

Ep #232: The Coaching Pendulum: Using Extremes to Find Balance



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 232.

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'm so happy you are here today. So first, just a quick housekeeping note. It is quite warm outside today and it is very windy at my house and there are some kids right outside flying kites and screaming and having the best time of their lives. And I have to get this recorded, so I'm going to record this now and hopefully, we will be able to edit that out or maybe they will finish up soon.

But I just wanted to let you know that just in case you hear any screaming if it slips through the editing or we can't get it out. That is what's happening. It's just kids having a lot of fun. And I'm the last person who's going to go out there and tell them to be quiet. Actually, it is really delightful watching them. I love it when it starts to warm up in the spring. It is April, almost April 1st as I'm recording this and the weather has been really up and down as it always is here in the spring.

So, I love seeing all the things when I sit at my desk when I look forward, it's my computer, but then on the other side of my computer is a window out the front of my house. And I just love to see when there are kids outside and the animals are outside and all the birds and all the things just tell me it is about to be warm, which is delightful.

A quick side note, in case you need to know this about me. I used to love to be cold. I feel like I just always kind of ran hot for years and years and years, and I preferred cooler, not cold cold, but cooler weather and didn't really mind cold weather. But the older I get, I'm understanding why people move south when they get older because my body, I don't know, something has changed and I do not like to be cold anymore. I just like to think about

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when the days are going to be warm. It feels so delightful to think about that.

So, all that to say, I'm sorry if you hear kids screaming, but just imagine that they are flying kites, which is really cute and they are running down the street and having the best time. So, I apologize. It's kind of like sorry, not sorry, right? I apologize, but also it's pretty great.

So, let's dive into today's episode. This is something, this is a concept I've been thinking about for quite a while that I finally decided I need to talk about this on the podcast because it's been coming up recently with some of my clients and I have never heard this talked about before. Not saying it hasn't been, probably has, but I've never heard it. So I think it's important to talk about it.

And it's something I call the pendulum effect or the coaching pendulum. And I'm going to tell you what that is, but then I'm also going to tell you why it's common for it to happen kind of without you doing it on purpose. But then also how you can use this concept to purposefully create results that you want to create for yourself or for your clients, right? Like as usual, this is going to be something that I'm teaching you that you can recognize within yourself and or for your clients, right? So maybe you won't relate to this so much, but you'll start seeing it show up with your clients.

So I have always called this. This for years and years and years, I have described this as kind of a coaching pendulum, like something that happens when mostly I noticed it in myself when I started coaching. And then over years, right, when I was coaching, when I started coaching clients and working one on one with clients, coaching my, I was a general life coach, coaching on all the different things. I started to notice this show up in so many different areas.

So, first let me tell you why I call it this. So if you don't know what a pendulum is, I'm going to do my best to describe it for you. And also give you a visual, a couple visuals that you can use to picture it. So pendulum,

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and I'm not talking about like a spiritual pendulum. I'm sure that that has another name, but like a crystal that's hanging from a string that some people might use to like in a spiritual practice for many different reasons. That is not what I'm talking about. Although, of course, it is based on the same kind of physical design, which I assume is why they call it a pendulum.

But a pendulum in science or just in the world is something that is hanging. So just imagine a string and then something that's weighted hanging from the string. And then you take the weighted thing, you somehow get it to move, right? You put like a force behind it. So maybe you pull it back and then you let it go. And maybe I forgot to say the string is attached to something at the top, right? Then the string's hanging down. There's a weighted thing. Picture like a little ball or marble at the end. Then you can pull the marble back, let it go and it's going to swing. If you don't interrupt it, if you don't touch it, it's just going to keep swinging back and forth. Eventually it'll start to swing a little less each time, right? Like slower, slower, slower until over however long it's not moving at all, right? And it's just now hanging straight down.

You could also picture this the ride at amusement parks that's like a pirate ship, right? It's like the pirate ship swings back and forth. It starts like really steep, really, it's one of our favorite things at King's Island, if you've ever been there. It is, you know, they you sit on one side, it kind of goes up high and then it swings and it just swings back and forth, back and forth. You could also picture this like a swing, right? Like an actual swing at a playground. So a swing obviously has two hanging things to hold the swing, hanging things, right? Like ropes, chains, whatever they're hanging by cables.

