

Ep #167: Goal-Setting Mistakes You Need to Avoid



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With Your Host

Lindsay Dotzlaf

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 167.

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 always. Happy new year. Happy 2024. This is my first day back in my office. You may have noticed, if you listened last week, we had a repeat episode. I missed one. I didn't quite get every episode recorded before I left for break and I just decided you just get a replay the first week of the year.

I'm so happy to be back today. I am really feeling so energized to be working in my business today. I'm kind of easing back into it. I don't have a full day today. My kids, today is actually the last day that they have off of school, so I'm doing the things that have to be done.

I hosted my mastermind, which was really fun just to come back after about two and a half weeks totally off, which I'll talk about in a minute. But today is my first day back and my very first thing that I got to do was come into my office, sit down and host a mastermind call. So that felt really, really fun for just coaching to be the first thing that I do in my business for the year. It felt very on brand and very just energizing.

So I'm so happy to be here with you today. I am really ready to dive into some new content. I have so much new content coming for you. I have been working a ton on creating content for The Coach Lab, which is my lifetime access coaching, foundational coaching skills program. And that program has been running for almost two years. It'll be, I think, two years in March maybe.

And two years in, almost two years in, I have been really going through all the content. Like okay, what do I want to change? What makes sense? What doesn't make sense anymore? What can I be better at explaining? How would I explain this differently? So there's tons of new content coming,

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I'm super excited. It's like my big project for the first quarter of this year to get that all out. So if you're not in The Coach Lab, now is the time to join us because there's just going to be so much exciting stuff coming for the first quarter.

And for those of you that have been a coach for a while, you probably know that this is a thing where you outgrow your own content, whether it comes to marketing or just the content that you're putting out into the world. Your beliefs change. You learn new things, whatever it is. So I'm very excited to have a Coach Lab refresh.

For those of you that are already there, don't worry, it's not a huge change. I'm just going to be redoing a lot of the lessons, making things more clear, expanding on some things, adding some new things that I haven't talked about before and I think you'll be very pleased.

So, again, if you're not in there, I don't know what you're waiting for. We'll add the link in the show notes just in case you're ready to join us.

Today, I want to talk about goals. And I know there have been a couple of podcasts about goal setting, that's what the replay was last week. But this is goal setting and thinking about how we help our clients set goals. Just different ways to set goals has been something that I've been thinking a ton about as I'm creating this new content for The Coach Lab and so I want to get into a little bit of that today.

And you probably know, if you're a regular listener, you may have even attended one of these. I did some big picture planning sessions for this year. I did them in December to plan for 2024. And so after coaching so many people on these workshops and hosting the workshops, I hosted them, I did a free one and then I did one inside The Coach Lab, and then we even did it in my mastermind.

And it's just been really interesting seeing the way people think about goals and the things that come up, and seeing a lot of the overlaps of the pitfalls that people get into, that a lot of you get into when you're setting goals. So that's what I'm going to talk about today, is just some of the things that I've

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noticed come up over and over and over. Some of these for myself, of course, totally human over here, right? And some of them for my clients.

And I just want to open up a discussion around it today so that you can just kind of see as you think about your goals for 2024, whether it's in your life, in your business, any goals that you're setting, so that you can really see, am I doing any of these? And then question them a little bit, or maybe change the way you're thinking about some of it.

So let's just dive in. So these are all, I just kind of made a list of the things that have stood out to me while I've been talking to so many of my clients and so many of you about goal setting. The things that stood out to me that are kind of getting in the way from you just feeling great about your goals. Feeling motivated by them, feeling amazing about them, and even for some of you, putting off setting any goals because goals is kind of a bad word. You're scared of them. You don't like to set them because what if you don't hit them? All of that. I've really been thinking, how do we solve for that?

Now, through this podcast, I'm going to be talking to you about your goals, but obviously everything that I talk about can also be applied to your clients and to really helping them think through goals that they are setting, of course, as always.

So I just made a list, and I'm just going to go through them and give you examples. One of the first things that just is very clear with a lot of my clients, especially those of you that don't like to set goals because what if you don't hit them, is that you're just making the goals very black and white, right? Very kind of singular and black and white. So you're setting a singular goal that is –

I'll just give examples that a lot of coaches have. Maybe it's in your business that's like how much money do you want to make? You might have a money goal for the year. Maybe it's how many clients you want to work with. Maybe it's in your life and it's like how often you want to move your body throughout the week or something along those lines where it's just one singular goal and it's very black and white whether you hit it or not.

