

## Ep #490: Boundaries vs Avoiding



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Brooke Castillo**

## Ep #490: Boundaries vs Avoiding

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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.

Hi my beautiful friends. Welcome to the podcast. I'm having an incredible day. I woke up this morning, I'm in San Diego right now. We rented a house here for the month and the pickleball here is crazy. Everyone is so good in this area. It's wild. It's so fun.

So I woke up this morning and went to open play by myself. And the way open play works at pickleball is you go and you put your racket in this little stand and then when there's an open spot, then you just jump in, and you jump in with any partner that is also kind of single in the open play.

And so you end up playing with lots of different people, getting to know lots of different people, and playing with them on your team. And I just went and did that for two hours and I met the coolest people, and we had the most fun. I'm telling you guys, pickleball is the answer. It is such a fun social thing to do, you get a great workout, and we laughed the whole time. It was great. Great time.

So I came back and I'm actually teaching a class today in Get Coached. I'm coaching a class today and one of the questions that came in ahead of time was so good, it was about the difference between boundaries and avoiding.

And it's such a great question because I think a lot of times people confuse the two, and we use psychological language to justify our own behavior sometimes in a way that may not be healthy. And so I think what's going on with this client, what was going on with her is she was basically using the word boundary but she was actually just avoiding this person.

And listen, first and foremost, what I want to say about that is you are a grown ass adult. And you can do actually whatever you want to do when it

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comes to your relationships, and I think this is an important part that maybe I don't talk about a lot. I want to make sure I do.

If you want to avoid a certain person, if you don't want to be around a certain person, if you don't want to talk to any person in your life, you just don't have to. And you can decide, "No, I don't want this person in my life and I don't want to talk to them."

Now, there are times that I have done this and my students have done this, my clients have done this in a way that is very healthy and I think very positive for our lives. And it's not an avoidance tactic. It's just this is someone that I do not want to have a relationship with because I don't want to work on my relationship with this person because it doesn't matter to me, or I don't want to work on myself as it applies to this person.

Now, the way that you know that it's healthy, or the way that I would help you define that it's healthy is it feels clean, there's not a lot of resistance around it, there's not a lot of anger around it, it's just simply kind of a self-love tactic.

And that's a beautiful thing and highly recommended. And that includes family members, y'all. That includes people you're supposed to be around. You can decide as an adult person not to spend time with someone, period. That is your right.

Now, where boundaries come in is when maybe there's a person in your life that you don't want to cut out of your life, you don't want to avoid them, you want them in your life, but you want them in your life in a way that supports you taking care of you in a healthy way and making sure that there are some boundaries that you've set up for yourself that keeps you being who you want to be in relation to this person.

So the first one is I've just decided I don't want this person in my life, the second one is I want this person in my life, I want to be able to interact with this person, but here are my boundaries for myself. And the third one that

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some of us do is we just avoid people because we don't want to do our own work, and we end up suppressing a lot of emotional turmoil and emotional work that would ultimately benefit us in our lives.

So let's talk about the three, how to distinguish between the three, whether you're actually putting up boundaries or whether you're just avoiding a situation.

I'm going to give you an example from my dating life. I'm no longer dating, I'm in a relationship now, but if you've listened to the podcast for a while, you know that I was dating a lot for a while. And one of the things about dating is you meet a lot of people in a short amount of time.

And oftentimes, I would meet someone, be introduced to someone, or go on a date with someone and decide I don't want this person in my life. This is not a relationship I want to be committed to, I don't even want to be friends with this person, I don't need boundaries with this person, I'm just going to basically ghost them in my life and say no thanks, bye.

And I usually just feel a sense of peace around a decision like that. I feel like, no, this is in my best interest for me, I'm taking care of me, I don't have any animosity or negative feeling toward the other person. It's just super clean, just a decision.

For example, I don't want anyone in my life that doesn't have shared basic values of humanity that I share. I don't want someone in my life that talks to me in a way that is mean or vulgar or negative or constantly complaining. It's just not necessary and I'm not going to put in the work to a relationship with someone that I just met if that is the case.

