

## Ep #480: Identity and Self-Authority



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

## Ep #480: Identity and Self-Authority

You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo episode 480.

Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Brooke: Hello my beautiful friends. Welcome to the podcast today. I'm so excited about this one, and here's how it started. We have a whole group of us that are here. Chris Hale sent an email that said this. It's all very dramatic.

"On the podcast, I'd love to discuss the role of identity in creating self-authority. Here's a little breakdown of the topic. Our identities are completely constructed and are often informed by the stories we've been told about who we should be without question. Questioning and claiming our identities is an important step in becoming the governing authority in our own lives. We often need to give ourselves permission to be who it is we know we are, and coaching is an amazing tool for that."

So we want to have this discussion and we invited some of our friends. We have Dex Randall, Dr. Sonia Wright, and Zayne Khan with us to have an amazing discussion on the podcast about identities. So Chris, why don't you start? Introduce yourself and then take it away.

Chris: Yeah, thank you Brooke. I'm Chris Hale and I am a Certified Coach Instructor and I teach in Get Coached and the Certification program, and I also have my own coaching business where I help folks own their creative authority so that they can have more confidence to put their work and themselves out into the world.

And I thought that this was a really great topic, especially for Pride Month because I think I work a lot with people with identity obviously and authority and I think as queer people, one of the very first things we do to claim our authority is to give ourselves permission to be ourselves.

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And that takes a lot of work in terms of questioning what we think about ourselves, what we've been told about ourselves, and so I think it's super important for everyone honestly, to be a little bit more I guess curious honestly about who they are, and not just accept the first thought they have about themselves, or the first assumption they make about what they might want, or what their dreams are, or what their desires are. And that really to me is the foundation of coaching, right? The curiosity, the asking questions.

Brooke: That's actually super fascinating when you think about it because if you identify as anything different than the norm, that invitation to question yourself and to find out who you are is actually more profound probably or more pronounced when you're younger as a lot of people, like what you're saying, don't even question. They just go along with the flow. Oh, I'm just this without even needing to question. That's kind of fascinating. Love that.

Chris: Yeah, and we don't want to make it this rosy thing because sometimes people have a really hard time with that.

Brooke: Oh yeah.

Chris: Right? But if we can hold the duality of it, it really is a gift that we are sort of pushed into that self-discovery and for some of us right at a very young age. It's kind of necessary.

Brooke: No yeah, I don't mean that it's rosy at all. It's almost like you're forced into it. If you think about a human brain and how we've evolved, when everything is the same and we're like everybody else, it feels more comfortable, right? So I think a lot of us like that, like that comfort.

So when we notice maybe something different about us, that's the challenge of the work, right? For sure. The rest of you, let's weigh in on this. What do you think, Zayne?

Zayne: Yeah, my name is Zayne Khan. I'm a Certified Life Coach here at The Life Coach School. I'm also a success coach and in my private practice I help introverts who are single find the confidence to create a tight circle of friendships.

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And I think it's so interesting to consider identity growing up and even in the context of the Self-Coaching Model. Because for me, the main identity shift or the one that made me feel othered was being a gay individual, kind of discovering that as a teenager, and that would just kind of go short in the circumstance of the Model.

And then I'd have just horrendous thoughts about it like you're going to be the one to not have a conventional wedding being in a Muslim community, you're going to be the one to maybe elope and not have a wedding, right?

So I think prior to discovering this work, I just would take those thoughts as facts, just truths that I had to accept. But then as I discovered this work, I realized that I had so much more authority over those - what I now understand as thoughts, and I get to decide what I want to believe about even aspects of my identity that I consider circumstances like being a gay man.

So now it's like, wow, I get to be an example of what's possible for all of these young men or young boys and girls and non-binary folks who may not have that example, who may not know what it's like to see someone who can have a gay wedding for example and still have that be okay and have that be celebrated.

So I think the real shift for me was being able to claim authority over my thoughts and my beliefs as a gay man because if we consider a belief as just thoughts you keep on thinking, I almost want to say your identity is composed of beliefs about yourself that you keep on reinforcing.

And what the Self-Coaching Model gave me was the ability to challenge that, which I just think is so powerful for anyone who's in any kind of marginalized identity or as someone who has maybe felt a bit othered in their life.

Brooke: Can you talk a little bit more about what that means, to be kind of othered?

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Zayne: Yeah, so you kind of have this identity that feels forced on you, like I discovered my sexuality when I was around 13, 14, that kind of typical age. And then you just feel like you're the only one, especially at that time, 12 years ago, it wasn't talked about as much. Being gay, being queer in my community certainly. So it felt like I was on the outside.