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Now, there's nothing wrong, obviously, with a goal that's very clear and very measurable. I think that that's great. And when I say black and white, what I mean is there's no room for error, right? You either 100% hit the goal or you don't, right, or you have failed. This is why, like this is the number one reason so many people quit on their goals – I should have looked up the statistics, but it's like by February or something. It's maybe even sooner than that, right?

It's like people have New Year's resolutions. They set goals for themselves for the year and then a few weeks in kind of give up, or a few months in, or however long it lasts. Usually, I think the statistics say if you make it a few months, then you're actually more likely to kind of keep going.

But in the beginning, especially when you're doing something new, or even if it's a money goal in your business, it's like if you are a new coach and you're just learning to kind of run a business and whatever, it's just so easy to give up on something when it feels impossible and hard and you don't hit the first couple of milestones and you get off track quickly. And it's just easy to forget it, right? It's easier to forget it than it is to give yourself that leeway of it not being so black and white and so singular.

One of the things I will be talking about on the podcast is kind of a different way of thinking about goals, which I'm calling holistic goals. Now, I did not make up that term. I have seen it used before but I've never learned about this specifically. But what I mean by that is just setting goals in a way that they aren't so singular, right? That there are many measurements that you're using, not just the one. Not just black and white. Not just pass/fail.

For example, I'm really working on this for myself, and I've done this in the past, but I'm really thinking through it this year as I'm creating this new material is, okay, I might have a business goal, a money goal in my business. And also along with that money goal I have other goals, right?

So this year, one thing I did that I talked about at the beginning of the episode is I've taken the last two and a half weeks off. So it was incredible and I plan to do it again next year. And next year I want it to be even more

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seamless. There were some things that happened that didn't quite work out, I had to work a little bit in the beginning. And I would just love to prepare for it even more to make things even more smooth going into the break.

And so that would be one example of like I want to make X amount of money, but I want to do it under these conditions. I want to take the last two and a half weeks off of the year. I want to be fully present if I'm on vacation with my family or if I'm traveling.

So for me, one thing is I want to be even more clear that I finish working at a certain time every day so I can be available to help my kids when they get home from school, to check in with their homework, to just be here and be present as a mom versus – And I know some of you can relate to this, like feeling very irritated that they're interrupting me.

Even though they're usually not because normally I plan to have stopped working by then, but my brain sometimes is still half in work mode, half not. So that part might not be black and white. There are some days I might have to have later meetings or later calls, totally fine. But just really knowing like overall that is the goal.

So I would encourage you to start thinking about goals in terms of that, right? Instead of being black and white, allowing it to be a little more holistic and asking, this has become one of my favorite questions, what is the experience you want to have while working towards this thing? So, for example, in my business this year, what is the experience I want to have when working in my business throughout the year? That's such a powerful question to answer.

Okay. Another thing, another place where I see some of you using things against yourself is setting goals without the facts. So the way I see this a lot in your coaching business is maybe you set an arbitrary kind of money goal, or a number of clients goal, but I see it a lot with money. This came up a lot when I was hosting the big picture workshops.

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And a couple of people would be able to get coaching and I would say like, okay, what are your goals? And more than likely everyone usually has some kind of money goal in their business. And so they would just say a number, an arbitrary number. And I would say, okay, great. How many clients is that? How many, like at your offer, what you charge, how many clients is that?

And it's always so interesting to me, but I remember doing this. I did this all the time in my business in the beginning where it was just like, I don't know. What do you mean, right? So for example, probably a lot of you are going to be like, oh, I'm totally doing this. How many of you are thinking, "My goal is X amount of dollars," and you have no idea how many clients that is or how many hours of just coaching that is or kind of the logistics of what it might look like?

I encourage you, if this is you, if you haven't done the math, I encourage you to figure that out because usually one of two things will happen. Either you will see like, oh, that actually feels way more doable than I thought. Or usually what I usually see is the opposite, which is like, that's actually impossible. Like there's no way that I can make that amount of money with what I'm selling currently. So then you have to figure out like, how do we get those to match up?

