

Ep #492: Secret Pain



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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You are listening to *The Life Coach School Podcast* with Brooke Castillo episode 492.

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, gorgeous friends. How are my beautiful friends today? I'm doing so great, so awesome. Just got done with an amazing yoga class, went walking on the beach today, it's been a gorgeous day.

It's evening time and while I was in yoga, I was thinking about some clients that I've been working with, and I decided I needed to do a podcast for those of you who aren't my clients that I'm working directly with to maybe offer you some relief by talking about your secret pain.

One of the things that's true is that in my business, in the work that I do, in running my company, I have to deal with a lot of things I don't want to deal with. A lot of nonsense, a lot of work that isn't in my zone of genius, a lot of paperwork, a lot of decisions that I have to make.

And often, I decide that I'm not going to do any of it anymore and I'm going to become a hostess, I'm going to retire. And then I talk to a client who tells me that something I said on the podcast or something I said in a coaching session or something I said in one of my classes literally changed their life forever and took them out of suffering.

And for me, that is why I do this work. It is so sweet to my purpose of being an example of what is possible, to have taken myself out of suffering to this life of ultimate thriving and abundance that makes me keep going and makes me want to keep doing this work for as long as I live.

And so I've told you all this before. I have had so many moments of deep suffering and deep self-loathing that took me to the brink of real despair in

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my life. And I remember the pull to figure out what was wrong. I remember the pull to solve this pain so I could then tell other people how to do it.

And I've put as much work into the world as I know how that relates to everything that I've gone through and everything that I've worked on with clients in order to help as much as I can, pull people out of that despair in any way that I am able to do it. And fortunately, I've been able to help hundreds and thousands of people do just that.

But I've never done a podcast specifically on secret pain. And when I was trying to figure out what to name this podcast, I came up with suffering quietly, feeling alone, and secret pain. And I think secret pain really describes it the best because if you are a person with secret pain, you resonate with that. You know exactly what that is.

And it's pain that you have at a depth that you have it that no one else knows about. And you're hiding it, or you're hiding the severity of it from the people around you. And I know that those of you who have it that just heard me say that know who you are because there's no missing it. If you're a person with secret pain, you absolutely know that you have it.

I recently had a beautiful conversation with one of my best girlfriends who recently got a diagnosis and had to go through some treatment for a physical situation that she had. And the way that she described going through that is she said to me, "I'm really suffering. I don't feel like I belong to any of the conversations that anyone is having."

I knew exactly what she meant and it was so beautifully said. When you are consumed with your own pain, you're consumed with your own mental suffering, and you don't feel like anyone can relate to you because that is the main thing that you're thinking about all of the time, and people are having conversations about the weather and politics and Instagram and the Kardashians, and you are in deep suffering, and you may participate in those conversations and you may laugh in those conversations, but you're

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not there, you are quietly suffering at a dinner table, at a party, in a car, with a group of friends.

And nobody knows that you're suffering. I had this for years when I was struggling with the pain of overeating and my weight and not knowing how to feel my emotions. The amount of suffering I had around that was so insanely consuming I didn't even know how to talk about it with anyone else because I did not think anyone would understand what it was like to be me and to suffer so hard over something that seemed very kind of surface level and vain, which of course, the struggle, the tyranny of the overeating process and emotional eating is anything but vain. It's the deepest work I've ever done.

And I remember being in rooms where I just did not belong to the conversation. I couldn't pull myself into a present moment. I had another instance where I had a very painful breakup with a man that I was dating and the man that I was dating was not a good fit for me, this was not someone that I was going to spend my life with, this wasn't someone that my friends liked, it had no future.

But that breakup knocked me on my ass. It literally took my breath away the amount of pain I had around that breakup. And it's because I later realized there was a lot of unfinished work and trauma that I really needed to work through and understand from my childhood, from my life, from my experiences, from who I was, from my current identity.

And I remember going out to dinner with my friends and it's like I couldn't hear what they were saying. Their mouths were moving but I wasn't there. And I would hear myself having conversations with them but I was in so much pain I wasn't even there.

And I didn't feel like I could talk to them about it. I didn't feel like they could understand what I was going through. My pain didn't seem to make sense. I've talked to many clients who have had very similar situations. I've had clients who are being unfaithful to their spouses and they're in love with

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someone else and they don't want to leave their spouse, and they're in incredible pain over that.