And what's interesting is I can kind of adopt that same thought but the tone behind it is so much different. You talk about power sentences, I think now it's a power sentence to say I'm one of the only out and proud gay men in my community. So the tone behind the thought is completely changed and I think that in itself is such a powerful gift that I would want everyone to have.

Brooke: So when you're thinking about your own identity, I would love to hear all of your thoughts on this, do you feel like you see yourself as other than or othered?

Zayne: I do, and it's in a good way now where it's not othered. I recognize that there are certain marginalized aspects of my identity where I have gone through discrimination and oppression at some level, and now I'm like, I'm special and unique in that. I use the idea of going from the black sheep of the family to the sparkly unicorn of the family who gets to represent and be that vibrant light for so many others.

So yeah, I recognize the discrimination and even the challenges I might still face growing up, but it doesn't have that same emotional weight to it because I know how to manage my thoughts around all of that. And I know that the bigger purpose and bigger picture for me is to be a voice for people who may not have the same tools that I have with The Life Coach School.

Someone asked me if I wanted to move somewhere that was more progressive, just an hour away, and I thought no, this city is the city that needs work, that doesn't have the progressive Vancouver Pride, the rainbow crosswalks. I need to be here doing the work because I've been given the tools that allow me to do that.

Brooke: That's amazing. I love it. What about you, Dr. Sonia?

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Sonia: Well, first of all thank you so much. It's a pleasure and an honor to be on this call today. So I am Dr. Sonia Wright, I am The Midlife Sex Coach for Women. I am a Master Certified Life Coach and I also get coached. So other, I think of my journey as kind of settling into who I am, just being more comfortable with myself and loving myself.

There are so many labels of others that people might put on me. You get to that place in your life where you're like, what percentage of this world would be considered other, right? The right race, the right sexual orientation, the right gender.

So much of this other you get to this place where you're like, I am me, I am meant to be who I am in this world, I'm going to settle into this place, and like Zayne was saying, be an example to others, but be an example to myself in terms of the life that I want to live and the life that I get to and deserve, it really is about that permission that we give ourselves to just settle and evolve into who we are.

And the love and the joy that comes from accepting our identity and being our authentic self, it's really what this journey is about. Coming back to ourselves and recognizing that we're exactly where we should be. I'm a queer person and the evolution of heterosexual, lesbian, pansexual, queer, even that is a journey and an evolution.

And we get to go on that journey, but to get to this place where you're just really proud of who you are and be there for other people, that's really what it comes down to.

Brooke: So are you saying that was your evolution?

Sonia: That was mine particularly, yeah. I didn't come out until my late 30s and I actually didn't realize I liked women until my late 20s. And I was like, "Oh, that's interesting." But I was married at that time and then when I ended up divorcing and I thought, "You know, I think this is a time that I'd like to explore."

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So I was in my late 30s when I switched teams and I ended up marrying a woman and then I was in that relationship for 10 years and that ended and I thought, "You know, I kind of like men too." And then I realized that it's a spectrum and I like all different genders and it's more who is that person? Who is that individual?

Brooke: Sorry for interrupting but when you say pansexual, does that mean you like all genders? Help me understand.

Sonia: Yeah, exactly. That's my identity. Everybody could have slightly different explanation of what pansexual means to them. For me, it means that I am attracted to the individual, the person, and their gender is just part of who they are. So it's kind of like it doesn't specifically have to be one way. It's just who is that person? Do I have a connection with them?

Brooke: Got it. So one of the things that I've been thinking a lot about is how hard it is to kind of identify ourselves when the norms are different, right? That's hard enough even for people that aren't identifying as anything different than the norm, right?

So I was asking myself this question, what does it mean to really be able to be yourself? What does freedom really mean to us? And I think for me, being able to be who I am is what freedom is. And I think if you look at the history of the identities that have been attempted to be crushed down and put away and pretend they don't exist, or say that they don't exist, that people are just making them up, and the violence that comes with that, and a lot about how threatened people feel.

Because I've been really thinking about why is there so much violence around it? Why is there so much fear around it? Why is there so much attempt to crush different identities away? What are your thoughts on that? Because I think for you, as you were speaking, I think you were saying I've really - we're saying I've really come to embrace and love and claim my own identity, and the challenge that you've had to do that is I think more extraordinary than most. So I would be curious what your thoughts are. How have you navigated that?

