

Ep #120: How to Talk About Coaching Like a Human



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf, and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills*, episode 120.

To really compete in the coaching industry, you have to be great at coaching. That's why every week, I will be answering your questions, sharing my stories, and offering tips and advice so you can be the best at what you do. Let's get to work.

Hey, coach, welcome to the podcast. If this is your first time listening, I am so glad you're here. And today, we're going to talk about something, and it's going to be kind of a brief but important episode, let's put it that way. So I've been noticing this comes up a lot. People ask me this a lot. I see it in my groups, in the Coach Lab, and in just all the places.

And I know I've talked about it on the podcast before, but I didn't go back to listen to all those episodes and see where I talked about it and see how I talked about it because I'm pretty sure that in this moment, I'm going to give you a fresh perspective that maybe I didn't say before. Maybe I just know how to explain it in a different way. And I haven't done a podcast only on this. So, I think it's really important. So let's dive in.

I want to talk about how to talk about coaching like a human. And I'm going to give you some examples, and I have no notes, so I just want you to know, just give me a little grace. Anything I come up with, it's just on the spot, and just as I'm thinking through it when I give you some examples of how I would talk about coaching.

But here's why I think this is important to talk about. I see a lot of coaches talk about this when it comes to doing consults or sales calls, or even, especially in my work, in, like, the first call of a new coaching relationship. Or even a check-in on goals like when you're working with a client, right?

So, what that might look like, for example, a client might ask me, "How do I just tell them what coaching is?" Like if a client asks or if I'm on a consult, or how do I just – It always starts with "how do I just." Like very frustrated. How do I just tell them what coaching is? How do I describe it?

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And I am going to tell you some ways that I would describe it. But here are some reasons I think this is important because it shows up in so many aspects of a coaching business. It shows up in your marketing. It shows up in your coaching. It shows up in your, again, consults or sales calls if you do those.

One thing that happened for me recently that made me really want to dive into this is someone said to me just kind of offhandedly when I was with them in person a few weeks ago, they said, “But it’s different for you because you work with coaches. And so you don’t really have to think about what you can use like coach speak,” they said in quotes, “and your clients will still understand.”

And so I kind of took that with me and thought about it. And I want you to know, as a listener, as someone who may or may not have worked with me at some point or who is in my world, I actually put a lot of thought into this. I think about this when I’m writing emails. When I’m writing my sales page, I actually edit it for this, the copy on my website, on my sales page. And even though I work with coaches, I think about this inside my programs.

How do I explain this in the most simple terms, right? How do I explain this like I’m just talking to a bunch of humans? And I think it’s one reason that I kind of attract lots of coaches from all over the industry. I’m not using certain vocabulary or certain jargon, I think that’s the word, from any space in the industry, right? I’m just talking about what coaching is, from human to human.

One example I will give you of something that’s like outside of coaching, I want you to think about your physician, like your family physician, your family doctor. Or maybe your pediatrician or a doctor that easily comes to mind that you go to. And think about there’s probably a different conversation they’re having with their colleagues, or with drug reps, or with people in the office versus a conversation that they’re having with you, right, the patient.

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Because there are certain words, certain medical terms, certain medicine terms, all of that, that they can say to each other, that they will understand. But if they said it to you, depending on your background, you may understand some of it, but you may or may not understand what they're saying, right? You'll be like, whoa, whoa, hold on, what does that word mean? Or what does this word mean?

I want you to think about, I don't care who you coach, even if you coach coaches, I want you to think about how this shows up in your coaching. In the way, you interact with clients, in the way you market, in the way you write emails, just all of it. And even sometimes, I nitpick it to get very specific.

When I'm writing something, I will really dive into, oh, what does this mean? Even if it's on the verge of what I would call like coach speak, I will try to get more specific because I think it just lands in a different, more comforting way when you hear a coach talking about it like, yeah, it's not a problem, here's what we're doing.

They just make it sound so normal, versus a coach that is using terms that a client may or may not totally understand what they're saying, but they might be too embarrassed to ask, right? Like, I'm really good about if I'm in a situation where I don't know what's happening, I have no problem – Actually, this comes up sometimes in the Coach Lab or in my mastermind. My clients will ask me things, and they might use terms that I don't know of.

They might have skills that I don't have. They might have training that I don't have. Or they just come from a coaching background that uses certain terms that I want to be sure I know what they're saying. So I will pause them and say, can you just tell me what that is or say it in a different way because I want to be sure that we're on the same page.

Your clients might not do that. Some of them will. If they're like me, they'll be like, whoa, whoa, hold on. But some of them will just go along because you're the expert, you're the professional. If you're using these words,

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obviously, they're important. I want you to consider where you do this in all the places you show up as a coach, particularly in your coaching, especially if you work with all of the humans or humans that are a population outside of the coaching population.