And let's say someone gives you a big push and then you don't do anything with your feet, right? You don't like make it go back and forth. You don't propel the swing on your own. You're sitting on the swing. Eventually, like the swing is just going to keep swinging back and forth until eventually over time you come to a stop. Kind of end at that resting point just straight down.

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And finally, the last example, I always think of this and I have to add it in just in case you've ever seen it, you'll know exactly what I'm talking about. I live in Indiana and although Indiana doesn't get a lot of things right, besides my family being here, but one thing that Indiana has that is amazing that if you're ever here, especially if you have kids, although even if you don't have kids, it's still pretty cool. We have a children's museum that is, I don't know, pretty consistently rated the top children's museum in the US. And it's downtown Indianapolis and it is pretty amazing. But actually I haven't been there in a long time.

Now that my kids are older, we I used to take them because I had fun there and we haven't been in a very long time. So I don't actually know if this is still there. For some reason, I'm thinking maybe it's moved or it's not there. But they used to have this huge clock. So when you walked in, in the very front entrance, there was this huge clock, like multiple stories tall that was run with water and a pendulum. And it was pretty incredible. So if you can I it's like kind of complicated. I don't even know how to really describe it, but if you've ever seen it, you know exactly what I'm talking about. Okay.

So now you can picture that, right? You can picture what a pendulum is. So when I first started working with a coach, one thing I noticed over time is that there would be something I wanted to work on and we would work on it for a while. And when I would start working on it, I'll give you an example in a second. But when I would start working on it, I would go to one extreme, right? Like, okay, here's this thing maybe I want to be better at. Let's use time management for example.

I have a bit of time blindness. I used to be late all the time and it was something that I really wanted to change when I first had a life coach. And we coached a lot on it. So I started off like being late all the time. So I was like on one end of the spectrum or like the pendulum swing, right?

And then over time I worked on it and I became really strict about it. Like overly strict and had this rule that I was just not a late person. I'm just never going to be late again. And I worked on it, worked on it, worked on it. That

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was like imagine the pendulum swinging all the way the other direction to like the highest point, right? Where I was very strict about it and was showing myself that I could be the person that's just not late.

And then over time, as I kind of became that person and now I was just the person who's not late. What I started to see is sometimes there were actually reasons that it was okay to be late or sometimes I would put unnecessary pressure on myself to not doing myself a favor by sticking to such a strict rule that I was never late. And so then over time, once I learned to be the person that now was just never late, over time then it kind of came back to the middle a bit and settled, right?

Where it's like overall, I'm now not the person who's always running late. But sometimes I run late because I'm human and things come up or life gets in the way or whatever or I make a mistake or there's traffic I didn't predict or whatever. And that's okay, right? And I don't beat myself up about it. I don't make it mean anything about myself. It's like I I'm finding that like perfect middle for me.

And I just started noticing things like that over and over. Right? I started noticing that in the beginning, one thing I learned about myself when I first hired my own coach is that I was living a lot of my life based on what other people would think is like how you're supposed to live, right? The way you're supposed to do things, the decisions you're supposed to make, all of that. Which I would have probably said I wasn't at the time, but with coaching, I started noticing all these places where like, ooh, I can't do that because that's not like what you're supposed to do, right? I can't rock the boat.

And so then over time I learned to ask for what I wanted and to make decisions based on what I wanted and not other people's input and all of that. So you can imagine, like that's a really good thing to learn. But you can also imagine how that could start to rub people the wrong way, right? People in your life that you love. If you are really working on listening to yourself, trusting yourself, asking for what you want, not people pleasing,

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all of that. When people are used to you being one way and now you've kind of become the person who has swung all the way in the other direction, it can be really uncomfortable for people in your life. Which is what happened with me.

So then I started realizing like, oh, okay, I've learned this skill. It's such a good skill to learn. And now I get to decide when I want to apply it, when it makes sense and kind of what that middle ground is, right? So it's like the pendulum swung. It started at one really high on one direction. This swung all the way the other way. And then over time we kind of come back to kind of settle in the middle. And the way I think about it with coaching is that it never maybe fully settles. There's always a little bit of swinging one direction or the other depending on maybe what I'm working on.