There have also been relationships and people that have been in my life that I've decided I didn't want in my life anymore in a significant way, and I've made that decision from a place of health and healing. And here's what I mean by that. And this is for those of you who are considering maybe having someone in your life or not.

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I always like to ask myself, “Is there more for me to learn in this relationship?” And I usually know if there’s more to learn in the relationship if I’m not being my best self in the relationship.

In the earlier example, the dating example that I gave you where I just decided I didn’t want someone in my life, I’m being my best self. I’m showing up as who I want to be, I’m being kind, I’m being loving, I’m being open, and this person is showing up as themselves in a way that isn’t compatible with me.

Just a beautiful ending. Bye. And that’s fine. And it’s usually mutual, you usually know when you’re not fully compatible with someone, and that goes for friends too, right?

I think a lot of times we think relationships aren’t successful if they don’t last forever. And I don’t actually believe that at all. I think that you can be in love relationships, I think you can be in parenting relationships, I think you can be in marriages, I think you can be in friendships, family relationships that have their seasons in your life and are gorgeous, beautiful, successful relationships that end in the current format that they’re in, and nothing has gone wrong.

It’s just an evolution. And I think if more people understood that, we would be I think more willing to break up relationships without destroying them first. That’s something that I see quite a bit. I think somebody doesn’t want someone in their life in maybe a love relationship, and so they’ll do something or they’ll start acting in a way that makes it very volatile, and then the breakup becomes somewhat justified in their mind.

It’s hard I think for some people to just end relationships or change the format of a relationship if nothing is going terribly wrong. It’s just not a good fit anymore.

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So I think that's the first test is really am I being my best self when I'm around this person, regardless of how they're behaving? Can I love myself and this person as I decide that I don't want this in my life anymore?

And if the answer is yes - actually my coach just told me the other day, she goes, "You know it's good if you want to quit on your best day. You know that that's a good decision if it's your best day of doing something and you still want to quit, that's a good thing."

And I feel like that I relationships. Nothing has gone wrong here, you didn't do anything wrong, I didn't do anything wrong, this just isn't a relationship I want to pursue. That is different than avoiding yourself and avoiding an opportunity to learn.

And so if you're in some kind of relationship and you feel like you need to remove this person from your life so you can feel better, that is the red flag. Because remember, our feelings are coming from our thoughts, and you may avoid the circumstance, which is this other person, but the thoughts that you're having and the process of creating those emotions and processing those emotions will still be there.

And I love the way the universe works because if you try and avoid work with one person, another person will come along and provide you with an opportunity to do that work. I have so many examples of this in my own life.

Our Mastermind event is coming up next week where we bring all the certified coaches together and I created a talk for that. And the whole theme for our Mastermind event is called Feel Harder. And I am sharing an example of that exact thing where I did not process properly because it was a total lack of awareness, emotions in one area, and it just popped up like Whack-a-Mole in another area completely unexpected.

And it was just another invitation to do the same work. So if you're trying to avoid anxiety or frustration or hate or anger towards someone, that's

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usually the time when I would recommend, okay, let's do our work with this person. Let's stay in this relationship until that is resolved.

And a lot of times when you resolve that kind of stuff, you want the person in your life. You're like, "Oh, once I get that cleaned up, this person's great. I don't have any problem with this person." And sometimes you may clean up all that work and still not want to be in a relationship with them. That's totally fine, but as long as you're not avoiding them to avoid yourself and to avoid your own work.

So you will know because there'll be some hesitancy there. There'll be like, "I don't know about this, I think I am mad or frustrated or angry or whatever," versus, "This is just a clean, obvious no thank you."

So let's say you decide, okay, I don't want to avoid, I want to stay in this relationship with this person but there's a lot of conflict, a lot of challenges, a lot of work that I need to do. That is oftentimes an opportunity for boundaries. And boundaries are a way of you taking care of you. Boundaries are not a way to avoid and hide from yourself, and they're not a way to control other people.

So let's say you're in a relationship with a difficult person who - for me, boundaries are always helpful when I'm in approval-seeking energy and I'm trying to please someone and someone is doing things in the relationship that feel unhealthy and feel kind of obtrusive to me and feel controlling to me. If I feel like someone is trying to control me or be in charge of me or not listening to me.