And I will challenge you. I know I did an interview about this with Maren quite a while ago, so you can go find that episode. But I want to challenge you to think about how you can describe what coaching is like when you're talking to someone who has never heard of it before?

I've heard people ask this in other ways like you're talking to an alien. I actually don't think that's super useful, at least not for my brain, because I'm like, no, no, no, they wouldn't understand any of the words I'm saying, right? I just go down a whole different path. But just like you're talking to someone who's never heard of it, how would you describe it?

I think something that's very useful that I do sometimes in my house, I will just give her credit. My daughter she's 13, and she sometimes asks me questions about coaching. And she actually worked with a coach for a short time at one point. And describing it to her is very interesting because I have to use words that she understands. I have to use very non-coach terms.

So when you are stressing over this, right, and you're like, but how do I say it? You can ask yourself, how would I say it in 100 different ways, but also think about the times you've been coached. How would you just describe that? The experience of what happened, right? How would you say it in a way that you could explain it to your mom, your sister, or literally anyone in your life? You could even do this as an exercise. Hey, do you mind if I tell you what coaching is, and you just tell me if you understand?

The other place, actually, in my life that I do this, which is also very fun and challenging, but I'm up for the challenge, is my grandpa, who I've talked about on the podcast before because he's the one who came to Thanksgiving. And he is 90 or 91, I believe. And he is so confused about what coaching is. But he's interested. So he asks me all the time. And so

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every time I talk to him about it, I try to come up with a different way to say it.

One time, he goes – I may have told you this already on the podcast, but I'm going to say it again. He goes to lunch with a group of his friends every week. I think every Thursday. And he said, I was with him, and he said, "So I'm trying to explain to my friends what it is you do." This was a while ago, maybe like two years ago, or maybe even more. And he said, "I saw a commercial the other day for California Psychic. Is that it?"

I was like, oh, no. And let me see if I can explain it to you. So every single time I'm with him, he always asks me. So, okay, tell me what it is again. And I come up with a different way to say it every time. The most recent time he asked was actually not at Thanksgiving, but he was at my house a couple of days after Thanksgiving. Actually, I drove him home, so it was in the car on the way home. It was just the two of us.

And he said, okay, describe to me again what coaching is because he knows. He's like, I think you're doing really well. I think you're doing a good job. You must be great at what you do, and I still have no idea. And so I said, okay, you know how athletes have coaches, right? There's like a basketball coach. He was like, okay, yes. Now, I see where I confused him because the word is the same, so he's like, I know this isn't what you do. But then I said it's kind of like that. Life coaching is like that, but for someone's life.

And he was like, okay, so you tell people what to do? And I was like, no. I didn't even get into it, and that's not actually what I do anymore. I was just trying to explain to him life coaching in general or coaching in general. But I was like, no, no, I don't just tell people what to do, but I will guide them, train them, and give them tools and help them find things that work for them. Just like a basketball coach isn't going to just say, okay, now go out there and just shoot the basket and make the two points.

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And he was like, okay. And then I said, and you know how in sports, it isn't just an athlete's physical ability, there's like the mental piece of it, right? The way they think about themselves, the way they think about the training, the way they show up for their training, and the way they feel about themselves. And I went through this whole thing, and I don't know that it landed 100%, but we're like inching closer and closer.

So I think that this is just a skill to develop. And I think I take it for granted, kind of, because I think I just spend so much time on it. I literally think about it all the time. I challenge you if you feel like this is an issue for you, I challenge you to do the same. I also challenge you to consider if you're trained by a certain coaching body, to think about what terms of theirs do you use that don't apply to the whole industry.

So, for example, I have a certification from The Life Coach School, among other places, but I think most of you, even if you aren't certified through there, I just know so many coaches listen to that podcast, so you're familiar with the model.

So sometimes I'll hear coaches say, even to their clients, or I'll see it in their marketing, they're not marketing to coaches. And they'll say things like, this is a T, or this is a C, and they'll use letters. I know what that means. It stands for a thought or a circumstance or a feeling or whatever.

But your clients do not know what that is. They have no idea. That's like using shorthand or abbreviations as a physician, right? It's like you can say that to another physician that is trained in the same thing that you are, but everyone else outside of that isn't going to understand.

So when you think about coaching, and this is the part where I'm just going to give you some ways that I think about it and the ways I used to tell my clients, like, this is what I do. I would literally narrow it down to the most simple way. And then I would just let them ask questions, right? I think that's another thing that gets in the way, are you thinking, oh, I have to tell them everything about what it is.

