

## Ep #148: Shame: How to Loosen Its Grip



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Lindsay Dotzlaf**

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 148.

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 happy you're here today. As usual, I love when you listen to this podcast. I just feel like I'm interacting with you. And normally, this is the part where I would say today we're going to talk about one of my favorite things, and instead, today I'm going to say, today we're going to talk about one of my least favorite things. Namely, the feeling of shame.

And there's a reason I want to talk about this today, but I had an experience this week, which I will briefly tell you about. I had an experience this week where I was feeling a lot of shame. And it's been a while since I have really felt deep shame, like in my soul. And so I thought, why wouldn't I come on here and tell all of you about this experience? It's like ripping the band aid off, right?

But it really made me think when I was experiencing it, how powerful it is that our clients, that your clients get to work with you to hopefully decrease shame that they're feeling in their lives if that is a thing for them. So, first, I just want to tell you a very brief story.

So this week, a couple days ago, first of all, just a lot of things happened out of the ordinary and it was like the perfect storm for me to take an action that is very unlike me. I'm going to tell you what it is. First, I'm just going to take a deep breath and just know that you're still going to love me even when I tell you this.

So a couple days ago, I woke up. And usually I get up and I kind of put some clothes on and help my kids get ready for school. And then when they go out for the bus, I take my dog for a walk. So I did all of that, but while I was getting dressed I got an alert on my phone that made me check my phone.

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And normally I kind of try to stay off my phone very first thing in the morning unless I wake up early, I might listen to a podcast or something. But I don't check messages or emails or alerts or any of those. But there was something that needed my attention.

So because that happened, I also noticed that there was a Facebook notification. Which this is the other interesting piece, I usually have my Facebook notifications completely off, like I don't get any of them. But I had turned them on for a specific reason and so I saw this notification. And it looked weird. So I was like, okay, let me check this.

And it said something like, this is also a cautionary tale by the way, so just be on alert if you get a message like this. It said something like, again this is on Facebook, this is not an email. It was a notification inside of Facebook that said something along the lines of your profile has been reported, we need to verify your identity.

Now, you probably already know where this is going because I told you about the shame, right? But what you need to know also about this is that for my business I have recently, as in the last few months, started running Facebook ads. And Facebook has actually needed to verify my identity to let me spend money on ads or to increase the spend on ads. So I've had to submit business information and documents to them.

So, first thing in the morning, I'm not all the way awake, I see this message. I know we're about to start another round of ads. What I am reading is that my ability to do that is going to be shut down and I need to handle something right away. So I click the link and, unfortunately, submit some information that normally I would never do, okay?

So that happens and then I go about my day. And the kids are getting breakfast and whatever and then I'm going on a walk. And again, for whatever reason, because this whole morning so far has been weird, I see a notification from my business manager in Slack, which is where we communicate and check it, which normally I don't do until I'm working.

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But I saw the beginning of it, you know on your phone when you can see the beginning of the message. And I was like, oh, that looks interesting. So I click it and it says, “Hey, you got this weird message on Facebook. Don’t click the link.” So immediately I’m like, oh no, right? Like just panicking.

So I get on a call, a Zoom with my amazing ads person. He talks me through making sure everything on the business side of my Facebook, that it’s all buttoned up, that no one can hack into it. And at this point there are lots of things going on. My kids get on the bus, my husband leaves for work, he usually works from home but this day he’s going to the office. And just the things like this are happening, right?

So it’s kind of a whirlwind. I am panicking. Like on the inside, panicking, panicking because I know, not only did I click the link on my phone, which I don’t know exactly how that works, but I know it can give people access to things on my phone. But I also actually submitted information because I thought it was linked to what I had done just not too long ago, verifying my identity.

Now, what you don’t know, probably, some of you might but most of you probably don’t, is that my husband works in IT. Not only does he work in IT, but he works for a hospital. Not just one hospital, but an entire hospital system. And he is an executive director of one of the major things being data security.