And so the way that you set up a boundary in a situation like that is you decide. You don't even need the other person involved in the boundary situation, and I'll give you an example.

Let's say you are dating someone. Let's stay with the dating theme. And you meet this person and you really like them, you feel like you have shared values, you have shared interests, and you want to keep dating this

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person, you want to keep exploring the relationship with them, but they keep coming over to your home unannounced and knocking on the door and wanting to come in and hang out with you.

Now, in that moment, I would be shocked, frustrated, maybe angry. I would feel slightly violated by this behavior. Now, a lot of times people will - like I used to do - will just bury it because we like the person. We don't want them to be upset with us so we don't say anything to them, and then we start building up this resentment and then when they come over unannounced, then we just act bitchy. That would be my patterning in that situation.

Now, a boundary in that situation would be, "Hey, if you come by unannounced, I'm probably not going to answer the door. When my doorbell rings, I just don't answer the door ever unless I'm expecting someone to be coming by."

So it's not I want you to do this, that, or the other thing. It's not trying to control them. It's not trying to tell them that they're wrong or anything. It's just, "Hey, if and when you do this, here's what I'm going to do to take care of me." That is a proper boundary.

Another boundary, god help us all, when it comes to dating, might be sending nude pictures. So I have been on dates with a couple guys, they decided as soon they had my text number that they would send me naked pictures of them.

Now, in that situation, if this is someone I really like and I think we have shared values and I'm really interested in them and they maybe didn't understand that I didn't want nude pictures, I would just say to them, "Hey, I don't want you to send nude pictures to me. Please don't."

Just make a very nice request. "And if you continue to send nude pictures to me, I'm just going to block your phone number because I do not want to



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be in the middle of my workday looking at naked pictures of men. That is not my jam at all.”

Now, I have many friends, they're into that, they think that's great. That is just not me. So that's going to be a boundary that I put up with someone. I'm just going to say no, don't do that, if you do, here's what I'm going to do.

And it leaves the door open for them to continue their behavior, but I am not going to participate in it. And that is a very appropriate boundary to set with somebody without making them wrong. It doesn't have to feel like you're trying to control them. It's just simply this is how I roll.

Other examples might be if you go on a date with someone, “Hey, I just want to let you know I appreciate you picking me up for this date. If you have more than one drink, I'm just going to take an Uber home.” Beautiful boundary.

And someone could say, “Oh no, I'm definitely going to have more than one drink. I'm going to have three drinks and I'm totally going to be fine to drive.” Of course, drink up, do what you want. I'm just taking an Uber home. I'm not trying to tell you how much you can or can't drink. I'm just letting you know that I'm going to take an Uber home and you won't be dropping me off at home if you have more than one drink.

That is a very appropriate boundary. A lot of people will just say, “You can't drink more than one drink,” or, you can't do this or that or the other thing, or here's how you need to behave if you're going to be on the date with me. That is inappropriate. In my opinion, that is not a great way to be in relationship with someone where you're trying to control them, or you're threatening them.

You're threatening them in a way that the intention is to change or control their behavior. I think people get confused because it seems like a subtle difference. So let's use this example with going on a date and the drink thing.

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I genuinely am on board whether you have one drink or three. Either way, I'm not trying to control you. I'm just letting you know that this is what I'm going to do. And if that is genuine, you can do as you may, I just want to let you know something, that is a pure boundary. That's a very healthy, good boundary.

If I'm like, "Listen, don't drink more than one drink because you need to give me a ride home, you drove me here and now you're responsible for giving me a ride home, don't drink more than one drink or I'll never go on another date with you," again, it's more of a threat.

And that may be true for you. Hey, I don't want to date someone that drinks more than one drink, if you're a person that drinks more than one drink, we should probably just end this here. And that's, I think, appropriate and fine if you have some really strong stipulations about what your expectations are. And usually, I feel like those should be said before you go on a date if they're that strong.

But let's talk a little bit about the avoidance thing that I think a lot of people are doing and calling boundaries and it's stunting your evolution. And that's what I want to really talk about here to make sure that if you are someone that struggles in relationships, has a difficult time processing your own emotion, if you feel resentful and agitated a lot of the time, you may be using what you're calling boundaries and thinking that they're healthy in a way that is really kind of curtailing your growth.