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Sonia: I think in terms of when there is violence and anger directed towards us, it's this understanding that there's an or, that it has to be one way or another, and if we are the or, we're not the choice. So we need to end in some way, as opposed to and. There's a place for everybody. It does not mean that who you are is less, and I think that that's what the issue is. It's this belief that one cannot exist and the one can exist as well. That there's intolerance and it's just one.

But I think when you get to that place in your life, when you look at who you are and you recognize you have been labeled other, and sometimes you've got so many labels of others like one on top of the other on top of the other that it could be so oppressive that your choice is am I going to end this or am I going to accept who I am and flourish in this.

And so instead of something that's being used to push you down, it becomes something that lifts you up and allows you to really flourish in this world. And all it is - and this is why I love coaching, all it is is shifting our thoughts around this.

If somebody tells us that we are other and there's something wrong with us, we get to decide, is that a truth? Is that what we want to believe? Or is there something else that we can choose? In this moment, can we make a different choice? Can we think a different way and realize that we were made and we are who we are meant to be? And we can choose to flourish and live in this world.

Brooke: Yeah, okay. What about you Dex?

Dex: Thanks Brooke. My name is Dex Randall, I work at the school as a Master Coach coach instructor and Get Coached instructor and I also work with professional men in burnout in my private business. I think my story really is quite complex because I think I have struggled all my life to find identity. It was very heavily suppressed when I was a kid.

I didn't fit the mold from day one because I was the wrong gender and I tried to express my gender and that was 100% unacceptable. Then I had to deal with the gay thing as well, which was also 100% unacceptable and it



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was pretty dangerous when I was a kid to mention that because at the time, I was growing up in England where homosexuality was still illegal.

And my parents were kind of deeply conservative, they came from this post-Victorian mindset and it took me about 25 years to come out successfully as an adult, and then I was always same-sex oriented, but first I was with one demographic and then I was with another demographic.

And it was all very difficult for me to be me. I lived most of my childhood inside my head. There wasn't anywhere else to live it. So I felt that the world was very violent, that it was against me, that I would be hurt. Even in Australia where I now live, in the 90s, when I came over to Australia, there was a very violent gay hate crime scene going on and a lot of people were being murdered, and it was dangerous on the streets.

So for me it wasn't okay to be myself. It wouldn't have been okay. I got a lot of violence directed towards me as well in hatred so it was a choice that was difficult to make.

Brooke: Yes. I mean that's kind of my whole point is I think it's hard enough to be who we really are and to embrace who we are and be out there in the world risking being criticized or being hated, and for you, I feel like it's just so much more compounded with the threat of actual violence to be able to identify yourself and then to be who you are actually in the world. So how have you navigated that?

Dex: Well, in my family of origin, I just hid. I just disappeared. I spent most of my childhood as a kind of cardboard cutout because as soon as I was visible and present and expressing myself, I [inaudible]. And I just couldn't handle that as a kid and there was nobody to talk to. I didn't have an adult I could talk to, and I couldn't talk to my siblings either. It was just so...

So I've just spent most of my life in hiding really. Visibly I may have expressed something that was different from them that freaked them out, but I would never talk about it. Even most of my life, if you like what you might call a gay scene, was completely underground. You went places but nobody knew where you went. It wasn't public.

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A friend of mine got knifed at a Pride parade. I remember the crowd and I just think, okay, there really isn't freedom of safe expression. So the thing with coaching for me, it's been about not identity so much as finding out who I really am. Is it safe to find out who I really am?

I ask myself the kind of questions that will help me come home to myself and find out who I am, which is what I've been doing during the coaching, the self-coaching process is being what I would describe as being extremely bold and other people would probably see as just step one in the process.

It seems very loud to me. From in here, it's like, wow, I'm doing something really scary, I just jumped off a cliff. But I mean, it's incrementally safer and also I've come to an identity which also isn't palatable for a lot of people still.

Brooke: I mean, that was going to be my question to you is you were saying the gay scene was or used to be mostly underground and I question - definitely it's different than it was, but I still question whether it isn't still underground. And one of the reasons why I ask this question, I'm very interested in your thoughts on this, is speaking with one of my gay friends and his husband and them talking about how they would never show any kind of physical affection in public.

They just would never do that. And I asked them why and it's just like, that is just not something that other people are willing to be around. And so it really made me think. That's not something most straight people have to ever think about is being able to give affection to somebody that they love in public, whatever appropriate affection that might be. What are your thoughts on that?

Dex: Absolutely. I think I would now. I mean, I don't have a partner, but if I had a partner I think I'd be more comfortable with it now but I would be circumspect. I would be thinking about it. I would be deliberate in my intention whether I did that or didn't do that.