I've had clients who've come to me who have been unfaithful to their spouse and have been lying to their spouse and then had a breakup from the person they were having the affair with, and they're going through the grief and pain of this terrible breakup with this person that they were in love with while they're still married.

That's one of those very deep secret pains that you can't talk about. Many of my clients, I am the only person that they have ever talked to about their secret pain. And the amount of despair that goes along with it because it is secret and because you can't talk about it is tremendous.

It's like you're going through the motions of your life like you're normal, you're getting up, you're going to work, you're taking care of your kids, you're talking to your spouse, you're talking to your friends, but you're not there. You're just in a place of tremendous pain.

And I will say, this emotional pain can be chronic and underlying or it can be acute and it can come and go. I have talked to many of my students who have physical pain, they have diagnoses and physical pain in their body so constantly that it creates a lot of mental suffering and they have the same experience where they feel like they can't be present, they can't have a conversation with someone because the only thing they want to talk about is their pain.

And they've already talked about it so much with so many people that everyone's kind of tired of hearing it. But you're still feeling it, you're still going through it. But nobody else wants to hear about how you're aching all the time. It's like old news to them, and so they feel so much shame around their own secret suffering.

And I think that is the part of the secret pain that is the worst is there's the pain but then there's the shame about the pain because it's a secret. So it

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is compounded and intensified. And let me tell you my friends, if you try to resist that pain, you almost can't even tolerate it.

The only way to deal with it is by trying to avoid it, and that's why we become disassociated from our lives. We become disassociated from joy. And we become almost obsessed with our secret pain. And for me, trying to solve it, and trying not to slip into despair, and trying not to buffer constantly to try to solve for it.

So here are some of the components that are usually associated with secret pain. There's the shame that's associated with it, but the shame of the pain of one of them is self-loathing. If you hate yourself because of any reason; for some of you that I've worked with, you hate yourself because of the way you look, you hate yourself because of your weight, you hate yourself because of the failure that you've done, or something you've done in your past, or something you haven't accomplished, or being alone.

The self-loathing is intense and there's so much shame associated with it because when you try to talk to friends about it or associates about it or family about it, they dismiss it as if it's not real and as if you shouldn't be doing that, you shouldn't be hating yourself.

And that is one of the things I want to tell you that is very important. When you are someone who is in secret pain and you want to heal yourself and you want to get out of it and you want to try and solve for it, one of the most important things to remember is this is not something that can be dealt with in a casual way with a friend in passing.

When you are in this kind of pain and you're reaching out for help, it needs to be very deliberate and I'm going to give you two really good ways to do that. But be careful, especially when it's self-loathing. If I go to a friend and I'm like, "I just hate myself," they're going to be like, "Stop doing that. Why would you hate yourself? Think positive. You're amazing, you should know that, you should embrace who you are. Girl, you're a badass."

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That's not going to solve this kind of secret pain. That self-loathing is coming from a deeper place that needs to be unwound within the mind. It is not something that we can just cover up with platitudes.

Another emotion that people have secret pain around is feeling trapped. This one I hear a lot. They feel trapped in their life that they don't want, they feel trapped in relationships that they don't want, they feel trapped in decisions that they've made in the past, they feel trapped in their lifestyle, they feel trapped in their jobs, they feel trapped by the people that they've chosen to spend their life with.

And that feeling of trapped, feeling trapped can create a lot of shame around it when you're not able to express it. And feeling guilty for feeling trapped, feeling shame for feeling trapped because you have such a great life and you should be thankful for your great job and you should be thankful for all the friends you have, but you may be hating yourself, or you may be hating your life, but you don't want to admit it so you just suffer silently. And then the shame on top of that compounds it.

The other emotion that I see a lot of you experiencing secretly is sadness. Feeling sad about what maybe somebody said to you, about maybe losing a loved one, about a missed opportunity, about something that you want that you don't have. And that sadness is under the layer of shame because you don't want to feel sad, you're pretending not to feel sad, but you genuinely are, and that sadness is not processed.