Another example of that might be maybe if you're setting any kind of health goal or you are, you know, just any goal. There are so many that are very common at the beginning of the year, right? Just to really question like, okay, does it match up? Does it match up with my life? Does it match up with the way I live?

Someone told me recently, a friend of mine was like, oh yeah, I just signed up for this class at whatever studio and it's at X time every day. I don't remember the exact details, but I just remember I said, oh, she has young kids. And I said, oh, you know, something along the lines of like, oh, is your husband going to be home to get the kids on the bus? And she was like, wait, what?

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She literally hadn't considered the class, that she wouldn't be home in time to get her kids on the bus, right? Like she just hadn't figured out that detail. Not that she can't, but it was just really funny. It's just like sometimes our brain loves to really cover up those pieces because it's like, those are the logistics that take more work to figure out. They're also the things that have us giving up on things pretty quick, right?

Another one is setting vague goals. So as I'm recording this, I'm going to give a really specific example. As I'm recording this, I just finished coaching my mastermind, my group. And one thing we were talking about people's goals for the year and kind of going through them and I was coaching them on anything they needed coaching on around them.

And one of my clients, and to be clear, this is not me throwing her under the bus. Everybody does this. I used to do this, especially, all the time. And I still do it, except now I'm just a lot more aware of it. And so I just correct it.

But she said something like, I want to make my marketing more succinct, more clear, more professional she said, kind of like in quotes. And so we were just kind of talking about it. And what I said to her is like, oh, let's get really specific. What does that mean?

So for any of you that have goals that sound like that, right? I want to be more this or I want to be better at this, define that for yourself. If you have a goal that's like I want to be better at selling coaching. Okay, what does that mean? Like specifically, what do you want to be better at? Because that will give you direction.

So as I started questioning her and putting her brain to work, like really thinking about what does that mean to her? What does it mean to be more purposeful and succinct with her marketing? Then we came up with really specific examples.

And taking those, she'll be able to say like, okay, well, how would I learn this thing? Is this something I can just Google? Is this something I can just, now that I'm clear on it, can I just figure it out myself? Can I work on it? Do I

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want to hire someone to help me with this? Like, how do I actually get better at this specific skill?

Giving yourself very vague goals just, again, makes it very easy to just give up on it or even just to forget, right? If you have a goal that's like, oh, I want to be healthier this year – I actually did this a little bit last year. I had a goal, I had two goals. One was to focus on money, like personal money. You heard me talk about this with Keena when I did an interview with the financial coach.

And I got really specific about what that meant. Just like personal money, like knowing will we have money for retirement? Do we want to be investing money? Just learning about money and just knowing about money in my life and being more purposeful about saving for vacations, knowing if we have money for this thing or this thing. Thinking about cars and college for our kids. All of those things, right?

I've always been very kind of, I don't know, it'll just work itself out. And last year was the year that I really wanted to figure that stuff out, to really just have a better understanding. So I was really specific about it. I had very specific goals.

And then the other one was to just feel more healthy or to focus on my health. But I didn't take the time to actually figure out what does that mean for me? What are the specific things? So you'll never guess which one I was very successful at and which one I wasn't, right?

I ended the year knowing so much more about my finances, having a better understanding of where the money is, where I want to be saving it, where I want to be putting it, educating myself even just around some of the different options when it comes to investments and should I put the money here or put the money here? So much more clear.

But when it comes to my health, because I didn't really have a specific goal around it, I didn't get clear, I'm kind of ending the year with like, oh, I see where I could make some changes. See the difference, right? The difference between being vague and then being very specific or at least

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deciding to get specific, right? Deciding to learn about or make decisions about what that means for you.

Sometimes, and this is another thing I see some of you do, is sometimes you might set a goal because you've heard someone else talk about it or you've heard other people say, oh, I plan to make \$100,000 in my business this year. I can't tell you how many coaches I've talked to that are like, oh, my goal is \$100,000. I'm like, why? And they really have no idea, right? It's like, just because. Like, that's industry standard. And I'm like, says who? What's happening, right?