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Even in the place where I live, would my neighbors be able to cope with this because I've got to live with them? My family took until my mid-40s to come into any space where I could mention anything. Mention. My parents used to talk to me about white goods and my job and what the weather was like. It was as far as it went.

Brooke: I literally had a friend - this isn't even that long, like six months ago say to me, "I don't mind if people are gay. I just don't want them to be so overt about it." And I was like, "What in the F are you talking about? You don't mind?"

I'd love to hear your thoughts but to me, it feels like I'm not comfortable with that so therefore you need to behave differently versus - this is in my coaching mind too. I'm not comfortable with that. I wonder why? I wonder why I'm not comfortable with that, and it's almost like who really needs the coaching around this?

Dex: Well I think homophobia and transphobia and all of that are very deeply ingrained. So what people fear about us in our sex and gender diversity is that they might have some tiny little thread in themselves that's the same and be at risk themselves and disapprove of themselves, be publicly ostracized maybe, but internally ostracized. That's, a lot of times, too terrifying.

But I think also it's quite interesting because if we've had difficulty belonging as kids or as young people because of our sex and gender diversity, then as we go through life, we're still going to feel this lack of belonging. And if we then join the queer community, what we might do is overcompensate.

So some people become very gay because they want to be accepted in the gay community. I'm going to be like the stereotype of gay people so I can join in that, or the stereotype of this kind of Q+ person so I can belong in that place. I ache so hard to belong I'm going to mold myself into what I think will belong over there. And then we kind swing the other way as well.

Brooke: That is heartbreaking and fascinating to think about.

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Dex: And that's what I've had difficulty with because I don't feel that I'm relating to the stereotypes that are available. I don't want to be the stereotype, so then I don't belong in the stereotypical bunch of people who are behaving that way.

Brooke: I mean, this whole process is really about the balance between our desire to be accepted by the world, by other people, by our communities, and then also the trade off with being accepted by ourselves and who we truly are, and trying to figure those things out. What are your thoughts on that, Chris?

Chris: Yeah, I think what you mentioned before too about who really needs the coaching and I think that's what this is because we have this extra labor that we've had our entire lives of doing the work on ourselves. So it starts with the shame and the trying to deny who you are, and that's the beginning of it. And then it morphs into, well, let me do the work on myself so I can manage my mind, my nervous system, my safety in the world where it would really be helpful if other people were doing that work.

We're seeking the coaching, we're seeking the understanding within themselves and so all of these things that we're talking about that everybody mentioned, to me it's just unseen labor that we're doing constantly that I think is so important to highlight and bring attention to.

Brooke: Yes, I agree.

Chris: Because that's just an extra bit of stuff we have to work through in every situation, like your friends talking about not showing affection.

Brooke: Even what Dex was just saying. I have to think about kissing my partner, or holding their hand or whatever.

Chris: And I think too this also comes in with belonging in terms of all the intersectionality of it all. If you're holding multiple marginalized identities, then it's compounded and it's the overall culture, but then we all have our individual cultures from our family of origin. So whether that be the religion

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or the race or the ethnicity, and so sometimes it can be like there's this competing thing, right?

So, like Dex said, if I'm seeking belonging in queer spaces and queer communities, well then that's requiring me to act in a way that goes against my cultural upbringing. So there's this constant checking of yourselves within all of the spaces where you're trying to be yourself and find a sense of belonging.

I don't know, I would love to hear what other people think about that because that's something for me because being biracial, I identify as non-binary, so everything is grey. I don't quite feel like I fit with any of the identities I hold or the ways in which it would be appropriate to show up as a Black person, or a gay man, or you know what I mean?

Brooke: Yeah. You know what's interesting? As you were talking, we were talking about the added labor that you've had to go through your life, having all of these different non-normal identities is I think for so many people who can't relate to that at the level that you've experienced it, it feels like labor to them to have to understand it, right?

I don't know what to say, and is this the right pronoun, and how do I talk to you, and I don't know what - I feel really uncomfortable about this, this feels like labor to me, so therefore I don't want to do it, right? And it makes me nervous. That's where I think so many of us who are straight, who are white, who are men, I feel like it's such an opportunity but it's not necessarily forced upon anyone so why would they go through that emotional labor if they don't have to I think is kind of part of the problem we're dealing with, right?

Chris: Yeah, I get it. I think that's part of the problem is I understand that. I think when you've had to understand the experience of the majority or what is seen as the majority because it's really not the majority, right? But the normative culture, the dominant culture, we all understand it because we've had to learn to understand it for survival.

