

Ep #133: When You Don't Feel Like an Expert



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With Your Host

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlafl and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 133.

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 glad you're here today. I have been thinking about you. And here's what I mean by that, I have been creating content for webinars and masterclasses. And I notice every time I do this, it's really funny because my brain always goes straight to, "But I have to tell the people on the podcast."

So I just want you to know I'm always thinking about that, you always benefit from it because whenever I'm preparing material, whether it's for inside of my spaces or for something like a masterclass or a webinar, I'm just always thinking of you. And there's always this thought, that's something along the lines of, "This must go on the podcast. I can't just create this thing and talk about it over here, but not tell them on the podcast."

So I just want you to know, I'm thinking of you, I love you. And here we go. I'm going to talk about something today that I see show up all the time. I'm sure I've talked about it in previous episodes, but I really want to dig into this today because I think it's something that is very important for all coaches, like literally at every level.

And what I want to talk about is the difference between you being an expert at something and including that in your coaching, versus thinking that you have to be a coach that can solve your client's every problem and have a solution or a strategy for every single thing they bring you. I see this come up with so many of my clients. We work through this a lot, especially in The Coach Lab and in my other spaces too.

But definitely in The Coach Lab this is something we talk about, because it's really important because I see coaches a lot of times thinking, having

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the thought, even if it's really sneaky, even if it's like buried under there, their thought is something like the coaching isn't enough. My client needs more. I need to be doing more. I need to be solving their problems or answering every single question.

And for some of you, this is the thing that you do. Some of you teach strategy on certain things because you're an expert at it. I've talked about this so much on the podcast, right? You might have a strategy because you're an expert at something. Maybe it's nutrition. Maybe it is you have special relationship skills that you have learned somewhere. Maybe it's meditation or Reiki. Maybe it is family dynamics, right?

Maybe you're an expert at something, whether it's through education, or your background, or a job that you have done, a career that you had prior to coaching. And this is amazing, so I just want you to know I'm not saying don't use these skills in coaching, because of course you should use these. And they are what will set you apart from some other coaches, if that's what your client is looking for.

But what I want to address today is when a coach thinks that they have to solve every problem or they have to be the solution or have a solution for every problem or every single thing that comes up for their clients. And I'm going to give you some examples of what this might look like, some really specific examples.

So let's say you're a general life coach and your clients come to you with anything that they want coaching on. And maybe they bring scheduling issues. I've talked about this specific thing even on the podcast before. Maybe they come to you with scheduling issues and they're like, "I want to be better with my time. Teach me your scheduling system." And you as the coach are like, "Oh, I don't have one."

But instead of just telling them that – And don't worry, I'm going to tell you what to do instead. So don't panic if you're like, "Okay, Lindsay, we get it. But what do we do?" I'm going to tell you exactly what to do.

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But in this scenario, maybe you're like, "Oh no, I don't really have one. So let me just make up something." This is something some of you do, I know it is because I see it happen. Or let me get off the call and think, "Oh no, I need a solution for that." So you Google it, right? You're like let me Google the solution or Google scheduling methods. And then you come back to the next call and you're like, "Okay, I have it. Here we go, let's do this."

Or you follow maybe another coach, who that really is their area of expertise. For whatever reason, like scheduling, they've created lots of intellectual property. It's all they spend their time thinking about and so you're like, "Okay, well, let me just use that, use their method, this will be perfect."

Another example might be maybe you're a parenting coach and your clients come to you with parenting issues and you do the same thing, right? You're like, oh no, I don't know how to solve this. So let me make something up or just give them something like, "I don't know, here's what I do," or "Here's what I think the solution is." But you say it in a way that you're like, this is the solution.

Or, again, you get off the call and you immediately Google it. Oh no, what thing could I give them? What could they use? What strategy could they use? I see this a lot, lot, lot. And I'm not calling you out, I say this with so much love. I see it a lot with business coaches, because a lot of coaches sometimes go down this road where they think the path to like the money in coaching is business coaching and it's the only way, which isn't true. I've talked about this on another episode. So go find that and listen to it.