Another emotion that I see people suffering with secretly is humiliation. I'm feeling humiliated. Something happened that they associate something that they're feeling humiliated about, and it could be from their childhood, it could be from something that happened at work, it could be something that they've experienced with a friend.

And remember, it's very important to remember that we are creating these emotions with our mind. So a lot of times, when we explain a circumstance to a friend and we say this circumstance makes me feel humiliated, a lot of

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times they're trying to solve for that circumstance. They're trying to explain away the circumstance but that's never going to work because it's always the way we think about it and the way that we're making it mean something about us in our own lives that's making us feel humiliated.

And the last one that I see most common with secret pain is people feeling bad, like they are bad people. And this one is, I think, the scariest one for people who have secret pain because if you think you are a bad person, the amount of shame is excruciating.

And especially if you think you're a bad person and nobody knows it but you. It's like your own secret that you're bad. And again, I have clients who think they're bad because of things that they do. They're having affairs, they're stealing things, they're gossiping about other people, they're trying to hurt other people in a way, talking behind their back, saying things to them, doing things to jeopardize other people's relationships, whatever it is they're doing.

In no way do any of those things make them a bad person, and nor could they ever. But in their mind, they feel bad like they are not good. They are only bad. And if you've listened to this podcast for a long time, I like the thought that we're both good and bad, all of us. And we can embrace the things that we do negatively and embrace that part of our humanness, and love ourselves anyway.

But a lot of times we get caught in a spiral of thinking we are all bad and terrible, and the despair and shame around that is intense. So if you can relate to any of these, if you're feeling like you may be having secret pain, I'm going to give you two ways to start to deal with it, to start to heal it.

And the first way I want to offer is with a friend who you know loves you unconditionally. And there's something powerful about talking about secret pain out loud. Not casually, and not unplanned, and not when someone hasn't been prepared, but in a serious conversation.

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So it is very important that you talk to another human being who loves you about your secret pain. And I suggest that if you have a friend, if you have someone that you think would be good for this, you call them up or you send them a text or something and you say, “Listen, I need to talk to you about something that’s going on with me. I need your support and I need you as a witness to something I want to say out loud. Would you be willing to do this? Yes or no?”

And if they say yes, say, “Can we schedule a time?” And I would give yourself at least an hour. You may not use the hour, but give yourself - “Can we talk from two to three on Sunday? And I’d love it if it can be in person or on Zoom and I want to make sure that we’re not going to be disturbed and there’s going to be time for me to process what I’m going to tell you.”

And then you get on the phone and you explain to them very clearly, “I do not want you to try and fix what I’m going through, I do not want you to try and solve it, I do not want you to offer me any advice, I simply want you to listen to what I’m going through so it is no longer a secret. At least with you, it is no longer a secret. There is another person who understands the depth of this.”

Now, you may still feel as you’re going out into the world that it’s a secret from everybody else, but there will be at least one person that it isn’t a secret with. And in many ways, this will help release the shame. And once you release the shame around it by telling someone, then you can go through the process of processing the pain, the secret pain, and letting it go, and understanding it.

Now, you have to make sure that this person that you’re asking to do this will not judge you, will not cause you to make this worse by hiding more. So whenever I’m having a conversation with a friend, I say, “Hey, I’m telling you this because I need someone to be a witness to me who I know won’t judge me, and I can hear myself say this out loud to another human being and give it some daylight because it’s festering in shame inside of me.”

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That's option one. Option two, which I actually like even better is to hire a coach or a therapist. And to explain to them, in general, what's going on with you. "I'm having some secret pain, I haven't talked to anyone about it, I'm suffering quietly, I need to have a witness, I need to have someone hear me talk about it out loud, and I need someone to help me understand my mind around it."

If you ever hire a coach from The Life Coach School who's been trained and certified by The Life Coach School, or if you hire a coach who is in Self-Coaching Scholars, our Get Coached program, you will have a witness who can hold space, who has been trained to hold space for you and who has been trained to help you look at you.

They will not judge you. They will not give you advice. They will not tell you that you're good or bad or right or indifferent or try and talk you out of your pain. That is not the role of a coach. They will witness you and help you see your brain about it.

I also highly recommend for secret pain that you hire a therapist. A lot of times, our secret pain are our deepest wounds and we oftentimes need to go back in time and discover where we first started these to truly understand them.