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We've had to do the work to understand where we're safe in the world. So I totally get it that it feels uncomfortable, it feels difficult, and if you don't have to do it, I can empathize with that. And I think that's what's difficult is when you're able to hold that empathy and that duality for other people, you can see it, and how do you - I always think about how do I invite people in to a conversation around it?

For me, the coaching work is really it. That skill of curiosity and asking questions that was really formed in the training is it. It's like, why do you feel that way? And what do you think it's taking away from you? How is it taking that away from you? Tell me what the work feels like that you have to do. It's scary, yeah, it's totally scary to feel like you're going to get it wrong.

Brooke: But I would also argue that this work of truly understanding humans, not just one type of human, not just the majority type of human, not just the Christian human, but understanding all of our experiences and all the diversity that there really is makes life so much more interesting, but not only that, I think it deepens our connection to ourselves.

To Dex's point, there's a little bit of us that can relate to all of those different things, right? And when we close it all off and we don't want to look at it and we don't want to understand it, we only want to go this way, I think we miss out on the experience of truly knowing what it is to be alive and truly knowing ourselves. The rest of you want to weigh in on some of the things we've talked about?

Dex: You know what makes that difficult though Brooke is that we've had to do this since we were very, very young. We've had decades of experience in managing different, whereas a lot of people that I talk to have zero experience of managing differences. So much of a standing start.

But I would agree with you. The more we can self-coach and coach, no matter who we are, or how we are, or how we see ourselves, the more and more powerful our human experience is. But I think a lot of people won't seek that because it'll be too daunting.

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Brooke: But I was just thinking about this on Juneteenth. I was thinking a lot about how there were periods in the world in our lives, not in our lifetimes but lifetimes before us where what was normal was extremely violent. I mean, still is but we look back on those and we're like, "Oh my gosh."

So many of us are like, "How could that have been?" And I think it's because when you aren't open to being curious and exploring and questioning things, that sort of violence, and obviously it was physical violence but the emotional violence that we do within our own selves by allowing ourselves to live in a world where we don't question that I think is tragic.

Chris: I think it's that, like you said earlier, we like what we know and that's comfortable and it's safe. And identity is actually fluid, right? We're all going to have different thoughts about ourselves as we go through life, as we age, we're going to have a different relationship with our bodies and our minds and the way we experience the world. And I think it terrifies people. So they're really trying to grab onto something that can be fixed.

Brooke: That is good.

Chris: And it's not fixed. You're not a fixed being. But they're trying to make themselves a fixed being.

Brooke: Okay, that's fascinating. So when you say identities are fluid, that's not just for the other people, y'all. That's for you too. So why does that freak us out?

Chris: Because it's scary. Learning about yourself and questioning and braving the world as something other than you originally thought you were, whatever that is, think about changing your hair color. I mean, sometimes people get really excited about it and then there's that little bit of like, what are people going to think that I changed my hair color?

Because people see me a certain way, so how am I going to be received? How am I going to be perceived? So this is why I think the learning about ourselves and bringing the coaching back to getting to know ourselves

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better is the key. Because then we can take that out into the world and feel more at home and more of a sense of belonging within ourselves.

Brooke: That is so good. That is such an excellent point because I even think about just watching people try to not get older, try to maintain themselves. It's crazy how we want our identity to really be able to stay the same because somehow I think we might correlate that with being safe.

Dex: But don't you think that everything about coaching is about identity evolution fundamentally?

Brooke: Of course. So I want to talk about this because Chris said we create our identities. They're just made up. That freaks people out because especially when I hear people talking about transgender, I hear them like, "Oh, now we just get to decide what we are," I hear these kind of comments.

And I think to your point, it's like, that is what we do, right? That is what the process of our mind to our identity does create, and I think in some ways by not believing that, we hold ourselves back from possibility. So much possibility. And why does that possibility scare us so much is kind of to your point. We don't want that fluidity. We want certainty because that feels like safety somehow. You guys want to add thoughts on this? I want to make sure I give you a chance.

Zayne: Yeah absolutely. I think for me, people are almost buffering with these implicit biases in this discrimination because they almost want their 50:50 experience to stay small. Because if they have to lean into the discomfort of expanding that negative 50:50, they're probably going to choose not to. But as we know, with the 50:50 framework...

Brooke: Wait, you just said something, my mind is exploding. People are buffering with discrimination.

Zayne: Yeah, because the opposite is expanding their negative 50:50, right? Which of course expands the positive too. So they get to experience more of us, more Q+ individuals, more people of other identities, but then



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of course they have to lean into the discomfort of that negative side too in order to do that. It's literally buffering.