One of the suggestions that I have for you is to think about anyone in your life that you feel like putting a boundary up affected how you feel in a negative way. And my dear client who emailed in to get coaching, that was her situation is she had put up some, what she was calling boundaries, with her family. And just feeling terrible about it, and feeling a lot of negative emotion and a lot of resistance around it. It wasn't done out of love for herself. It was done more out of avoidance.

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And my recommendation if this happens to you or for you in your life is that you sit down and you write down what your emotions are as it applies to this person. Do you feel frustrated? Do you feel angry? Do you feel hurt? Do you feel threatened? Do you feel unsafe?

Whatever it is that you're experiencing, don't judge yourself. Just allow all of the emotions to be there and to be in full. I like to use the example, you open up to them and you walk in and you actually feel the emotions. And then ask yourself, am I afraid to feel these emotions or am I resisting these emotions? Am I avoiding these emotions?

And a lot of times, I'll ask myself, are you angry that you're feeling this? Is this making you mad that you're feeling these emotions? And typically, that's a clue that there's some great work to be done.

And then what I do is I write down all my thoughts about this person, everything I think they're doing wrong, everything I wish they would change, all of my judgments about how they should behave. And I look at my response and how I show up and how I behave in my A-line when I have these thoughts and feelings about this person,

And typically, it's not pretty. If you're setting a boundary with your hands on your hips, you're probably not ready to set a boundary. And I open myself up to the opportunity to be around and with this person and find my best self, to see where I might be getting triggered by something or upset by something, and see if I can respond with my best self.

And however long that takes, however long that work takes, I'm willing to do it. And it may turn out that once I do that work and I'm able to be around this person and not have drama with them and not be triggered by them and not be upset by them and not feel like I have to constantly be on edge or guarded with them, at that point, then I can decide if I want to completely remove this person from my life, if I want to set up some pretty strong boundaries with this person, or whether once I do that work, none of that is necessary.

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Every person in your life can be an invitation, can be an opportunity for you to be curious about humanity, to find unconditional love, but mostly to find yourself in a stance of this is who I am and this is how I show up no matter who I'm around.

I am Brooke Castillo, I am loving, I am honest, I am confrontational, I am sarcastic, I am fun, I am funny, no matter who I am around. And I don't use other people to justify my bad behavior. And I don't try to avoid people that bring out the worst in me. In fact, the people that bring out the worst in me is my opportunity to look at the worst in me and heal it and understand it and change it.

So there you go, my friends. The difference between boundaries and avoiding. Make your decisions wisely. Use your life as an opportunity to explore all the corners of yourself and to understand your true capacity for being a human who is non-judgmental, loving, and showing up as the best version of themselves.

Have a beautiful week everyone, talk to you soon. Bye.

Hey wait, don't go. I have another Example of Awesome starting right now. Enjoy.

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Brig: Hey guys, it's Brig again with another coach that I want to introduce you to. This time it's Gabrielle Smith. I'm going to let her introduce herself to you but she's an amazing Master Certified - yes, we went through Master Coach Training together. And I'm excited about what we're going to talk about. So she's going to talk about the first 90 days. I love this concept. Go ahead. Introduce yourself.

Gabrielle: Thank you for that introduction. My name is Gabrielle Smith and I am a coach for coaches. I help coaches sign their first paid client and like Brig said, the first 90 days, the first three months are the most important and they are where we struggle the most. And so I am so passionate and

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excited to help coaches get past that and start making money in their businesses.

Brig: Let me ask you something. Why do you think that's the time that they struggle with the most? Those first 90 days? Why do you think there's such a struggle there? What do you think they're thinking or doing or whatever?

Gabrielle: I think a lot of it is decisions. They're struggling to make decisions. And entrepreneurship, decision making is very important. And we struggle with deciding on what we're going to do, who we're going to help, and taking action on it.

Brig: So good. So good. And I get that because for anybody, even if you're not a coach, if you have a goal, those first 90 days, if you're in indecision, you don't go anywhere. So I can see how those first 90 days, making decisions, clear decisions is important. So what's one of the decisions you help them make in the first 90 days?