So imagine the shame that I’m feeling in this moment when I am thinking, okay, I’m going to have to tell him because he’s going to know what to do, right? Like, this is literally his job. And he’s going to know what I need to do to be sure that my identity isn’t stolen, that his identity, like whatever. Of course, at this point now I have Googled it and my mind is going to the worst possible places.

So I pick up my phone. I’m like, I’m just going to have to call him. I can’t text him this, he is not going to be happy. My husband is one of the most kind, loving people you could ever meet and I love him so much. And also I knew he was not going to be impressed by what I just did, right? Not at all.

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And not only was he not going to be impressed, he was probably going to be pretty upset because he takes this stuff very seriously.

But I fought that feeling, right? Like there was so much shame coming up, all the thoughts. I should have known better. I can't believe I did that. I started crying at one point. I mean, it was very dramatic. The shame in my body was so strong.

And I called him anyway, of course, because my thought was, okay, I could keep this to myself and just try to handle it. Or I can call him and let him help me. He's an actual expert at such things. What do I think he would rather me do? Even though he's not going to be impressed, what would he rather me do? Of course, he would rather me tell him so that he can help me.

So I called him and I told him. And, of course, I start with like, okay, I know, you're going to be really upset, which is never the best thing to say, right? Because he was immediately like, oh no, what happened? On high alert.

So I tell him, and he helps me and I spend most of the day making sure everything is safe, everything is secure, locking down our accounts, all the things. So now that we're on the other side of it, I feel pretty good about it. Although, of course, we're keeping an eye out. So that's just a little thing that happened for me.

But I just noticed that day, as I kept kind of going through the day, how much I kept thinking about it and how much I kept having thoughts like, no one can know, right? Which this is 100% the voice of shame. That's what it sounds like. No one can know. I can't believe I did that. I should have done better. I cannot tell anyone, which, of course, obviously I'm on the other side of it because here I am telling you. It still feels a little uncomfortable, but I'm saying it out loud.

But that is the voice of shame, right? No one can know about this. You can't tell anyone. What will people think? You should have known better. You shouldn't have done that. Who do you think you are, right? Just any brand of that thought is the voice of shame.

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And the antidote for shame for so much of that voice of like no one can know, you can't tell anyone, is learning to fight against that, right? To do the opposite. No one can know? Great, I'm going to talk about it on my podcast. Now, it's taken me a minute to get here, right? I didn't just hop on to let you know what I did. I didn't post about it anywhere.

But I do think that that is so much of the antidote to shame, is being able to say the words out loud. To just tell someone. To even be able to say it to someone and someone say, oh, I've done something like that before. Or it's actually not that stupid, I've done that too. Or let me tell you about this thing I did, right?

Friends are so good about that. We forget, sometimes when you're in your own head experiencing shame you don't have access, usually, to the thought I bet other people have done this too, let me ask. It'll feel better if I know I'm not the only one. Because shame is very isolating, right? Extremely isolating. There's usually some flavor of this has never happened to anyone else, I am the only person that would be – I don't want to tell you the words that were actually going through my mind, but you know, like this is the stupidest thing I've ever done. That was one of my thoughts.

And so that experience of shame can be very isolating, right? And how to solve for that, a lot of times, can be just noticing, okay, I'm feeling so much shame right now. And I know, as a coach, as someone who talks about these things all of the time, that one way to feel better is to just say it out loud. To just tell someone.

Tell someone I trust. Tell someone I love. Now, in this case, it was my husband. And, of course, I trust him and, of course, I love him. If it had been something else, I may have said it to someone else first, right? Because of what it was, because I knew this particular thing he was going to be pretty upset about. Which, of course, he wasn't mad at me. He wasn't really upset at me, but he was upset about the situation. He was not impressed.

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He said, why did you think that was a good idea? I can't believe you did that, right? He repeated all the things that were happening in my mind. So maybe if I didn't need to handle it right away, I would have started with my best friend, or someone, my grandma maybe. Someone that would be like, oh, I do this, I've done that before. But I didn't.

Okay, so I told him. And then it just really got me thinking what a powerful emotion shame is, right, and how much it can drive your behavior. And I see this come up a lot for coaches in their coaching, in business, right? Let's say you have – I've experienced this before, where I've had a launch that has gone terribly and my first thought is like, no one can know.