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I would just say, oh, my clients hire me to help them create the life that they want to live. Even that's a little like coach speak, right? Or they set goals, and I help them work towards them. Or we talk about, like, what is the experience you're having in your life right now in all the areas? And what's the experience you want to have, and how do we get there? Or I help you change things that you don't love in your life. Some of these are so simple. I challenge you to just come up with those things for yourself, right?

Now, if I say I help you change things in your life that you don't love right now, and they're like, oh, that's interesting. How do you do that? I might then explain a little deeper, right? I might say, well, every day you go about your life, you're having all these thoughts, you're having all these feelings, and you're taking action, of course, like moving throughout your day. And that's creating certain results.

And all of that, mixed together with all of the outside influences going on around us, creates the life that you're living, right? It creates the experience that you're having every single day. All of those factors if we change any of them, the outcome is going to be a little different. So if we change the way you think about yourself, the way you think about your day, the way you think about your life, the way you think about people in your life, it's going to change the outcome.

If we change just the way you want to feel every single day, or if we change like you're going to have more confidence or you're going to have less anxiety. Those are going to change the outcomes of your day-to-day life. And then every single day, when you add those up, it's going to create a different result down the road.

Now, obviously, you can modify any of this for whatever your niche is. This is applicable for any niche. It does not matter what kind of coach you are, right? You could say the same thing about business. You could say the same thing about relationships, marriage, nutrition, or any of it.

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Then the other piece is, so that's like just the general coaching piece. And then, for some of you, you might have a specific strategy that you use in your coaching. You might say, I help you change your relationship with your partner. And they're like, oh my gosh, how do you do that? And then you kind of go down the road that I just did, right, and explain some of the things. And then you might say, I use a specific tool called blah, blah, blah. And then you describe it.

Or I can help you change your financial situation. I'm a finance coach, and I help you change the way you think about money, the way you interact with money, and the way you feel about money every single day that, down the road, creates a brand new result around money in your life. And then they're like, oh, that's so interesting. Do we do budgeting? Like what does that look like?

And if you have strategies that you use, that's where you would say, yeah, I use QuickBooks, and I give my clients a template, and you just enter all your things. And I do help you with that piece. But it's not just that because we're also going to talk about all the times you're thinking about money every day, all the ways you're feeling about it, blah, blah, blah, you just go down that line.

If you think that this sounds, oh, this is so simple, Lindsay, you're just saying it because you've practiced it so many times. That is true. I have practiced it so many times. And I've been willing to get it wrong, over and over and over. And I encourage you, if you are a coach that feels like you're in this space, or even if you've been a coach for a long time, but you have something new, you have a new offer, a new group, a new program, a new whatever it is, how do you say that in totally normal human speak in 100 different ways?

How do you explain it to your kids? How do you explain it to your partner? I used to practice, you can ask my mom. I used to say, "Mom, here's what coaching is. Let me tell you." Now, first, I was so excited about it, right? Because I had just figured it out and I wanted to tell everybody. But she

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was such a good mirror for me, like, is she understanding what I'm saying? This is interesting. Let me just gather clues from all the people in my life when I explain it.

And maybe start wherever it feels safest. Maybe you have a two-year-old, and they're not going to understand what you're saying no matter what, but you can practice saying it out loud to them, right? If you're like, oh my gosh, I can't imagine saying it to my partner or my mom, and then just keep working up. Go to the next person, okay, let me explain it to them. Let me explain it again to my thousands and thousands of podcast listeners. Let me explain it again to the hundreds of people already in my program.

I just don't think that it's ever a waste of time to consider how to do this and to use this skill. And I even challenge you to go find all the places in your emails, in your sales pages, in all of those places where you use terms that aren't specific, right? Or that someone might read and be like, what does that mean? Like if you say, live your best life, okay, what does that mean specifically? Most people don't know.

I know you think they do because you've been in the self-development world, but most people are not. So you have to think about that, right? What does that mean? If you use words like transformation or breakthrough, or I could keep going, any words like that, I would just get curious. How can I change these to words so that any person would understand?

How to use this in your first calls, right, is like instead of, okay, what are your goals? Let's think of your future self. Clients don't know what that means. Don't say future self. Let's think of you one year from now. What do you want her to look like? What's the experience she wants to have, right? Just use words that people are like, oh, okay, I get it.

All right. I know that this was a little bit of a soapbox, a little bit just like, let's not do that. But I think, as an industry, this is like an epidemic. I see it everywhere. And when I see it, it's like I can't unsee it. I'm like, oh, it's here,

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and it's here, and it's everywhere. I promise you. Your clients will get better results. They'll feel more comfortable working with you. And your marketing will make way more sense to people. They won't have to hear it nearly as many times before buying.

All right. Thank you for being here, and I will see you again next week. Goodbye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Mastering Coaching Skills*. If you want to learn more about my work, come visit me at lindsaydotzlafoaching.com. That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.