It's definitely not true, but I think where a lot of business coaches kind of get stuck and get in their head is when their client is like, "Right, I get it, okay, coach my thoughts, but how? Tell me how. How do I do it? What's the strategy?" And if you haven't built a very successful business yourself or if you don't know a strategy, then you can go and do exactly what I was saying before, right?

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Maybe you're like, "Well, I follow these other business coaches. They seem to know what they're doing, so I'll just teach that." Or let me Google how to set up funnels and then I'll teach my client that.

And I know I'm kind of laughing about this, but I just want you to know, hopefully, this feels reassuring, for those of you that are like, "Oh no, I do this." Hopefully it will feel a little reassuring to know, so many coaches that I see, so many coaches that I work with, do this. And I always know it's coming from the thought that just the coaching alone isn't enough.

So hopefully, we're going to work on that today in this episode. And I will give you a solution, like I said, of what to do instead. But first, I want to address what happens when you do this, when you don't believe coaching is enough and so you either make up a solution or a strategy, or you tell your clients to use one that you have never used, you don't know for sure if it works, or that you're just not an expert in.

What can happen is that then, okay, now the client is going to go try that thing, right? Let's say you are like, "Here is how you build funnels," because you Googled it after the last call. And so you come back, you're like, "I'm now an expert. Here's how you do it." And you teach your client what you learned in your research over the last week or whatever.

And you teach them and then you're like, "Ta-da, go do this, and then come back, we'll see what happens." And then your client comes back the next week and they're like, "Okay, I did the things. I did the steps that we talked about, and it didn't work." Or, "It didn't work and I'm not sure why," or "Here's what happened," right?

Because as coaches we know, most of us know truly, that usually when we're helping our client with something, when we're giving them a solution to something, it's rarely just going to work out of the gate. Sometimes it does, or sometimes it will start to work, right? But it rarely is just like one week and, okay, I've figured it out.

But you forget that, I think, when you're thinking I should be an expert at this, I don't know why it's not working. So let's say you do this, your client

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comes back and they're like, "Oh, okay, well, it didn't work" or "Here's what went wrong."

For you as the coach, what can happen in that moment, like this feels like where it gets really sticky and where it can really start to affect your confidence as a coach, just because I know, I've seen it with so many of my clients. Because then you don't know where to go from there, usually.

Once you've gone down, like you've gone all in on a strategy and you've really gone down that road and here you are, now your client believed you that you're an expert at this thing, that you know what you're talking about. And then they come back and they're like, it didn't work. It's really hard to stay out of the pool with a client or to not believe all the things that they're saying when you don't fully understand or know what it is that you're trying to teach them, right?

When you don't have a really strong understanding of the strategy that you're using, it's really hard to coach someone from that space when they're looking to you for just answers and actions, right? So they might come back and say, "Okay, well, I tried to build the funnel the way you taught me to, the way you explained it. But here are all the things that went wrong."

What is going to happen, what can happen – It doesn't always happen because some coaches, some of you catch it, right? And you're like, "Oh, shoot, okay, well, let's go down this other path." But what happens with some of you is that you're like, "Oh no." It puts you in a constant state of now I have to problem solve this for my client, right? And then they go try the next thing and then they come back, okay, it didn't work or it did work, but here's what happened or whatever.

And because you're not an expert in it, it always puts you in this constant cycle of like, oh, no, let me go learn the next step or figure out what the problem is or dig deeper. Like spend your whole week as the coach, instead of just lovingly coaching your clients, spending your whole week as the coach learning about funnels or learning about whatever it is.

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I'm just using funnels as an example. Most of you, as coaches, probably know what that is and have been in this space thinking about funnels or even just wondering what funnels are or whatever. So that's why I'm using that example.

But it can put you in the space of like, oh no, just always I don't know what I'm doing. Going to figure it out, and then coming back to your client the next week, and it can keep you almost chasing your client. I don't know if that's the right way to say it, but you probably understand what I mean, right? You're trying to keep up with their actions with more strategy.

