

Ep #121: The Pursuit of Mastery



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With Your Host

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills*, episode 121.

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. I am so excited you're here today. I want to talk to you about something today that I think is so important. I see it so often in the coaching world and I see it a lot of times in my spaces. And I didn't know that this was one of the reasons, like I don't think I knew in the moment when I was creating some of my spaces like the Coach Lab, that this was something that I was really trying to help coaches with. But now that I see it, I can't stop unseeing it. And I just think it is so important when it comes to being a great coach, right? Like being an excellent coach.

And my guess is that you have done this at some point and may or may not be doing it right now. And we're just going to talk about it. And if you're like, "I never do this, because I'm amazing and this isn't a thing that I have to work through." First, you're probably wrong, I bet you're doing it somewhere. Everybody does it, even I do it. And also, totally fine. You can also use this when you're thinking about your clients. All right?

So what I want to talk about is how we think about skills and how skills are supposed to be developed. And how we use it against ourselves when we are working on something, when we're working on being great at something, or working towards mastery in an area or being an expert, and how specifically that shows up in coaching.

And again, I see this so often. I coach on it all of the time. I see it in the Coach Lab, which is my more foundational type program. And then I see it all the way into my certification, which is my newer offer. If you're listening in real time, it's my newer offer and we are a few calls in and it's even come up in that space.

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So what I want to talk about is how when you are learning a skill or specifically focusing, maybe you're not even learning it for the first time, but you're just focusing on something and you're focusing on being really good at it, this thing happens where you learn it and then you think that maybe you're supposed to be done learning it or you're supposed to be on the other side of it.

And so then every time after a certain point that you've determined is the end point, every point after that, then when you're like, oh, I see this thing, or here I am working on this thing again. And it becomes this like, again, with some shame attached to it, or some emotion that is similar to shame, right? Some experience that you're having that is similar to shame or judgment of yourself. Like, oh, I have to do this again, or I shouldn't have to do this. A lot of times it will sound like a should or a shouldn't.

So I'm going to give you some examples and tell you kind of what it creates when you're doing it so that hopefully you can notice it. And I'm just going to say, if this is something you find yourself working on a lot, 100% you should be in the Coach Lab. You should join us immediately because this is why I created it.

There's so much coaching that happens in there. And obviously this isn't 100% of the reason I created it. But there's so much coaching that happens in there that's like, let's just set the shame aside or the judgment aside or whatever and just tell me what's going on. Tell me what you're working on because we can definitely solve it.

So some examples that I see are, oh, you know, for example, sometimes my clients will identify, oh, I'm working on this specific thing in my coaching. I want to be really better at setting really intentional, clear goals or intentions with my clients upfront so that they know exactly what they want to work on and we're all clear.

And so they might go try it. But then they'll try one or two times and they'll think like, oh, I should be better at this by now. Or before they even, maybe they see it but before they even start to work on it, it can just become like, I

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shouldn't be working on this. Like maybe I've been a coach for a while or I know better than this, or something along those lines. And this shows up in just so many spaces, right?

It can show up even in consults or sales calls where you're like, I should have done this differently or I should know better by now, right? Or in your coaching where maybe – This is something I see that I coach on kind of often in my programs, maybe you notice that you recognize you're a better coach or a better teacher, right?

Usually in my spaces it comes up where people are like, "I know I'm really good at teaching my clients things. And then I get kind of stuck in the coaching piece," right? And I'm like, okay, well, that's not a problem. First of all, how amazing that you're a great teacher, this is going to come in really handy sometimes. Now, let's look at exactly where you want to be doing, kind of more coaching and more asking questions, and more holding space for your clients, versus the teaching, right?

My favorite thing to start with is, it's not a problem, but now that you see something you want to improve, okay, let's just start there. How are we going to improve it? Right? Let's just face it head on. It creates so much more forward momentum and so much more improvement than adding the shame and the judgment on top.

So I'm sure I've mentioned this on the podcast before, and if you've been around for a while you've probably heard me say this, but I'm obsessed with Lizzo. I love her. I'm in love with her, whatever. I'm just totally obsessed. And I love everything about her. If you haven't watched her Netflix, I think it's a Netflix documentary, it might be on something else. I think it's called Loved Lizzo, definitely go do it.

But anyway, recently she posted, and I wish that I had taken a screenshot or saved it or shared it, or however it works. But she posted this thing on Instagram and it was in her stories, so you can't go see it now. But it said something along the lines of I feel so incredible about getting recognized

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for XYZ. It was like some praise that she had received in a write up or somewhere.

And she said, “This just feels so special to me, because I’ve spent the last year working so hard on this skill,” right? And it was like a specific vocal skill. And then the review or write up or whatever it was, praised her for that thing.