Now, it doesn't mean that you can't heal without going back into the past. By understanding your current thinking about it, you can move on with your life and release secret pain. But sometimes working with a therapist and understanding the patterning that led up to this can be super helpful.

I would recommend, if you're open to it, hiring a coach, joining us in Get Coached, getting on the phone with one of our coaches and explaining it to them. And they are trained to know if they should recommend you to a therapist and if a therapist could help you further, or if they can actually help you and continue helping you in the session. So that is what I would recommend.

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And when you're in that coaching session, creating an opportunity to say your pain, to speak your pain out loud, to not have it be a secret, one of the worst parts of suffering quietly is always having to keep your mouth shut about it and pretending. And what you get to do in a coaching session is open up about it and talk about it and be in pain in front of another human being and have them acknowledge it.

That is a very powerful experience. It is what helped me get out of and understand all my self-loathing. Being able to look at my mind and see the thoughts that I had about myself never would have been possible if I didn't start talking about it out loud, if I didn't start acknowledging it, if I didn't give it air because it was constantly festering inside of me and I was pretending that everything was great and everything was wonderful.

That was a lot of my past but I will tell you, secret pain can happen to anyone at any time. Any humiliating or sad or trapped or bad or self-loathing or shame that comes your way that you don't want to acknowledge and you certainly don't want anyone else to know about will be secret pain. And let me tell you my friends, that secret pain will fester. It will not go away. It will chip away at your self-worth and your self-esteem completely unnecessarily.

Give yourself the gift of having a witness to your pain, of releasing it out of your mouth and giving yourself some space for it. You can heal it, but first you have to acknowledge it. You have to open up to it. And you don't have to tell your friends, you don't have to tell your family, you don't have to tell strangers.

But tell someone. Pick someone you trust. I highly recommend you hire a life coach or a therapist for your secret pain. And then get on the path to healing it.

The last thing I want to say about this is some of you are deeply afraid. You've told me this, you're deeply afraid that if you acknowledge your

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secret pain and if you let it surface, it will consume you and you won't be able to function.

So many of you have been functioning with this secret pain for so long that you think that avoidance is the answer to it and that it's just something you have to deal with. I promise you it's not. Secret pain can be healed.

It doesn't mean you have to change your behavior, it doesn't mean you have to change anything you're doing. We're not trying to fix a circumstance. We're not trying to stop you from doing something or start you doing something.

The only thing we're doing is helping you release the pain so you can make decisions from a clear mind and a clear heart that is full of worthiness, that acknowledges your self-worth, and acknowledge that you do not deserve to be in secret pain ever.

You do not deserve any kind of suffering punishment, I promise you that. So tell someone. If you are resonating with this, if this is something you know you need to do, I highly recommend you go to TheLifeCoachSchool.com/join.

Get into our Get Coached program and talk with one of our coaches who is trained to hold space for you. And you don't have to come through my program. It's just one of the ways that you can. Hire one of the coaches that has their own business who's been trained by us, or go to an excellent therapist, or talk to a very dear friend who's been prepared by you for the conversation.

You deserve to be free from your secret suffering. Have a beautiful week everyone. I'll talk to you soon.

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

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Judith: Hello, hello. Judith Gatton here and I'm bringing you another special interview with a dear friend of mine, Sara Fisk. I'm Judith Gatton, I'm a Master Certified coach and I'm a style coach for high-achieving women. And my dear friend Sara is going to introduce herself and tell you who she serves. Take it away, Sara.

Sara: Hi, I'm so excited to be here. I am also a Master Certified coach. I teach women how to stop people pleasing and perfectionating so that they can just get on with their lives.

Judith: I love it. And we are CCP sisters, which means we certified at the same time as life coaches way back in the day.

Sara: We did. And then we did Master Coach Training together as well.

Judith: We lucked out. We are both CCP sisters and MCT sisters, meaning we were in CCP and Master Coach Training together. So good. We lucked out, my friend. I really feel like we lucked out.

Sara: Totally. I love you so much.

Judith: But before you became a coach, you were actually a teacher and you also run this really amazing charity, which you don't always lead with so I'm just going to plug it for you because it's kind of central to a big part of the work that you do. So tell us about that.