When you get really specific about it, you can just start to question it. Why do I want to have this goal? Like, what are the specifics around it for me? Why is it important for me? Is that the actual number? Maybe it's more than that or maybe it's less. It allows you to just take a lot more ownership and puts you in control, right? It gives you a lot more control over the goal.

The next one that I see is, this actually goes a little hand in hand with what I just said, but kind of lying to yourself about what it is you want. So that can happen in a couple of different ways. One, it can be setting more arbitrary goals just because you hear other people do it or because that's what you kind of think that you should want.

Or it could be setting maybe, we'll come back to money again, maybe setting big money goals, business money goals for the year without really knowing why you've set them. Or even setting smaller money goals than you want to because that's what you think you're supposed to want, right? Or they think, I shouldn't care about that.

Or setting a goal that's like, my goal this year is to just really love my body, when in the back of your mind you're like, but I really just want to lose 10 pounds. Like, if I just lost 10 pounds, that would be perfect. That's really what I want, but I know what I'm supposed to want is to love my body.

Now, I'm not saying one is better than the other. But when you set a goal that's a little bit of, like, lying to yourself, it's going to be impossible, right?

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It's like there's the goal and then there's the secret goal in the back of your mind.

I have seen people do this in masterminds that I've been in and in business spaces I've been in where it's like, here's the goal, but then there's a secret goal. They're kind of lying to themselves a little bit and there's really this big stretch goal that they're just not talking about, not saying out loud. But when you actually name it and say it, then you really get to own it.

Again, it comes back to it gives you a lot more control. It gives you the ability to plan for it and to really say, oh, if I want to lose 10 pounds, if that's the goal, if that's the real goal, how am I going to do that? What's the plan?

The next one is setting a goal and not allowing yourself to work up to it, right? Not allowing yourself, especially if it's something you've not done before. This comes back to it being a little black and white where it's like all or nothing and it has to start immediately. So for some of you, as I'm recording this it's January 2nd, for some of you, you might already be feeling behind.

This could be because you've set a goal and you are like, in your mind now that it's January 2nd and we're two days into the year, a week later when you're hearing this, and it's still true today as you're listening a week later, this is still true. It's just the beginning of January. You have plenty of time to work up and learn the things that you need to learn, right? To do the things that you need to do.

There's something about setting goals, and I think this is where some people get very scared by them. There's something about setting goals that it's like even though, let's say it's a money goal for your business that you want to hit by the end of the year, you have all year to do it. For some of you, there's something about that that our brains go into overdrive of like, okay, well, I need to be on my way immediately today. I should be halfway there, it's January 2nd.

Now, that's obviously an exaggeration, right? But just think about that. This is so common. I hear so many of you talk about this. I even know for myself

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that this is true. I'll give you a kind of silly example. Actually, I have two very specific examples for this.

So one goal that I had last year was that I would take off, like I would be off the entire time my kids were off for holiday break or for winter break. And so that was about two and a half weeks. And it started mid-December and then ended today. Today is my first day just a little bit back in the office.

And I noticed, so what happened was it's the first time I've ever done that. We did plan for it, but there were a few things that didn't get finished in time that I decided like, oh, I need to open up a little space in my calendar those first couple days when I'll be off. So the first like three days that I was supposed to be off, we ended up scheduling some things.

I did some calls on those days. I had a couple meetings on those days. I had a planning session with my business manager, which actually that one was amazing. It was really nice to do that kind of separate from the everyday day-to-day of my business.

But I noticed on that second and third day that I really started thinking I totally failed at this. Like, I'm not doing it. I didn't do it right. It was very black and white, right? Like, I just totally failed.

Now, after that I was, I completely shut everything down. My business was closed for about two weeks and it was incredible. I'm so glad I did it. Definitely doing it again. And I get to take that as a win, right? It doesn't have to be that I failed because I worked those few days. That's just more information for next time.

I could have given up on like Tuesday, when I had already scheduled things for those first couple of days. I could have just said, like, okay, well, I'm just already working. So I might as well just give in and just, like, work now. But I didn't, right? It's like, this is the learning.

It's kind of a silly example. But it's the same thing that so many of you do with a lot of your goals, right? Oh, I'm already failing, so I'm just going to give up now. I'm going to give up my goal. Leave no room for magic.