Brooke: That is fascinating. And all buffering is basically distracting you from what's true and what's real and what to do.

Zayne: Exactly. I always go back and forth between do I want to educate people who have these implicit biases or should I just focus on helping Q+ people be more resilient and I kind of lean more towards the latter because when I'm able to help people do that and when we can help people do that, it speaks to what Chris is saying where we can be more curious and open and have the conversations, versus I have the thought that trying to work on the implicit biases, it's exhausting and it's almost an uphill battle.

But I truly believe they're buffering and it's like, I buffer too sometimes. It's almost like we have compassion for it at some level where it's like of course, there are so many areas in all of our lives where we choose not to lean into discomfort. And just speaking to the aspect of intersectionality, I 100% agree, being a plus-size gay man of color I think is especially - it can be so difficult because even when you're within the gay community, you see on dating apps no one above this weight, or no chubs, for example.

Be around my weight, versus I hear a lot of my straight friends who are female saying, "I just love those cuddly guys who are a little bit bigger." There are even challenges within these spaces, which is why I think it's so important for allies to understand or at least try to understand what we're going through.

I just have so much love and respect for allies as well. They think, is Zayne sharing a quote on social media from a Q+ person really going to do anything, and I say yeah because it's almost expected that we as Q+ people are advocating constantly. That's just something we should or have to do. But when an ally steps up and does it, I do have a lot of respect for it, especially when it's done in a non-performative, genuine way because I really think we underestimate the power that allies hold.

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Because they're the ones who can actually have the conversations with others who may have those implicit biases without seeming like they're trying to push an agenda or something. They really have a lot of power that I think is being underutilized and under-recognized in many ways.

Brooke: When you were saying like, the choice between working with someone on their implicit bias or working with the Q+ individuals and helping them be more of who they are and be able to be more out loud and be present in the world, I wonder if you're right about that.

Because as we get to know people truly for who they are, it's kind of like Dex was saying, your neighbors, would they even be able to handle it? They can handle you hiding, but can they handle you? And I think if you know someone as a human, that's when you realize we're all human, instead of everyone pretending to be just like everybody else, which I think so many of us are doing for the reason what Dex was saying, we just all want to be accepted.

Zayne: Being able to develop that resiliency is so valuable because unfortunately, we're never going to have every single person on this planet be fully aligned with our values or just how we want to show up in the world.

We're never going to get rid of discrimination or implicit biases but I truly believe by creating that resilience and helping people understand how they can manage their minds, especially for people who have marginalized identities, that's where the conversations can happen. That's when we see less horrific things like self-harm and even self-shame and judgment and blame towards other community members or even themselves.

Chris: I want to say I think that's where what you were saying about allies Zayne is so important because we're doing labor anyway all the time, and we get to choose when we want to do additional labor. So there might be certain conversations you want to have that you're willing to have as the person who holds the marginalized identity that you get to decide case by case.

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We're activists just by living, just by being in the world, and daring to just tell ourselves the truth about who we are, we are already doing activism. So we don't have to take that on.

Brooke: That is beautifully said. That is so good.

Sonia: Yeah, I would agree with that. I don't necessarily see it as an either or. It's both. But I have my boundaries, I have my limitations. When my energy is there, I'll work within my community and also with allies and just with other people in general. But you get to this place in your life when you recognize you have to take care of yourself first in order to continue to do this work within your community and also around implicit bias that's there. We can't be everything to everyone, but we need to make sure that we're taking care of ourselves, and then we go from there.

Brooke: Yes, absolutely. Is there anything else you want to discuss, Chris?

Chris: I would just like to kind of talk a little bit about how we use these tools for all people in terms of coaching themselves closer to themselves because I think it really is easy to use the work against ourselves in a sense where we're being really hard on ourselves about the ways we're showing up.

So to Zayne's point, am I doing enough to be educating? We kind of use that against ourselves, and I think the most important part of it is making space for what we're capable of and how do we help other people do that? To not be hard on themselves. When you said earlier, "I'm going to get it wrong," I think that's a really important thing to touch on.

How are we all helping people be with themselves around that? Or just around anything where they're being overly critical and not allowing for all of the parts of themselves to show up and be in this space. I was working with a client yesterday and she talked about how she wants to feel spacious for all of who she is to be involved, but that includes that part of us that's going to mess it up. So I don't know if any of you have thoughts about that.