Sara: It is. I was a teacher, I taught elementary school and loved it, then stayed home with my own kids. And then I served a mission for the church that I used to attend, the LDS Mormon church in the country of Bolivia. This is back in 1995 to 1997. I am Latina but I was really disconnected from the Spanish language.

And living in Bolivia for a year and a half really solidified Spanish for me and it was just a tremendous connection not only to my own language heritage but then to just a country in South America that is very different from Mexico. I am Mexican but this love and this connection for the people

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there and for what their culture and their life just really formed during that time.

And so now I work in Bolivia along with some of the other people who were missionaries at the same time and we formed a charity organization that serves primarily women and children who are extremely poor. And we work with orphanages, hospitals, and schools to really just do a little bit to make their lives better. And it is one of the joys of my life.

I get to go back, we haven't been back lately because of the pandemic but we travel every year. We find projects, we work with people in the country who really know what they're doing, and we get them the resources that they need to be able to implement what they know they need to help their fellow Bolivians.

Judith: Incredible. And I was like, we have to talk about this because I know your heart and I've obviously watched you over the years. Now you do coaching, but I think you've always been entrepreneurial and you've had this sense of how do I get resources to women and children. And I know one of the projects that you worked on, I think you really should tell the folks listening about it, is you help put some people through school if I remember correctly?

Sara: Oh my gosh. We've worked with an orphanage for quite a while now and the orphanage system in Bolivia is different in that there are no resources for children who age out. So once they're 18, they're kind of on their own. So we have been working with an amazing woman, her name is Marcela Cortes and she is on the board of this orphanage, but she also works relentlessly to inform the public and to deal with the problem of femicide, which is the killing of women.

And Bolivia has the highest rate of femicide in all of North, Central, and South America. And she decided after years and years of advocacy from outside of the system to take her advocacy really inside. And what she means by that is to have lawyers and social workers and police officers and

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those first responders to cases of violence in the home to be people that she has trained.

So to do that, all of these young girls who are aging out of the orphanage system, they want to become those social workers, police officers, lawyers, judges, and so we agreed to fund five years of education for each of them. That's about how long each of those careers takes in Bolivia.

And we have had amazing donations actually from LCS coaches who have donated toward that project and we have the first class I guess, or the first group of 40 of these young women who are all aging out of this orphanage system, and they are all in school now to become those people on the inside of the system who can actually help turn this problem around from the inside.

Judith: I have chills.

Sara: It's so amazing. It's so amazing. They're called Justicieras, that's the name they've given themselves. And you can hear justice in there, but the literal translation is vigilantes. Isn't that amazing? I love that. And they're so committed, they're so grateful, they are so - it's given their life a purpose and a meaning and a means to accomplish it because now they can actually get educated and achieve these degrees and careers. And so it's just been amazing.

Judith: That is so cool. And just to be your friend witnessing all the ripple effect of the change that you make in the world is kind of crazy pants, and I'm obsessed with you so I had to make sure we talked about that.

Sara: Thank you.

Judith: But I think what I see sort of central to your heart is helping women, empowering women. And I think that's what I see with your Stop People Pleasing too. Tell me a little bit about the population you serve in terms of your coaching and how you help them.

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Sara: So I grew up in a very conservative religion and I can both acknowledge that there were lots of gifts that came out of that, and there were some limitations. And one of the biggest limitations was just not understanding my sovereign humanness, and I was always taught to look outside of me for, are you doing it right? Are you doing enough? Are you doing the right things? Are you doing them the right way?

And so my young adulthood and into adulthood was really characterized by someone else telling me if I was doing it right in this kind of religious context. And so the women that I help, they don't necessarily have to come from a conservative religious background. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't.

But it was interesting for me to really understand that what I had experienced in my religious culture was actually part of the broader culture. It was part of patriarchy. And another thing you and I did together was Kara Loewentheil's feminist coaching certification. And that was the hugest eye-opener in terms of, "Oh, what I thought was just my little niche conservative religious corner is actually everywhere."

Because conservative religions, they just take patriarchy and they put it in God's mouth. And now God wants you to do all of these things like have a very traditional role for women that is in the home, with children, raising them, where you don't work, where you're dependent on your husband and defer to him in terms of decisions and big life things.