So sometimes like I might notice, oh, I really started letting this thing get in my head and not trusting myself. So I might swing it back on purpose, swing it back the other direction just a little bit. And it's just those small tweaks, right? Which is very different than like the big swing.

I'll give you some examples of this that you may notice as a coach. I know a lot of coaches do this because it comes up often in the Coach Lab or just in general when I'm talking especially with new coaches. So when you're a new coach, this happened with me too. So this is not like, don't worry if you're doing this. I feel like it's kind of part of the initiation process, part of like becoming a coach. When you're first a coach, especially if you have been coached and it really changed your life, right? And now you have a coaching business and one of the things when you first start your coaching business that you have to do is really work on the belief about how powerful coaching is and why it works and why it's so great and that everybody should have a coach. And you know, just all the amazing things about coaching.

And it sometimes can be a little extreme, right? That could look like, like if you're like, do I do this? This could look like maybe telling everyone that you know that they should have a coach because it's so amazing. And

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maybe coaching people in your life without permission, right? Without them asking you to coach them. It could look like going to maybe a networking event and leaving and thinking like, oh, maybe I was a little pushy. Like did I turn people off by the way I was so insistent that they needed a coach or that I could help them.

You know, just things like that where it's like you're working so hard on building your belief in something and finding all the proof of why it's so amazing within yourself, within people around you, all of that that you don't maybe even notice that it's happening in the moment.

And it is really powerful, right? Because it does help you with that belief that coaching is great and that everyone should have it and that there are people all out in the world who want to buy your coaching. But then over time, that will start to settle down, right? And it will kind of come back to the middle where you kind of learn like you can still believe, like I do, coaching is incredible, that it's the best thing ever, that it actually would be amazing if everybody had a coach. I feel the same way about therapy. Like everybody needs therapy. Just do it. Right?

So I still feel that way. I'm just not out in the world saying it as loudly and forcefully and maybe as against people's will as I was in the beginning. And I can laugh about this now, but at the time, I'm sure it was probably kind of annoying to some people in my life.

So if this is you, don't worry. I'm not saying this so that you see it and think, oh no, I need to tone it down or I need to fix it. What I really want you to see is that it's happening for a really good reason. And it's really going to help you create the belief that you are, for example, a person who's never late. Like when you're fully in that belief, I'm a person who's never late, think about the ways you learn to not be late that are so different and completely opposite of the way you showed up in the world when you were just like, oh, I'm just late all the time.

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And so it's a really important thing that happens. But sometimes, some of my clients that come and get coaching on this because they see it happening maybe with their clients and it kind of scares them a little bit or they see it happening with themselves and it scares them a little bit. And so that's why I wanted to talk about it so that when you see it, you can be like, oh, I see what's happening here. This is good. You can just let it be a process. Right?

And the process will, I think, correct itself. Like you will find, especially if you are aware of it and consistently, you know, keeping tabs on this thing or working on this thing, you will notice, oh, okay, this thing that I've been working on for a long time, it's kind of come back to like I have found my middle ground, right? My just like hanging marble on a string that's not swaying or that's swaying back and forth a little bit, but not to the extreme that it was.

One example of this might be maybe you're working with clients and you notice that they aren't really good at processing their emotions. And you work a lot on teaching them this, right? And this is something you spend a lot of time on and it's really powerful. And then maybe you start to notice, oh, now they're like in their feelings all the time. Which can sometimes that can be great. I'm not suggesting that you ever just ignore the feelings, right? But that they're just kind of like sitting there in feelings instead of learning to process them and move through them.

And so then you kind of start to bring them back to like, okay, they've now they've learned that skill. Now they've learned to listen to their body. They've learned to pay attention to all those physical cues. Now let's come back the other way a bit and introduce more of the mindset piece, right? More of the like forward motion.

Or it could be the other way around, right? Maybe you start to work with someone who is always in their feels and one thing you do as a coach is you start to show them that they have control over some of what they're thinking, right? And that they can choose different thoughts and work on

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different beliefs and kind of combine that power that they have of really being in touch with how they're feeling with also changing the way they're thinking in order to move forward and create the results that they want.