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Now, in this case, it wasn't really any magic. It was just logistics like, oh, I was just wrong about everything I needed to get done and how long it would take me to do those things before I could just be off. So I already have a list of things for next year that I want to implement before we're off for those two and a half weeks.

Another example of this is this morning, because I've been off, I walked into my office to host my call and I immediately started being so hard on myself because my office had become a little bit – It's like on the first floor of my house, very close to my living room. My house is very open concept, so there aren't many rooms in my house on the first floor. It's one kind of big room with everything open to each other.

And over that time, we'd set up this big area for gift wrapping and all the things. And so many of the boxes and kind of gift wrapping things were thrown into my office and my desk was a mess. And it was just like, I can't believe, like I started being so hard on myself. I can't believe I didn't clean this up. I can't believe that I would let it get this messy. I can't believe that my first day back and already my office is like this.

It was fascinating to just watch. Like I caught myself, right? And I was like, wow, you're being so hard on yourself. But again, this is what we do with so many of our goals. What I then asked myself is like, yeah, but was that in the plan? Did you plan for your office to be clean when you come back?

That's very different, right? If I had and I had set aside time to do it and then I didn't do it or I didn't follow through or I didn't whatever, that's very different than just seeing like, oh, actually, that just wasn't in the plans at all.

And because I took the time off and because I was so committed to it, I literally just didn't come into my office. So it wasn't like I was seeing it every day and I was like, oh, it's so messy. I'm just leaving it messy. It just was kind of out of sight, out of mind. And I was so in the family time, in the time off, that I just didn't even think about it.

So, of course that's what the office looks like when I come back. So next year, I'm just taking note of this. Oh yeah, it turns out I don't actually love

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coming back to a messy office. Now, I'm going to clean it today. It's no problem. Like none of it's a problem at all. And it was just really interesting to see that, right? It was just another way that you go straight to like, oh, first day back, failed already.

How often are you doing this? How often? Like just notice all the places that you do this to yourself. Again, I'll just reiterate what I said earlier, which is, knowing now I just have more information for next time. It turns out I don't love coming back to work and my office being full of boxes and returns and just all the things that need to happen from the holidays.

And so I'll just put that on my list for next time. Either don't make it messy, or if that's what happens, schedule some time before my first morning back. That's just more information. That's just like, oh, I did a great job having all this time off. Next time, here are a couple of things I'm going to do differently to make it even smoother.

And then some of you might be setting, I'm going to call them non-compatible goals. Like goals that don't really align with who you are, with your values, with the way you really want to do things.

So one example of that, I was doing a planning session for 2024 for my business and I kind of had a number in mind, like a money goal. And then I had a, this was before I really had planned out the year, I had a meeting with my bookkeeper.

And one of the things I asked her is can we figure out just next year if I want to make these few investments and I want to pay myself this much and I want to pay my business manager this much and I want to have all of these resources for my clients and all the support I need, can we figure out exactly how much is that for the year?

Like on the high side, like including every single thing that I want to do that I can think of right now. So we did. And what was fascinating about it is that – And this includes my salary, all of it. What's fascinating is that when I saw that number, it was so much lower, like one fourth of the goal that I thought I was going to set for the year.

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And so I really started questioning that. And I've actually talked to a couple of my clients about this as well when they're setting goals for next year, because I really started questioning like what's the gap? Why do I think I should bring in X amount when it takes this to run my business?

Now, the answer might be to say I can do it or to show myself what's possible. Or there are actually these other things that I would love to invest in that will take a lot more money. Or I have this huge dream that I'm working towards. But the truth of it was, like if I was just really honest with myself, the probably most honest answer was because I think that's what I'm supposed to do.

So it was just very interesting for me to see that, right? If it's like that's what I'm supposed to do, have this huge push, like stretch goal. But then my values are connection with my clients and really delivering in a way that my clients feel so cared for. Not that I can't do that and make a lot of money, but to just notice which of those is more important. And to me, the values are always more important.

The math has to work out, right? I have to have the money to run my business. I need profit in my business. I need money that's a reserve that's there in case I don't, you know, something happens to me or I don't make the money I think I'm going to make or whatever, to keep my business running to be able to pay people over time. All of that is true. And also just noticing, wow, that's a really big gap between what I need to run my business and the goal I thought I should set for the year.