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Dex: I think it's a really big part of it. I mean, I love the allies that we have and I love how outspoken many of them are these days, and I agree that it's a really big factor. But I do meet a lot of people who are terrified to even open the topic because they just plonk their foot in it straight away several times and that's that.

And I do think we do the labor of supporting them though that and sometimes we want to and sometimes we don't. I think it's very courageous of an ally to go, "Okay, I got no idea what to say or do now, but I would like to do something helpful. I would like to be with you."

Brooke: Would you recommend that if someone felt that way, maybe there's somebody listening to this and they're like, "Oh my gosh, that's me. I'm going to say the wrong thing, someone's going to get mad at me, I'm going to get canceled," whatever, if someone really wanted help with that, do you have like, don't do this, do this?

Chris: I think that's a hard one because we're not a monolith. So I mean, you've got four very different queer perspectives here and we might share some similar identities and not, but we're never going to all agree on what's the correct way.

I think that self-compassion is the thing that I can offer. Be compassionate with yourself first and that's going to give you the confidence to maybe try and screw up or ask your friends. Ask the people and trust them that they'll create the boundary on whether or not they want to educate you or not.

Brooke: That's key. Make sure you ask them before you ask them. Because I think there's this idea, well, you have a responsibility to educate me in some way, which is insane.

Chris: There's a little bit of that entitlement, right? Like, come on, just tell me what to do, I'll do it. And I think that's in earnest, they want to show you that they care, but oftentimes the way they show you care is to initially do your own research and or ask permission to ask and be educated.

Brooke: Or hire someone that does this work.

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Chris: Hire someone who does this work. There are many people that do that. Anyone else on that?

Dex: It's also a part of coaching isn't it to assume that everybody's got a good heart and a good intention. Every person we speak to has a good heart and a good intention so when we can occupy that space together, then if somebody hasn't got the information they need to be what they would describe as competent in the discussion, then you hold space for that. That's all you do really, you hold space for people who don't know how to do it.

Brooke: Just because you have a good intention. So it's like, from your perspective, if you assume they have a good intention, but also from your perspective, just because you have good intent in the things that you're doing and the things that you're saying doesn't mean that you don't hurt people and that you don't need to get educated about it too, right? There's both sides to that for sure.

Chris: Well that's where repair comes in. Are you humble enough and self-reflective enough to repair that? If you make a mistake, you say the wrong thing, you offer the wrong thing, and not make a big deal about it because you don't want to center your discomfort in the situation. If you're the one that screwed up, that's a really big thing across the board I think with all marginalized identities. If you start centering yourself as the person who made the mistake then it becomes about you, versus just correcting...

Brooke: Which is very easy to do by the way.

Chris: It is, yeah.

Brooke: Very easy to make it, "Oh my gosh, I'm now horrified, look at me, look at me, look at me." You don't realize you're doing that.

Chris: Oh totally.

Brooke: But listen, I have been there many times.

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Chris: That's the self-compassion piece though, right? That's why I think that's the start because if you can be compassionate with yourself first, you're not going to be as reactive to your uncomfortable emotions around screwing up.

Brooke: Yes. And that's difficult.

Dex: Also, I've got a Q+ coach, I work with a Q+ coach and we blow up all the time.

Brooke: You do what?

Dex: Between us, we have to do quite a lot of repairs as well. It's like, "Oh, my bad. Oh, I've said something, it was insensitive." We're just human. We're all human so we're all going to make the same kind of mistakes time to time.

Brooke: But I'm just going to say the willingness to do this work, the willingness to mess it up and to put yourself out there and to make the mistakes and to center yourself and to say the wrong thing, all of it I think is an opportunity to grow that is so worth it to become who you really are.

Because I think who we really are at our deepest core is afraid and afraid to really not be accepted. And that's where I think a lot of this fear of putting ourselves out there and exploring ourselves truly, and it's a fear of not being accepted by ourselves like Dr. Sonia was saying. Maybe there's something within you that you don't want to accept, and maybe there's something that you're afraid you won't be accepted for by someone else.

Zayne: I think willing is a very useful emotion here because it almost assumes that there is a little bit of resistance there. I'm willing to go through it. You're not maybe excited and determined and inspired all the time. You're willing to go through the discomfort that it takes to understand as much as you can.

And I think the piece about self-compassion and compassion is really important because when you mess up you don't want to beat yourself up in

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any way, and if someone gets mad at you in the Q+ community, there's a lot of pain wrapped up there for a lot of us, all of us really. So having that understanding too can be helpful so that you're not like, "Okay, well someone got mad at me once, therefore I'm just done with this work forever."