Now, I've really learned to get on the other side of that and just really, truly learned the more open I am about it, the more I talk about it, the less shame I experience, the lighter it is. The more I can just keep moving and keep going without carrying that weight around. But I do remember, especially when I was newer in my business, that I would feel shame and I would get coached on it a lot.

And there was always this piece of like, once I just kind of said it, it would start to evaporate. It would feel lighter. So I want you to think about this from two perspectives. I want you to think about this from the perspective of your clients and how fortunate they are that they have a coach. Or your prospective clients, your clients or your prospective clients.

How fortunate are they that they get to work with you, that they get to work with someone that they can just say things out loud that maybe they've never said before to anyone? I know especially when I was a one on one coach and just having one on one calls with many of my clients, I know for a fact that sometimes they were saying things to me that they have never said to anyone, right? Like their innermost thoughts.

And there's something really powerful about, first, being able to say it out loud and just letting that weight kind of evaporate. But also having the experience of saying it to someone, like a coach, and that coach holding space for it not being crazy, right?

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Because that's kind of what we're thinking sometimes in our head is like, this is crazy I cannot believe that I am having this thought. But when you have a coach that just responds to you that's like, of course, of course you're having these normal human thoughts. It really allows you to just like, oh, maybe this isn't as strange or as abnormal as I was thinking it is.

And I have so many clients, I've worked with so many coaches who have the thought that their coaching needs to be more valuable, more valuable, more valuable, and they kind of get in their head about it. And it will start to kind of affect their confidence in their coaching.

And one thing I would offer is when you think about this, when you think about it this way, and not that I'm saying that this is all coaching as is just letting clients say things to you that they haven't said to anyone else. But if you think of just the value and the power of that, right? Like just that one small piece of what coaching can be, this is one of the things that really hooks me into how powerful coaching is, how valuable it is just in general.

Because this is just one teensy thing that our clients get to experience with us, right? They get to just tell us things that they might not tell anyone or that maybe they've never said out loud, maybe they haven't even admitted sometimes to themselves, right? Like if we're teaching our clients to really have more self-awareness and to notice just the thoughts that are running through their heads, and to give them the choice of, do you want to believe them or not, right? Like how committed are you to these thoughts? Let's examine them.

Even if that is the only way in this moment we're going to measure the value of coaching, my thought is that is invaluable. The value of that is intangible almost, right? Like even just in that moment over this kind of silly thing that I did, it's not even like in the grand scheme of life. Yes, it was ridiculous. And yes, I shouldn't have done it. But it could be way worse, right? There could be so many more things that I could feel shame about. Just think about that for your clients. Really let that sink in and think about how powerful it is.



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And now I want you to also consider how this shows up or could show up for you as a coach. So I have the amazing privilege of coaching hundreds of coaches each week. And one thing that I know that I see a lot in The Coach Lab especially, really in all my containers but specifically this example I'm going to give you is in The Coach Lab.

One thing that happens is coaches show up and they say this thing happened in a coaching session. And a lot of feedback I get is, that was so powerful just to be able to say it out loud. And to see that there was a room full, a call full, a Zoom room full of other coaches who are nodding and who are like, yes, that has happened to me too. It takes so much shame out of it, right?

And I think one thing that happens when you experience shame, so let's say you're on a call, something happens, your client says something and you're like, I don't know what to do about that. I don't know how to coach on this. I don't know how to respond to this. And after the call, maybe your thought is, I can't believe that happened. I should have known how to handle it. I should have done better.

And you may experience some shame. What I know that a lot of coaches do is they just kind of push it back to the back of their mind, right? And they're like, okay, if I just don't think about it, like if I just push it back and I try my best to not think about it, it'll eventually go away. And that is 100% not how shame works.

I actually think that shame is an emotion that can't be just pushed to the side and ignored. I think the more you try to do that, it just grows and grows and grows. I also don't think that shame is an emotion that we need to sit in and process. Like, okay, I'm just going to sit here and just feel the shame and let it move through my body.