Another example might be, let's say you are a nutrition coach and one thing you do is you teach your clients to count their macros, right? And maybe they've never done that before. So they're kind of starting on one end and then you teach them this new skill and they love it and helping them create the results that they want and they get super strict about it, right? And they're counting every single macro every day, all day. And it kind of becomes too much.

Then maybe over time, usually what will happen as they get better and better at it and they kind of master that skill, then they're able to come back to the middle a little bit and know like when is it important for them to track these things and when can they be a little more lenient while still creating whatever the results are that they are trying to create.

Or maybe you're working with a client and they are coaching on being able to communicate differently with their partner or with someone they love. And maybe they are used to being very like talking over their partner, being a little unforgiving or not not used to being a good listener. And so that's something you're working on, right? That they want to be better at listening. They want to feel more connected during their conversations.

And so they kind of learn that skill and maybe they realize, oh, like now that's all I'm doing. I've gone a little too far the other way. And so over your coaching relationship, maybe you help them like kind of come back to find that middle ground when do they take a more active, kind of louder approach to a conversation versus when do they sit back and listen a little more.

This can happen in pretty much anything that you're coaching on. Right? I remember when I was first a coach, like in the first couple years of my business, one thing that I did is really learn to schedule everything. And so

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then I got really, really strict with it for a while. Over time, I realized that that is not the model for me. That is not the version of scheduling that I should be using. It created actually a lot more stress for me than it did. Although so did my schedule being very loose, right?

But I had those two examples. And so then over time, I got to kind of figure out like, what is my way? What's the best way for me to do this? Now some of it's scheduled, some of it's not. I tend to run my schedule with kind of blocks that have a lot of flexibility within the blocks. And that works really well for me.

So, as you can see, so many different examples. I would challenge you to think of how this has maybe happened for you or how you see this showing up for your clients. And just to know first that's totally normal and natural that this happens and makes a lot of sense. And think about how many things that it kind of explains, right?

So sometimes one thing I hear from coaches is that when they first start coaching, like when they are getting coached, sometimes they might start to have like arguments or disagreements with people in their life. And you could see why, right? If you think about this pendulum effect where the people in their life are just interacting with the human that they're used to interacting with. And it's like one day they're this way, kind of like at one side of the pendulum. And then over time, maybe a short period of time, they've kind of drifted all the way to the other side, right? Swung to the other side of the pendulum.

And being a person that's interacting with that person could be tough because they're not on the inside, right? They don't really understand like why it's happening or what they're working on. So just notice that if it's something that comes up for your clients, you could even explain this to them and kind of show them what's happening. I think it just helps to loosen any judgment around it or any like, oh no, this is a bad thing or, you know, coaching even though it's maybe creating this thing that I love, it's also creating some results around me that I don't love. And that can be scary if

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you don't understand why it's happening. Also makes it a lot easier to solve or to talk to other people about it when your client kind of understands that that's what's happening.

Now, you can also use this specifically for yourself or for your client, where you decide, right? Like you see something you want to work on and then you get really clear, like here's where I want to be, totally opposite of where I am now. I want to swing all the way in the other direction and then you purposefully solve for that, right? What would you need to believe about yourself? What are the different actions you would take if you were all the way over here?

One example I have of this, and this is kind of leading with an action in order to create the beliefs that I wanted to create. But when I, so I was a one-on-one coach and when I decided I wanted to start a mastermind, which was Coaching Masters at the time, I went all in. I went straight from one-on-one to group, kind of like cold turkey. Like just no, I didn't like ease into it. I didn't like have a group and still sign one-on-one clients, right? I just was like, no more one-on-one, only group.

Now, I was able to do this because I had built my audience quite a bit at the time. I had a bunch of clients that I thought would probably be good fits for the group. Like there were lots of reasons that it made sense. But when I made that decision, the reason I made it, I think I've talked about this in the past possibly on the podcast, but the reason I made that decision and stuck to it is because I knew if I did that, at the time, I really had this thought that one-on-one coaching was the best ever and that group would never be as good.

