

Ep #245: Stop Hiding Your Coaching Failures: Why Transparency Creates Client Trust



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lindsay Dotzlaf

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Hi, this is Lindsay Dotzlaif and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 245.

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. So, first of all, can you imagine almost 250 episodes? What is even happening? If you have your own podcast and you have more episodes than that, I highly commend you. But also, if you have your own podcast and you have like 10 episodes, that's also amazing. I just am always blown away by myself. I think the podcast, because I number the episodes, it just always blows me away with each one how many there are. And I never imagined that I would get to the place where I'm like, 245. I don't know, it just seems crazy. I just had to share that.

But I am so happy you're here, and today I want to talk about something really very important. And if you're on my email list, I actually sent an email about this as I'm recording this a couple of days ago. But if you received it, it would have been, I don't know, a week or two ago. And I got so many responses that it blew me away, actually. And it was just like something that was on my mind. I wasn't selling anything. There was no purpose for the email besides to just tell you what I was thinking about. And I got so many responses that I decided I must create a podcast episode about this.

And what I started with was this silly thing that has been living just rent-free in my brain for probably about two years, I would say. I'm going to estimate probably about two years. And you know when you just have, I assume everybody has this, I don't know, maybe not, I guess. But when you just have these little things that feel really quite insignificant, but for some reason, they're just in your brain and you think about them often or these little like memories pop up or visuals pop up. That's how this thing is for me.

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So a couple of years ago, I was, I assume just scrolling on Facebook because I do remember I just kind of came across this post. And when I saw the post, it immediately sparked this kind of, I think almost like anger in me, which maybe that's why it's seared in because real anger, especially when I'm just reading an arbitrary Facebook post, doesn't usually happen for me. So maybe that's why it's locked in. But it was one of those posts, you know where you can just pick the Facebook background and then just write like one sentence or whatever, a very short kind of statement or question or whatever it is that you're writing. It was that type of post.

And it just said something like, "I would never hire a business coach that openly shares when they fail or that has big fails," or something along those lines. And I just remember thinking, wait, what? And I also remember reading the comments and seeing how many people agreed. And it honestly, that kind of blew my mind. And I didn't comment because that's not my style and I wasn't going to argue.

And I don't remember who posted it, but I do remember it wasn't someone I knew. Like it was just someone who was in my feed. I'm sure I must be Facebook friends with them, but just another coach, not someone who I'm close with, a colleague, a friend, anything like that, or a client. Or at least not that I remember at the time. I remember at the time not knowing who this person was.

Now, listen, if this is you and you are listening and you're like, oh no, I wonder if it was me. Here's what I need you to know. This is not a problem. This is not a you problem. This is just a thing that happened in my mind when I read it. And hopefully, maybe, you feel a little differently about what you said now.

But here's why I think this is such a problem, making a statement like this. Because I think one of the most dangerous thoughts you can have as a coach for yourself and for your clients is having any kind of fail, you know, or a thing that you try or a thing that happens that you deem, like, oh, this

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shouldn't be happening to me because I'm a coach, or this shouldn't be happening because I'm a business coach, because I'm a marriage coach, whatever, whatever type of coach you are, and then having the thought no one can know, or some form of that.

I want to be very clear, I've had this thought myself. And I am talking currently a lot about transparency, and I will be talking a lot more about it. But even though transparency is truly a value of mine and I feel so great and so much better when I am being transparent, I want to be very clear that I have had this thought, no one can know—when it, you know, comes to business fails and whatever.

So it's very normal. So this is not, this is nothing against having that thought because it can be a very normal thought. But I also think it can be a very dangerous thought. And here's what happened when I read that post is I had an immediate reaction, like an immediate, just kind of gut reaction of like, oh, I hate that. Like, oh, I totally disagree and I wish that this person wouldn't have posted this because I hate that that is a message being spread. And you know, it really just hit me, kind of viscerally, right?

And my thought at the time was something very much like, well, I just disagree, whatever, move on. But now, a few years later, at least two years, maybe it was even longer than that, but now a few years later, as I have really been quite transparent in my business, especially in my containers and with my clients, and I see how important it is and I see the reactions that clients have when I tell them things like, oh, yeah, that's a normal thought for you to have or like I've been there or yeah, that's happened to me before, you know, whatever situation fill in the blank.

And they're like, what? Like they're so shocked by it that I just see more and more the importance of kind of normalizing some of the things.

And so, now, a couple of years later, however many years later, even though it feels so silly and so insignificant, I think that's probably why it just

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keeps popping up into my mind because it feels like such an important message to spread is the opposite of that, right?

That like of course coaches are human, that we shouldn't hold ourselves to a standard that is unhealthy, right? Or that creates so much pressure and so much perfectionism, which is what I am currently seeing sometimes with some of my clients because they think they have to show up in a certain way that it is actually detrimental to them, to their clients, to their business. And yeah, mostly I just couldn't again, disagree more with that statement.