I think sometimes that could be useful. But I think to me, at least my experience of shame, is that really it just grows and grows, right? It's like, let me just keep bringing you back to why you did something that was so awful.

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So when that happens in a coaching session, even if it's just the little teensiest hit of shame, right? It's just a little teensy like, oh, I shouldn't have done that, and then you push it to the back of your mind, a lot of times what happens is it just compounds. And then the next time it happens, because that thing is going to happen again because you didn't solve for it, you just pushed it back, you're going to feel even more, right? It's going to be like exponential amounts of shame.

So sometimes I have coaches in The Coach Lab who will say to me, who will say things like, I'm so grateful for this space because it's the first time I've ever said any of these things out loud. And then they say, it's also the first time I've noticed that everyone knows what I'm talking about.

Which means the other coaches in the room are like, oh yeah, that has happened to me too. Or some form of that has happened to me too. Or I've been afraid that's going to happen or any of the things that show up in coaching sessions that we think, oh, I'm just not going to think about that and it's just going to go away.

So what I would offer for you, for anyone listening, is one, you should obviously just join us in The Coach Lab where we talk about these things because it's so powerful. And if you don't, just make sure that you're talking about them somewhere, right? Like find a space where you can say, this thing happened, has this ever happened to you? This thing happened, how do I solve for it?

Some of my favorite calls inside The Coach Lab are the weeks where it's like every person who's getting coached is like, this thing happened in a session and I don't think I handled it the best. Or I'm afraid this thing is going to happen in a coaching session, or this thing happened in a session, here's how I handled it. It felt fine in the moment and ever since then I've been thinking about it and what I should have done or could have done differently.

These things, these topics are so powerful to work through as a coach with someone else, right? I did an episode about comparing what we do in The

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Coach Lab, like talking it out to supervision that you might experience if you're in the industry of counseling or therapy, right?

Like if you're a therapist or a counselor, there's something called supervision where they just kind of talk it out. You've seen them do it on *Shrinking*, if you've ever seen that show. It's one of my favorite shows ever. It's so good, highly recommended.

But this is what it's all about, right? It's not thinking that you have to be perfect at everything. And I actually think you could talk to a lot of coaches who've been coaches for a while, I think they would all agree, one thing that you think when you're a newer coach is someday I'm going to know exactly what to say, all of the time. I'm going to be perfect at what I do all of the time.

But what really happens is you just get more settled in the fact that you don't always know what you're doing. You don't always have the perfect thing to say. But you do always know that you have tools and that you can trust yourself to figure it out.

I think that's a big difference from like, someday if I keep going I'm going to be perfect at this, to actually, if I keep going what's going to happen is some things are always going to come up that I've never experienced before in coaching sessions because humans can be messy and unpredictable and all the things.

And even when I don't know the exact perfect solution, I know I have all the tools I need. I know that I can think in the moment and just decide and trust myself how to move forward. And, to me, that is the definition of coaching, true mastery.

So I want you to consider that. I want you to just think about shame. It's not the most fun emotion, right? It's a little heavy. It feels kind of like you're wearing, I always talk about it like it's like wearing the heaviest sweater that somehow is also attached to the inside of my body. That's what it feels like to me. It's like shackles almost, but like a sweater that's just so heavy that I can't take off. To me, that is how I experience shame.

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And there you go. Here we are, I'm just talking about it. I hope that this was really helpful for you, either from the perspective of how you coach your clients when they're feeling this way and really just knowing that sometimes all they need to do is say the things out loud.

That's like the first kind of step to helping the shame move, right? Move out, move through their body. And how you may be experiencing it as a coach. And I just want to invite you that if this is you and if you're like, yes, how did she know? I just want you to know it's totally normal.

This is a thing that happens for a lot of coaches. And it means, to me what it means is that you care and that you want to be really good at what you do. So I invite you, if this is you, to come join us in The Coach Lab where we talk about all these things and we just normalize them. And we just see how the human experience can be really messy. And that is never, ever a problem.

All right, I will see you next week. Hopefully a more fun topic, more fun for me at least. And I'll see you then. Bye.

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](http://lindsaydotzlafoaching.com). That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.