So by forcing myself to just go all the way to the other side and say, nope, now I only do group coaching, it forced me to find all the ways that group coaching is amazing, right? And actually, in order to really sell it effectively, I almost had to be in the mindset of group coaching is the best. Like it's better than one-on-one coaching.

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Now, of course, over years, I have kind of come right to the dead middle of that, right? Which is like they're both amazing just for different reasons. Some of the same reasons, but also for a lot of different reasons. And I feel pretty confident in that. But it was a very effective strategy for me. Now, I'm not suggesting that you do this with all the things. You could consider it, right? So even if, so just let's use that same example. Let's say you are a one-on-one coach right now, but you know you want to do a group coach or you want to have a group, fill a group with coaching clients.

One thing you could do, you don't actually have to 100% swing all the way in one direction and do the action of I only sell group coaching. But what you could do is just challenge yourself to think about it like you do, right? What if I only sold group coaching? What would I have to believe about myself, believe about the container, believe about my group, believe about coaching, about my clients? Like you can take your mind there without actually shifting all the actions.

And you can use this and apply it in so many different ways. One way I'm applying this actually right now with someone that I'm working with, I may have mentioned this in my last podcast. I'm working with a functional nutrition person and she is helping me figure out some health stuff that I have going on, right? So one strategy that we're doing right now is I've cut lots of things out of my diet, gluten, dairy, all the things. But we haven't cut them out forever. We just cut them out for now. And it's forcing me to really figure out so many things that are hard, but also pretty amazing and see how I feel without all of that in my diet.

And then over time, we will slowly start to add things back in, right? And it maybe I will add all the things back in and it'll come to this place of I can eat anything, but just in moderation or maybe we find as I add some of it back in that like, ooh, you know, okay, I was fine when I added gluten back in, but when I added dairy, it really, you know, had a big effect. And so it allows me to just kind of find my medium, right? Find that middle ground of what makes me feel the absolute best.

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Other ways that this has shown up for me in the past is like learning to believe new things about myself or use specific strategies in my business specifically, where, you know, maybe it's not the strategy I would have picked to begin with. But then leaning into it kind of allowed me to create all of these new beliefs and these thoughts about myself. And then I'm able to come back kind of to the middle and say like, okay, what did I learn that I'm going to apply moving forward versus what part of that maybe wasn't for me.

So, my challenge for you, if you think this is interesting, is to just think about this, like where has this shown up for you? Where have you felt that pendulum swing of going from one maybe extreme of something all the way to the other side and then finding that kind of happy middle or medium? And where are you with it now? Right? Maybe you have something that you feel you can tell like, ooh, I'm all the way over here on this side. And that's amazing. I've learned all of these things. Sometimes I think it can be really useful to see this because when you can see that that's where you are, then you kind of know, okay, now my work is to figure out for myself, what's my middle of this? Okay.

I hope this was helpful. I hope you loved it. And if you want to share some of your examples with me, come find me on Instagram @lindsaydotzlaf and pop into my DMs. Tell me what you have going on. I love to hear all of the things. Y'all have been doing this recently and I love it. Super fun. I love hearing how you apply this work in real life, especially since with the podcast, it's like I'm talking. I don't actually feel like I'm talking into a void. I really do feel like I'm talking to you. I imagine that people are listening, but it is really fun to get some feedback and hear how you think about this. So, if you want to share, go for it.

And we will put this in the show notes, but if you are still interested in the Business Pods, the Coach Lab Business Pods, we do have, as I'm recording this, we do have a few spots left for the founding members for the new offer. And we will be applying this concept a little bit. I hadn't planned on turning this into a pitch. It's not why I talked about this, but we will be

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thinking about this pendulum where when you're newer in business or when something has changed about your business, sometimes you do have to kind of swing all the way to one side of like, let me learn this new thing. And then you can kind of come back in the middle to find your strategy that works for you, right? And the beliefs that get you where you want to go.

We'll put the link in the show notes if you are interested in joining us for a three-month business coaching experience. Come find me. Let me know. If it is full, we will replace that with a wait list because I'm sure we will be running this again in the future or opening another round very soon. So get on the wait list or just join us now. I can't wait to see you. And otherwise, I will talk to 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.