Or you don't find more strategy and you just keep using the same one over and over and over and it keeps not working. And your client is very frustrated. And you're very frustrated. And I think, as a coach, one of the tricks or tips I would give you just of being an amazing coach is two things. One, to believe the coaching is the most important piece. And two, to make sure that you feel like an expert at what you're doing.

So sometimes there might be times where you're learning or practicing some coaching skills. But what I would suggest is that you can always be an expert at something. You can always find something, even if it's like, oh, I'm an expert at creating awareness of where my client is in this moment, right? There's always a piece of it that you can be an expert at, right?

You can be an expert at holding space. You can be an expert at just really being a sounding board for your client. You can be an expert at helping your client set big goals and dream big, right? All of those things are things you can be an expert at, and they are enough. Period.

When you start thinking they're not enough, I need more. I need to be an expert, especially those of you that are general coaches, thinking I need to be an expert at every single thing, that's not always a great path to go down because it's impossible, right? It's actually impossible to be an expert at every single thing. I hate to break it to you. If I'm the first one that has told you this, I'm sorry. I know it's rough, but it's true.

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Now, as you've been a coach for a while and you start developing your skills and maybe you become more niched and you find something that you're like, "This is all I want to coach on, this is all I want to talk about," you'll become more and more of an expert at it. And eventually, you will create strategy, you will have like, here's how I did it, or here's how I would teach my clients to do it. And you will create that over time.

But even then, I think it's so good to remember that coaching is the most important piece when you're a coach. It makes so much sense, right? But in the moment, for some reason, some of you forget it and it just feels really bad. And it just takes you totally out of your expert energy, totally out of your confidence as a coach, and it has the client questioning you because you're questioning you, right? You're questioning yourself.

And there's just a lot of doubt happening on all sides. And that's a really tricky space to be in as a coach. It's also a little tricky to turn it around, because once you've really gone down that road of here's how you do it, here are the steps, here's the strategy we're going to use, then it can be a little tricky to come back and say like, okay, hold on, let's reframe this. Maybe this isn't what we're going to use. And then the client might say like, wait, what? I thought that's what you told me to do. I thought this was the solution.

So what I would recommend doing instead, is to really lean into the client-centered approach to coaching, which is what I teach in The Coach Lab. And I think it's really, really an important skill to have in coaching, where a lot of coaches think either I have a strategy that I teach my clients.

So we'll use, again, like a business coach, right? I have a business strategy that I teach my clients. Or I'm a mindset coach for business owners or for whoever, entrepreneurs. And if I'm a mindset coach for entrepreneurs, I do no strategy. But my solution would be somewhere in the middle.

And to first be very clear with yourself which one you are, right? Do I have a strategy for this? Am I an expert at this? Or am I, do I lean more like coaching on mindset, on thoughts and on feelings and what's happening in

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your body and embodiment, right? Like any of those pieces I would consider that human experience piece of the coaching and overall coaching all of the humanity parts of coaching. Do I do that?

Which is amazing and enough, but there is going to be, no matter which side you coach on, there's going to be a part where a client is like, "Okay, but what actions do I actually take?" And instead of going to the place in your mind where you're like, "Oh, I have to know an answer to this," I would turn it around to the client and say – I say this all the time, even now. In my mastermind, in my certification, I say this all the time. I actually don't know the answer to that, but let's explore it.

Let's just come up with some solutions. How do you want to solve this? How do you want to move forward? What are the actions you want to take? And I really help the client explore it. Instead of me saying, "Here's the perfect right answer. Go do that."

What you miss out on when you do that, is it the right answer for that client? Sometimes it might not be. Or does it make the most sense for the specific thing that client is trying to create, the specific results that client is trying to create right now? Is it kind of personalized to the client? There's so much more room and space to personalize something when you are turning it back around and helping the client find the solutions on their own.

And I'm not saying there's never a time to say, well, here's something I've tried, or here's something that I know my friends use, or that my colleagues teach or whatever. But there's a difference between thinking I have to be the expert at this, I have to have all the answers, and so just answering like you are the expert and like it is the answer. Versus, I don't know, let's explore this together.