And I just want you to think about that for a second because if Lizzo, who is incredible and clearly at this point at the top of her game, is still taking time out to focus on a specific skill, right, she can identify, oh, I can see this thing that maybe needs a little work. I can see where this vocal thing, where I could work on this, hire someone to help me with this, right? Like put my time and attention here.

And she doesn't mean that she's doing it wrong now, or that she's doing a bad job, or that she should know better. She just identifies it and says, okay, now, moving forward, I'm going to work on this. If Lizzo can do it, we can all do it. And this is how I would love for you, for all coaches to think about their coaching.

What if the pursuit of excellence or mastery or whatever you want to call it is constant? Not in a way that it has to always take all of your time and attention, but in a way that it will always be evolving. And I think when you can see that and lean into it, instead of judging it or adding whatever other emotion on top of it that isn't useful, that doesn't move you forward, the faster you can see that, the faster you're going to work on the thing, right?

It's like way faster to just identify it and say, “Oh, here's exactly what it is. Now I'm going to go work on this.” So sometimes people will come to me in the Coach Lab, and they'll say, “Well, I just want to be a better coach.” I'm like, “Great. What does that mean? Like, tell me specifically, what does that mean?” And a lot of times, this is totally fine, but a lot of times they've actually never really thought about it. They just have this running thought in their head that's like, “I just want to be a better coach.”

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And when I ask them what that means, they kind of draw a blank or they're like, "Well, I don't know, let me think about it." But then when they can identify, okay, sometimes they can't even identify it then, right? And then I'll kind of give them the assignment of like, okay, well evaluate, right? We do evaluations in the Coach Lab. And I say go evaluate some of your coaching and see where you want to improve.

I have been doing this recently with videos and I'm about to start creating some webinars and some trainings and I am getting ready to do this, right? I'm going into it. I'm taking some of my own medicine and reminding myself that, of course, I'm not good at these things.

I have not done very many of them. So there's going to be a learning curve, it's totally fine. Even when I think I'm doing a great job, I will probably still be questioning, oh, how could I do it better, right? What's the next thing I want to work on? What's the next thing I'm going to learn?

I do this, for example, while still in my coaching. I'm always refining my processes and looking at, you know, if I think about it, for example, right now there are videos in the Coach Lab. There's a whole vault of videos that is available to you immediately when you sign up.

I can see now after it's been almost a year, not quite a year that I've had the Coach Lab open. And I am starting to see now, oh, here's what I'm missing, right? Like here are some gaps in the things that I teach. How can I say this better? How can I rethink this? How can I make this more clear?

There are hundreds of people in there. I don't make it mean, oh no, I've been a terrible coach for those hundreds of people this whole time. I just make it mean, oh, this is about to get better and better and better. So, I want you to think about this. Where are you doing this?

And here's what I see happen if it happens, you know, when I'm in this or when I see it happen for my clients, here's what happens. So they identify something, right? And they're like, oh no, I need to work on this thing. And then they think, I shouldn't have to work on this thing, or I should already be

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better at this, or I should already know better. Whatever that thought is. There's a thought that happens or a stream of thoughts or whatever.

Then they experience an emotion that is something similar to shame, or frustration, or disappointment in themselves, or judgment. And then, so there's a discomfort there, right? And so then when they feel that discomfort, a lot of times what I see a lot of coaches do is then they just push it to the side. Oh well, I'll think about this later. Or, oh well, I can't look at that right now. Or like, it feels too big, I don't even know where to start. Or some kind of this is bad, so let me not focus on it.

And then from there, they kind of go in circles, right? They go back to the beginning. Okay, well, if I don't know how to be better at this thing and it feels really uncomfortable to look at it and I don't want to feel this shame, I'm just going to maybe change my process so I'm not doing that thing anymore.

Or I'm going to just decide that it's totally fine, I don't need to help my clients create clarity with their goals in the beginning of a coach relationship, right? Like, that's fine. We don't really have to do that, my clients are getting fine results.

I see it handled in many different ways. Either justifying or thinking, oh, it's not really that important right now, but it's still kind of playing in the background. Or, okay, let me go and change things. But what happens then is every time they get to that same spot where they're like, oh, I see this thing coming up again, then that shame comes back, right? Or the judgment, or the disappointment, or whatever it is, that emotion comes back.

So it doesn't ever actually fix the problem. It just stays in this cycle of, oh no, this is bad. Now I feel bad. I'm going to add my shame or whatever on top of it and just pretend like this isn't a thing that's happening. Versus what I'm suggesting is you see the thing, right? You're like, oh, I see this thing or I see these certain clients aren't getting results. Why not? Let me look at it. Let me face it head on and solve for it. That's so different.