Gabrielle: So the biggest decision that trips most people up is figuring out who they want to help, figuring out what their niche is. And the reason it trips us up is because we're looking for the perfect niche.

Brig: Yes.

Gabrielle: We think there is this magical one and once we choose that, then our business is going to blow up and everything is going to fall in place.

Brig: Yes, there's always that magical one. So how do you help them deal with that? Go from there's this magic answer to picking and deciding on a niche and making these decision? How do you help them make this decision?

Gabrielle: Well, so the things that they're trying in terms of looking for the perfect niche is they're Googling, they're researching, they're looking at what other coaches are doing, other successful coaches are doing. And the reason that that does not work is because those niches were perfect for the

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people who chose them. But they're not necessarily aligned with who you are and who you're meant to be and who you're meant to serve.

So how I help them is by helping them identify what's true for them. What's true for them by tapping into their God-given gifts and their own life experiences. We use that to connect them with the people that they're meant to help and from that, they have the confidence like these are my people.

So I know I can help them, so I have the confidence to help them, which means that I'm going to tell the world about it, and then I'm just going to continue taking action from there because I have the confidence that I'm helping my people and I have the confidence that I can help them.

Brig: Okay. I love that. So then for someone else then that's maybe not a coach, so maybe they don't have what we call niche drama. For those of you who aren't coaches, who you help is what we call niche drama. How can we relate this to someone who's like, "I don't know what career path to take, or what job to take, what decision, or what diet to take."

How can we make this helpful for them as what works for them that's in alignment? I think I remember you saying something about alignment.

Gabrielle: I did and that's exactly it. It's figuring out what is true for you. I think it really is not going from the should because when we think should, that means it's coming from someone else. It's not coming from our own wisdom, our own true desires.

So when we're making decisions for a career for example, then we want to check in with what it is that we truly want, what feels good for us, and not what we should do. Because look, that's how some of us get into careers that we end up being miserable in in the first place because we've done something that we should, we thought we should do. But yes, just being true to yourself, tapping into what it is that you really want, and just being in alignment with what you desire to do.

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Brig: So good. And also, I think there's a part of it like there is no one way or one niche or whatever. We forget our ability to create it. We're the one that makes the niche work. Not the niche. We found the goldmine, no, we make the goldmine. I'm sure that's what you help them do.

Gabrielle: Yeah, that's exactly what I help them do. And I think another part of it too is being willing to get it wrong. I think a lot of times we're so afraid to get it wrong but be willing to get it wrong in order to get it right. That's the only way you can figure it out. Only way to figure it out.

You have to be willing to get it wrong because if you're willing to get it wrong, then you will put yourself out there, you'll be willing to make a decision, try it out, evaluate, and then change it if necessary. If it's not sitting right, if it doesn't feel right, then you get to change it. But you have to be willing to try. Try it and be willing to get it wrong, fail at it in order to get it right.

Brig: Okay, so in the first 90 days we need to make some decisions. What we're going to do, who we're going to serve, find out what's in alignment for us, and then be willing to get it wrong.

Gabrielle: Yes. That's it. That's it.

Brig: I love it. I love it. I absolutely love it. Okay, so won't you tell them all about you? Because I know if you're not even starting, if you're a coach or listening to this and you're thinking about this but you're like, "It's way past 90 days for me," can you help them too?

Gabrielle: Oh yeah, absolutely. If you're trying to sign your first paid client, that's my expertise. That's where my passion is, that's where I love helping coaches make that for themselves.

Brig: Cool. I love it. Tell them how to get in contact with you. Give me all the deets.

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Gabrielle: So my main one is IG, on Instagram, I'm @TheThoughtTrainer on Instagram, it's my favorite. My DMs, they lit. I live in the DMs. My website, TheThoughtTrainer.com, Facebook, The Thought Trainer, so it's The Thought Trainer all across the board.

Brig: I love it. Okay, so let's make some 90-day goals and make some breakthroughs.

Gabrielle: Let's do it.

Brig: Love it. Thank you.

Gabrielle: Thank you.

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