So, I want to give you some really specific examples of why I think this is a really dangerous thought to have, this kind of like no one can know, right? Because that is a mindset that will create several things. But first, I want to give you some examples. So, for example, if you're a business coach, maybe you have a failed launch or a failed, whatever, a fail, you don't hit your money goal one month or one year or whatever it is, and you have the thought, no one can know, right? Because you're a business coach, so your business should be perfect all the time.

Or maybe you are a marriage coach, a relationship coach, and you have a fight with your partner or you have, you know, something messy in your relationship. And not only is this thing happening in your life, which causes possibly some heaviness, some weight to it, whatever it is for you, but then it also has implications on your business because of the way you're thinking about it that's like, oh my gosh, no one can know.

Maybe you're a health coach and you've had some sort of body image issue, right? Or thoughts that come up about your body that you then shame yourself for because you think, how can this be happening to me? Like who even am I as a coach to have these thoughts while I am helping my clients towards, you know, this specific type of transformation?

Or maybe you are a coach that teaches about money and abundance and you have a month where you have some financial stress for whatever

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reason, right? Something happens in your life or your business doesn't go as planned or whatever, and you have some financial things that come up that you feel stressed about.

Or maybe you coach working moms on work-life balance and on occasion, you yourself feel overwhelmed as all humans do, right? Just like it's a normal human emotion, but when it comes up for you because it's specifically connected to your niche, you again, not only have the discomfort of feeling it, of whatever's going on in your life, but also have some sort of thoughts and feelings about it as a coach and about your business.

So I could keep going, right? There could be so many examples of these. These are the types of examples that I see most often, but I'm sure I could probably even tell you more specific stories about things that clients have brought to me. But I just see like this is something I literally coach on all the time inside The Coach Lab, especially, when my clients are having thoughts about like, how can I be a great coach when I'm going through this thing in my life? So I just thought it's so important that we have this conversation.

So let's talk about the cost of you having this thought, no one can know. First of all, it affects your coaching, right? It affects the way you show up for your client. If in the back of your mind, you're thinking, oh my gosh, this thing just happened to me or your client brings you something specific and you relate to it and you're like, I can't think about that. I have to pretend like this has never happened to me.

It might just feel like a disconnect between the words coming out of your mouth as a coach and these thoughts circling in the back of your mind or even in your subconscious that are very like, you know, making you very tense as the coach and kind of taking you out of your full attention and power as a coach and your full ability to help your clients create the results and just show up with no agenda and show up very relaxed and just ready

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to dig in with your client, right? Like any of those thoughts playing in the background for you, of course, will be very distracting.

The next thing that could happen is you might isolate yourself from the support you need in the moment. For example, if you're thinking no one can know, then you're also going to be less likely to get your own help in that area, whether it's hiring a coach that works on these specific things. Like if it's something that isn't just, you know, like a one-time thing or like a here and there thing, but something that you're like, ooh, I really would love support around this for myself.

So maybe it's a coach that you don't hire. Maybe it's a therapist that you don't find. Maybe it is a, you know, just talking to friends and colleagues about it and just kind of getting it off your chest because, oh my gosh, they are on your social media and they'll know because you are a relationship coach and you can't possibly let them know that you're arguing with your partner, right?

And to me, this is probably one of the worst ones. Well, I don't know. I could probably make an argument that they're all the worst ones, but it will for you as a coach, it will create unsustainable pressure and it will completely drain your energy, possibly your health, and definitely your business over time, right? So if it's something that continues and you're not getting the support you need, of course, it's going to start to affect your business if you're always having that thought, no one can know and you feel like you have to hide these things about yourself.

And then, again, like I said, I could argue that each of these is the most important. I also think one of the really important things about it for your clients is that like now your clients are going to completely miss the opportunity to normalize some of the things that they're going through.

And to be clear, I want to say this because I've had this pushback before. Normalize doesn't mean normalize and stay in the struggle. Normalize, the

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way I mean it, is more of a like, okay, oh, this is normal. Other people have these thoughts or other people have these situations, and then you can kind of drop any of the shame, guilt, embarrassment, like anything else that's coming up around it so that you can actually get to solving the problem, right, and getting on the other side of it.

And so if you are always telling yourself as the coach that you can't talk about anything, that you can only present this kind of perfect facade of yourself because you're a coach, then your clients miss the opportunity to see, oh my gosh, my coach goes through this too. This is something I'm always trying to show my clients and I can't even tell you if you're not in my spaces and you've never seen this happen, I can't even tell you the relief that come over people.

It's also why a group can be really powerful, right? Because you can hear someone talking about something they're struggling with and you might think, oh my gosh, I'm so glad they shared that because I'm also going through it and I didn't really want to talk about it or thought I couldn't talk about it or anything like that, right? So the same is true for you as the coach.

And I want to be very clear, when I say that you don't have to hide it, I don't mean that what you should be doing is kind of trauma dumping on your clients. That's very different. That's not just sharing something that has happened with you or a struggle that you're currently having or that you've had in the past and you've worked through. Trauma dumping is like, let me enroll you in my story as well.

And that is certainly not useful to clients. That is something to be shared, I think, in therapy with your own coach, with your own family, like whoever it is, like whoever you have to do that with and who can hopefully help you work through some of it.