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No shame at all needs to be added on top. There is nothing wrong with you learning ever. Every profession is like this. Every professional human who's out doing their work in the world has seen ways that they can improve, right? That they're like, oh, I see this isn't quite working. Let me do it differently. Let me think about this. Let me focus on this. Let me really hone these specific skills. Wouldn't that be so different for you if that was the experience you had in your coaching?

Maybe you notice that something is coming up with lots of clients. Like, oh, for some reason my clients keep getting really defensive. For some reason my clients keep rescheduling all of their calls. For some reason, you know, dot, dot, dot, like, whatever the thing is that's showing up. And I see this happen, of course, with my clients in all different areas.

And one of the things that I've been doing in these first couple of calls of the certification, the advanced certification that I just launched, is that I told them from the beginning, and you may have heard me talk about this, or I was posting about it on Instagram. I kind of told them from the beginning, this is the place where you just bring it. You bring all the things and we're going to unpack it all with no shame. And if shame does come up, or if whatever emotions come up, that's totally fine. We're going to work through them.

But what I see happening for them, and mind you, this is in my certification. These are coaches that have been coaching for a while a lot of times. What I see happening is just kind of a relief coming over them like, oh, I just put it out there. I just said the thing. I think that I'm bad at this thing, or I think that this thing is kind of getting in the way between me and my coaching process, and I haven't known how to address it so I just keep avoiding it.

Or this thing is coming up with my time management skills and I'm judging myself for them. And I'm never really solving them, I'm just going to keep judging myself and avoid it, right? Like whatever it is. And it's so interesting because in these spaces, what I see as the coach is it doesn't matter if we're in the Coach Lab, if it's in the certification, it doesn't matter which

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space it is, it happens at every single level to so many of my clients in some way or another.

So the way I'm talking about it at this moment might not be exactly how it shows up for you. But there probably is somewhere where this does happen. Maybe you're better at avoiding it or like not adding tons of shame to it, but still just like not working on the thing or thinking that you shouldn't have to, or that it's bad that you have to focus on your skill. But what I see, no matter which space I'm in, is just on the client side I see so much relief. Even if emotion comes up with it, it always is followed by relief of like, oh, I just said it, perfect.

And then the other thing I notice, and this is always in a group setting, so the other people that are watching the coaching, there's always so much nodding happening, right? So when you're the one that's in that space, when you're like, "Oh, this is so terrible. There's this shameful thing that I'm doing," or whatever, a lot of times it can feel very lonely. Like, obviously, I'm the only human who would think this about my coaching or I'm the only coach who's making this mistake.

What I know from watching so many people get coached in a group is that is literally never true. And I know this because so many of the other people in the space will be nodding along. And you can see that they're like, oh my gosh, I'm so glad that you brought this up, or I'm so glad that you asked this. Even if it's not their exact thing, usually, I can tell that they can really relate to what's happening, right, to like what the coaching is.

So I invite you, first to come join us in the Coach Lab because we have a lot of fun. And we talk about all the things and we coach on all the things, and we just lay them out there and just get them out in the open so that we can work on them, when you want to, right? I can't force you to do any of this, but I do invite you. I invite my clients to do that.

And we coach on all of these, we get all of it out and I just think it's so fascinating to always see whenever anyone posts in the group or when someone gets coached on this, when you can just see other people either

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commenting or physically nodding along like, yes, I've had this too. I think that's one of the most powerful things about being in a group space, when you're all kind of working on similar things. And maybe your exact thing isn't everyone else's exact thing, but everyone has something similar, right? So I invite you to do that. Come join us.

And if you are already in there, or if you're like, nope, it's just not for me and I'm just going to listen to your podcast, that's also perfect. If that's the case, then just ask yourself, where is this showing up and why am I doing it? Why do I think that staying in that, like feeling the shame, feeling the disappointment, judging myself, how do I think that that's keeping me safe?

Because that is probably what's happening, is your brain is just like, here's the safer option. If we feel the shame, we don't have to feel the discomfort of solving for the thing, right? We don't have to do the thing that in the moment possibly feels just a little scarier, or a little harder, or like it's going to take more effort. So instead, I'm going to circle back and just judge myself, or shame myself or whatever.

And wouldn't it be amazing if you just didn't ever have to do that because you just knew that every coach at every level is, just like Lizzo, always working on something, right? There's always something.

And if you're like, "I don't know, I don't think there is always something. I'm just good. I never have to learn another skill ever again," then you may have just come to the wrong place because that's what we're talking about here just all the time. Hopefully that's not the case, but just in case. I love you. I'm so glad you're here and I'll see you 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.