Really understanding even the history could be useful too for people to educate themselves on Q+ history and the discrimination, the oppression that a lot of us have gone through I think can help cultivate that compassion as well.

Brooke: Yeah, I mean I think that's an incredibly useful point for people to know is if you say something that maybe offends someone and they get mad at you, and you're like, "Geez, I just said one thing," that was the 18th time they had heard that that day, right? And you're not realizing that because you just had your one experience, but I do think that understanding that is really - to have compassion for them and for yourself, and not react and be resistant, that's not useful at all.

Sonia: What I'm hearing here is definitely about compassion for ourselves, compassion for others, and recognizing the fact that we're just having this conversation because I'm old enough to know and have been in a time where it was like, don't ask, don't tell, don't talk.

So while we're sitting here having these conversations and we're trying to get to the next place, I also want to acknowledge where we have come, that we're willing to have these conversations. People may not like the discomfort of the conversation but they're at least willing to think about and to feel a little bit of the discomfort, whereas we didn't have that in the past.

We were just a race, invisible. So while we're in the midst of this, thank God that we're able to be in a place like this where we can have this conversation, and yes, there is work that we still need to do and if we had that compassion for ourselves and for others as we continue to do this work, I think that's really going to make a big difference here.

Brooke: Agreed. Alright Chris, any closing comments, thoughts?

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Chris: I just think it's so amazing that we do get to come together to have a conversation like this and to have it on this platform. And I want to thank you for inviting us on to have this conversation because as much as I really believe we need to be our own example, there are so many things that it's important for us to see in the world for us to be able to go like, "Oh, I think that's me, oh, I see myself in that."

And to be able to be people who are doing that for others, I don't know, it's just so special to me and I'm so grateful to have shared this time with you and all of you.

Brooke: Well, I appreciate you for reaching out and opening up the conversation with the topic that you did because I think it's accessible and very, very useful for people. So any closing words from you, Zayne?

Zayne: Yeah, I'm also so grateful to have this opportunity. I've been listening to the podcast for five years now. I was in the end of my psychology degree, I was going to go into clinical counseling and then I thought, no, coaching is more aligned with me. I was in Scholars for two months and then I was right in the Certification program so such a dream come true.

And I think I want us to all let it be messy. Let yourselves kind of mess up and get it wrong a lot of the time because it's going to happen and that's okay. And I think coaching, again, has been such a useful tool because it let me reclaim aspects of my identity that I thought were just fixed and that I had to accept, and there was no joy or no pride.

Of course, we talk about Pride Month or any kind of future possibility, and now not only have I owned my identity as a gay man, a gay man of color, plus-size gay man of color, I've now gotten to this place where I'm willing to help others and I really thank you so much for that with the coaching tools because I don't know if I would have come to this place without that, so just thank you so much.

Brooke: Amazing. What about you Dex?



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Dex: Yeah, I'm really appreciative of being here and you having this conversation in public as well. It's been wonderful to meet with you other guys in here. It's such a rare opportunity we get to discuss these things. It's what you said, any time we can be open and curious about who we are and who other people are, we've opened up a little bit of space where we can just sideline our prejudice for a minute and explore something new.

I think it's helpful for people in the Q+ community and for allies just having that little, oh, maybe I don't know all the answers, maybe what I think is not quite right, which is the core of coaching. It's so, so helpful. So if it prompts those conversations, marvelous.

Brooke: Dr. Sonia?

Sonia: I would agree. Thank you so much for this opportunity. Thank you for this space where we could all come together and be able to talk about this. It's so important. I'd have to say, continue to tolerate the discomfort and this is what I love about coaching. We learn to tolerate that discomfort with self-love. That's so important. And continue to grow. That's what it's all about.

Brooke: Love it. Now listen, if you want to hire a coach who is good, I always say find someone who has been to hell and back. They have to have come back from hell. And the way that they came back from hell is by coaching themselves and learning themselves, and everyone here really I think has had an extra dose of opportunity to coach themselves, so they are all, I mean, obviously that's why we hire them and have them work at the school.

But also, if you want to really work with someone that can help you find those deepest parts of yourselves that maybe you're afraid to see, I highly recommend that you go to [TheLifeCoachSchool.com/podcast](https://TheLifeCoachSchool.com/podcast), find their contacts in the show notes. Definitely follow them all on their platforms for sure. You will learn so much. Thank you all so much for being on this call. I love you all so much. And let's do it again soon, yeah?

Chris: Yeah, let's.

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Brooke: Just keep sending me those requests. I'm down. Alright my friends, have a beautiful time. Talk to you next week.

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