And then saying, okay, now which direction do you want to go? Which one do you think makes the most sense for you? What do you want to try first, right? Like asking so many more questions, being so much more curious, it opens so much space for coaching and for curiosity and asking great questions, which, of course, is the heart of coaching, right?

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And the client is going to be so much happier when they try something that they are totally on board with from the beginning than they are if you are just kind of making up solutions and then they're trying it and they're not really, like this isn't maybe the one they would have picked to begin with. And now it's kind of feeling bad. And then they're coming back to you and like I thought that was the answer. And it just kind of creates a whole wonky experience of coaching. I don't want that for you. I don't want it for your clients either.

Then there's the piece where sometimes you are the expert at something, you do have a specific strategy, and maybe a client comes and says, okay, I know that you're the expert at, let's say, funnels, right? Or let's say, I know you're an expert at Facebook ads, but I want to hire you and I don't want to build a business running Facebook ads. Then you, as the coach, get to decide, okay, is this a client I would take or isn't it.

And I think just owning it, like here's the thing, because in my opinion there's no right or wrong solution to most things, right? There's just the solution that works. So, for example, I teach coaching skills. I teach specific ways to coach. I know there are people, some of you out there, even some of you listen to my podcast because every once in a while you let me know that you disagree with me.

I know that there are people that are like, "No, that's not true, here's how you do it instead." But in my opinion, they aren't wrong. But also I'm not wrong. It's just like, this is what I teach. This is how I approach coaching, I have a very client-centered approach. If that's not for you, that's great. I'm just not the coach for you.

So just consider that. No matter where you are in your coaching, so if you're a brand new coach I want you to consider that. Like feel it in your body when you get to the place of the coaching is enough. The coaching is the absolute best part. Anything else that I add into it or that I bring to the table, maybe you are an expert at something else, maybe you do have strategies that you teach, anything else is like a cherry on top, right? It's just like extra.

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And not only is it extra, I think I don't want you to hear that like and that makes it better, that makes it like the better thing, because it's actually sometimes not, right? Some people won't hire you when you teach a specific strategy because they don't want to do it that way.

Maybe think about, for example, a nutrition coach. There might be a nutrition coach that is like you have to weigh your food, you have to track every single macro, you have to keep a food journal, right? It's very strict and there are all these kinds of rules. And it's like if you're going to be my client, this is how we do it. This is the strategy we use.

Then there might be a nutrition coach that is kind of the opposite, a lot looser around it, right? A lot more like we really dive into what feels good in your body. We track how you feel every day, how your body feels every day, right? Like just a very different approach. Neither are wrong. I'm not a nutrition expert, so I don't think either is wrong. But in my opinion it's like neither are wrong, you would get to decide which one do I want? Which strategy do I want to use to create the results?

If you think about business, right, there are so many ways to build a coaching business. There are so many ways to make money as a coach. When you hire someone, if you're hiring a business coach, the best thing you could do for yourself is ask, like if all of their clients are creating results, what are the ways that I want to create results?

So think about this for your clients, right? Your clients who have maybe never been coached before, to them it is going to be genius and novel that you can really teach them self-trust. Show them their thoughts. Show them how the thoughts they're having really do affect the results they're creating in their life, no matter what the situation is, whether it's just inherently a bad situation or it's their relationship with their kids, or it's how they show up in their business, or whatever it is.

Their thoughts play a part in that. And if they have never learned that ever, they're going to think you are a genius. So really just let that sink in. Even if they do know it, I still think my coaches are geniuses when they show me

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thoughts and show me how those thoughts materialize in the world. I'm like, "Whoa, I hadn't even considered that."

We have a joke, a lot of times some of my colleagues and I we're like, "Wait, you're saying it's a thought?" And not that it's, I want to be clear, I think if you listen, if you're a regular listener, you know this about me, I'm never all about the "it's only our thoughts," right? But no matter the situation, our thoughts do affect the way we show up within it. So I just kind of want to leave you with this.