So it was simultaneously very eye-opening for me but also, it just infused me with this fire of, oh, this is every woman's experience who has been raised in a Western, capitalistic, patriarchal society where we are all taught to look outside of ourselves for value, for worth, for the feeling or confirmation that we're doing it right, whether it's good enough, or that people are happy with us.

So what that leads to is so much time worrying about what other people think, worrying if you've done enough, trying to make up for the times when

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you think you didn't do enough, trying to forecast future conversations where you don't think you're going to be able to say no to some kind of request that people make, feeling like you're selfish, feeling like you're not doing enough, feeling like there's always more you should be doing. That is every woman.

Judith: Yeah. But I think I just want to pull out one of those string of things that you said because I noticed - I think it's humans, particularly women because we coach women, but I think humans do this imaginary conversation in their head thing.

Sara: Yes.

Judith: The fake conversation where they rile themselves up and they're really pissed, but actually the conversation hasn't taken place yet.

Sara: Yeah. Or the conversation is they beat themselves up for what they should have said, should have done, didn't do. And this is one of my favorite questions to ask my clients and potential clients and everyone listening can do this.

Just think about the amount of time that you spend having those conversations, beating yourself up, wishing you had said something different, going back and replaying the conversation, worrying about future conversations that you don't want to have or don't know how to have, and it is hours. The average person tells me about three hours a day.

Judith: Oh, minimum. I woke up this morning and replayed a conversation I had in the fifth grade, I'm not even kidding you. In the fifth grade.

Sara: Yeah. So we're worrying, we're obsessing, we're criticizing, we're judging, we're replaying, we're ruminating. And if you take three hours a day times seven days a week, that's 21 hours a week, times 52 week a year, it's 1093 hours on the low end that our brain is just hemorrhaging energy because we're having conversations with ourselves, no one else is there, we're not actually solving any issues.

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And then that just compounds year over year over year into hundreds of thousands of hours that we as women are literally just hemorrhaging the very energy that we need to be able to create the life, the legacy, the juicy existence that I know we all really want.

Judith: So what's one thing, if they can walk away with one thing after this because I know everyone's thinking now all the hours they've spent and maybe a little dismay has come in, we've got y'all. We've got y'all. What's one thing we can do to maybe whittle away at that 1093 hours, oh my God?

Sara: Yes. When you feel it happen, there's a couple different ways you can experiment it but I'm just going to give you the way that I have found most helpful. Number one, so all of that ruminating is happening, appearing in your brain, right? I make contact with my body.

I put my hands on my chest and I take a big breath. Because I don't want to beat myself up on top of beating myself up. If I'm already having those in-your-brain conversations, I just want to notice, make contact with my body, take a deep breath, and then I want to tell myself something really loving and gentle like, "Oh mama, there you go, it's okay, it's alright, yeah, your brain has been doing that for a long time. It's okay, it's okay. But we're going to stop."

And then I use the power of my brain, which if I can just take a minute, that is something I will always be grateful to LCS for is they taught me - that's where I learned about the power of my brain and directing my thoughts on purpose to something that I choose to think, rather than just kind of letting it be taken away by my habitual thinking, which is where this conversation in our head is coming from that we're talking about.

So you focus on purpose on something loving and kind. "I know, no, it's okay, we're not going to do this anymore. What do we want to think about instead?" And you have to cut it off either lovingly or sometimes I just say, "Nope, no, no, we're not thinking about that today. We're not going to do that today."

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So either with a little more love or a little bit sassy nuh-uh, your choice. But cutting off that line of thinking I have found to be the most important thing that I have done for myself because it's me parenting myself, it's me parenting my brain and using the power of the focus of my brain to direct it on purpose to loving and being good to myself, rather than beating myself up and dwelling on what I think my inadequacies are.

Judith: Alright y'all, you heard it. Go practice that this week. Hand on your heart, my loving or sassy pants. I tend towards the sassy pants myself so try that this week. Get some of those 1093 hours back and if you want to continue this work with Sara, where can they find you, Sara?

Sara: I am on Instagram @SaraFiskCoach, Facebook, the same, and SaraFisk.Coach is my website.

Judith: That's what we have for you this week y'all. Stay tuned for some more amazing, quick, actionable episodes. We're out.

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