So some of you may be doing that in other ways, right? I know in the past one thing I've done is set health goals, right? I've never been one that sets like a weight loss goal or it's never around weight. It's always around having more energy or just maybe doing something every morning that just kind of wakes me up and makes me feel great.

But year after year of doing this, this was mostly before coaching is what I'm talking about. Year after year of doing that, what I started to notice is it's just not compatible with who I am as a human. Like when my kids,

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especially when they were young and they would wake up really early before they were in school and when they were babies and toddlers and whatever, sometimes they wake up really early.

And so I would try to hold myself to this standard of like, well, okay, if they're going to wake up at 6:00, that means I have to get up at what, 4:30 or 5:00? To some of you, that might sound delightful. To me, it's just not who I am. You know when I would set that goal and I would do that, it was constantly I was fighting against my kind of natural tendencies or kind of who I am just as a human. And I do think that you can kind of train yourself to do those things. But this became clear that it was like, over time, just not for me.

And so I want you to just think about those things. Even if you're someone, I've seen coaches do this in their businesses, where they've set money goals, huge money goals over and over and over. And they've said to me, you're the first person that's ever questioned why I want to have that goal.

Because I think it's really important. You do want to know why. And just make sure that you love your reason, that's it. Not because we're going to judge the reason. Not because there are right reasons and wrong reasons, but just so that you're in full awareness. So that when it's the middle of the year and you're like, I set a \$5 million goal or something, like a giant goal, and the main reason I did it is just to say I could, maybe you can give yourself some leniency if you're not on track or if you're whatever.

Now, that's very different than if you set a \$5 million goal and it takes \$5 million to run your business, right? It's just having that awareness. Did I set this for reasons that I love? Did I set this for reasons that are actual logistics that I need to do something about if I don't bring in that money?

This comes back to me to like the importance of coaching and what's so incredible about it is really just creating complete awareness around everything you're doing, everything you choose to do and just going into it with like, I chose this, I love my reasons. And just allowing yourself to be more fired up about it.

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Versus I chose this because I just thought I was supposed to or because I'm just used to overachieving and being really incredible at things. And so obviously that means my goal has to be bigger and bigger and bigger. Or I set this, but I didn't take into account these huge family personal goals that I have this year. Or I set this goal and I didn't take into account something big I just have going on this year, that was another.

Maybe this will be the last one that we end with. That was one that I saw that would come up when I was coaching in the workshops is people would have like, okay, I want to work with X number of clients. Let's say maybe it's like I want to work with 40 clients this year.

And it was like, okay, well, what does that look like? How long are your packages? Can you do that, right? Can you fit 40 clients in your schedule for the year? Which if you coach 20 clients one-on-one for six months, that's about 40 clients if you're just full all year, right? And so that is definitely possible. Or if you have a group or there are other ways to do it.

But let's say you're getting married and you want to take a month off. Or you're having a baby or welcoming new family members or you know you want to take some time off because someone in your family is sick and you want to help them with whatever it is, right? You just know that there are chunks of the year that you want to dedicate to something else.

Or you're like, I'm taking the whole summer off to be with my kids. Or I'm taking the summer off and we're traveling for two months. You have to take those into account when you're setting your goals, right? Because if you don't, it's going to leave you very frustrated when you're like, oh yeah, I forgot that's not even possible. I didn't even consider that this was a thing.

So I hope this was helpful. Hopefully you heard some things in there that feel useful for you that maybe you noticed. As always, I do not want you to beat yourself up about any of this. I just want you to notice it, create awareness and I give you full permission to make changes to any goal you've set, to let go of some things. So just love yourself a little more this year. Let's just all do that. How about that?

Ep #167: Goal-Setting Mistakes You Need to Avoid

All right. I'm so happy to be back. I cannot wait for some of the content I'm rolling out, some of the content I'm creating for The Coach Lab. I'll also be using some of those topics and get back to teaching coaching skills for some of these episodes, some of these upcoming episodes. Of course, not giving you all the things that I teach in The Coach Lab, but just giving you some little snippets of skills that you can use in your coaching, back to basics, back to foundations. I'm so happy to be here, see you next week. Bye.

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