So I did say if you're a newer coach, really get to that place where you're like, it's enough. And if you've been a coach for a while, because I see it happen also on the other side. So sometimes you can just get to this space where you are more of an expert and you are more used to relying on strategy that you teach and your intellectual property in your coaching.

And this isn't a bad thing, but sometimes it can go too far the other way, where you also forget to keep asking questions, keep being curious. When I think about strategy and I think about the way I teach it now that I've been a coach for quite a while –

And to be clear, in the beginning I had no strategy. I was just showing up and coaching my clients for hours and hours and hours every week. That's all I did, was coach. I did not have strategies. I did not try to teach them the best way to do anything. I was just coaching their brains and their bodies and all of it.

But when you create your own strategies and create your own intellectual property, it can be really easy to forget how important the coaching is. So the way I implement it, it's like here's the strategy, go try it. But then the most interesting and most important piece of the work we're going to do together, is we're going to say, "Okay, how did it go? Why? What are your thoughts about it? How are you feeling? Tell me all the actions you took." And really be curious and dig into how you created it and the thoughts behind it.

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And it can sometimes be a little intoxicating to rely solely on strategy, right? Because you're like, "I have this and I know it works." But here's the thing about strategy, I could say here is my one strategy for how to clean the oven, let's say. Such a random example that just popped into my mind. But let's just say I'm like, here's the one strategy, how to clean the oven. And I teach it.

And I'm like, I am an oven cleaning expert, which could not be further from the truth, by the way. So I don't know why this is the thing that came into my head. But let's just say that I was and I teach you a strategy. One strategy is not going to be the best for everyone. Because on my oven, like currently in my house, on my oven there's just a button you push. You just close the door, you push a button, it locks, it makes your house smell terrible and it cleans the oven. It burns, I think it gets really hot and burns all the things off.

That wouldn't work for everyone, right? Not everybody has the same kind of oven. Maybe I teach all the chemicals and you get in there and you scrub it and you do this and you do this. And then people are like, "Wait, why would I do that? I just have a button. All I have to do is push the button and it cleans the oven."

So I know that's a silly one, but just really think about that, right? Like there is truly no strategy that's going to work for everyone. Someone might be like, "Oh, I'm actually allergic to the chemicals in this cleaner that you're telling me to use. It's not going to work for me." I could keep going down this rabbit hole of the oven, but you see what I'm saying, right?

There are just so many ways that this isn't going to be the perfect strategy for every human. But for the ones with the same kind of oven I have that are wanting to create the same results using the same process, it's going to be the perfect strategy. And I think that we just forget about that when we just go all in on one thing, right? And then we're like, "Well, I don't know why it's not working. This is just how it works. It's true for everybody."

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I hope that this was really helpful. This is something, again, that I've been working on for a masterclass, is just really diving into this piece because I just see it. It's like an epidemic, I think, right now in the coaching industry, or at least for coaches that come into my space because they get very confused about this.

And one thing that I will just kind of leave you with is, if you think of other industries and other mental health type industries, this isn't as much of a thing. So as coaches, I'm not really sure why we get into this space of like, I have to be able, I have to answer every question. I have to be an expert at everything.

I don't know why it happens. Because if you think about therapists, therapists are rarely giving any strategy. Now, that's not always true, some therapists do give certain strategies for certain things. But even then, it's usually – Like when I have been in therapy in the past, I had a therapist at one point that taught me kind of how to meditate.

I had meditated previous to that, but he had really, I had so much anxiety and he was really helping me calm that and it was a tool that he taught me. But even that is very therapy adjacent, right? He wasn't teaching me how to go into the world and change all my circumstances that were creating anxiety, that was for me to figure out.

Or if you think about, for example, a massage therapist, right? You go to a massage therapist, they give you a massage. They're not expected to know but like, okay, what's the exercises I do to make this one muscle stronger that's always weaker or always injured? So just consider this.

I hope that this was really helpful for you. I am so glad you're here and I'll 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.