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But sharing and saying these things are normal, they happen to everybody, here's an example, when it feels appropriate to you, can be so useful for your clients, right? Because the opposite of that is only presenting this perfect image, which I'm sure you can think of, I'm not going to name any names, but I'm sure you can think of coaches who if you think of their, especially on social media, right? Because that tends to be sometimes a highlight reel. I do think it seems to be getting a little better recently. I seem to be seeing some more authenticity and transparency recently, which I love.

But you can probably still think of some coaches or even other service providers that when you think of their brand, you just have this thought like, oh, they're just completely pulled together all the time. I'm just here to tell you that that is never true. Like that's just not the human experience, 100%, not the human experience. And it certainly isn't something to compare yourself to.

So I'll give you a couple of quick examples of when this thought has shown up for me and kind of the results that happen from it or the side effect that could have come if I hadn't recognized it.

Years and years ago, when I very first launched group programs, I think it was the Coaching Masters Mastermind, which I think would have been in 2019. I remember, actually the first launch went pretty great. And then the second launch did not go as great and I don't remember the exact details or numbers, but I just remember being kind of surprised by it. And I remember having this thought like, oh my gosh, no one can know.

So what happened, of course, is for a minute, I didn't show up and get the coaching that I needed. I didn't get the help that I needed. I didn't ask for help because again, no one can know. And so eventually I did, which really turned the launch around.

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But in the beginning, I just remember, I kept thinking when it wasn't going well, that I was mortified and obsessing over thinking about like the first call when there would only be a couple of people on or whatever. I again, don't remember the exact numbers, but I just remember being so overcome by that. And it wasn't even starting for a while, but I was already kind of obsessing over that.

Now, luckily, once I saw it, I was able to get coaching and turn it around and all the things. But if I hadn't noticed, if I hadn't really been onto myself and aware of this thought that I was having, I would have just been really stuck, right?

Another time this happens again in launches is when, and this has happened actually more than once, is when I start a launch, so maybe I'm launching something new or I'm whatever, I, a launch starts, and for the first couple of days or the first, you know, what I feel like is like, ooh, this is so exciting. Everybody's going to want this. I'm so, you know, just like in the moment of launching the thing, and then it's crickets.

And then I feel like I have two options, and I can think back to when this has happened before and the different levels of like mortification and the thought, no one can know versus the leaning into it like, okay, how do I solve this?

And if you think about that, like imagine what happens when you're launching something. Let's say your launch is seven days. Now, this can vary wildly depending on what it is you're selling. Some of you aren't even selling in exact launches, but let's just pretend like you are, right?

And let's just say the launch is seven days. And you think that the most people are going to sign up when you first open. That's usually what I think because I am usually a, usually, not all the time, usually an early adopter to things like this. Like if I know I want the thing and then it is released, I'm usually like a, yep, I'm in and I just sign up. I don't overthink it. I don't have

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to like think about it for a while. Again, it can vary depending on what the thing is. So I've always just thought that that's how most people buy. Come to find out, that is not true.

But when I believe that and then nothing, right? I launch something, nothing for the first, let's say two or three days out of seven, what could happen is I could panic, I could think, oh my gosh, no one can know this is so embarrassing. I can't possibly tell anyone, even my coach who I know she would help me, but also it's just embarrassing to tell her, or I definitely can't let clients know or anyone, just no one can know. In general, no one at all can know and that's going to be the right path.

What happens if I think that is then I hide. I definitely don't take steps to correct the launch from a healthy place, right? I might start panicking. I might, you know, start writing emails or posting on socials in a way that sounds very graspy and needy, which of course is not going to translate into more sales.

Versus that happening and my first thought being, I should get help with this, right? Or oh, I should share this. This would be useful for my clients. Or any other thought really besides no one can know. And just imagine the difference, right? The difference between, oh, I should get help with this, right, is going to immediately prompt me to get coaching, get, you know, feedback, get whatever it is that I need to get in order to make some shifts during the launch and hopefully create more sales.

Or even saying, oh, my client should know about this and then in some way sharing it in a way that feels productive. Maybe you even that might happen like after the launch is over where I'm not sharing it in the moment when it feels maybe heavier. But imagine what that means for my clients, right? It might create relief for them. It might create trust because they just know I'm being transparent. And just the tone of my overall messaging would be very different if I wasn't panicked, if I wasn't thinking no one can know, if I didn't feel embarrassed or shamed or feel guilty or any of the things.

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I want you to take a second and just imagine, like what is your version of what I'm talking about? Or it could even be like, oh, I could not possibly coach you on this because I just had this thing happen in my life.

This comes up sometimes in The Coach Lab, right, where maybe someone is a general life coach, so they kind of coach on everything, but then their client brings something that they kind of freeze and they're like, oh my gosh, she can't know. She can't know that I've been through this or that I haven't solved this for myself. And it just puts you in such a specific energy as the coach when those are the thoughts playing in your mind.

So now let's talk about the alternative, how transparency can really lead to freedom. This is my new thesis that I'm out here to prove, that transparency creates freedom. Now, I want to be very clear. I feel like that's the thesis, but then there's a little asterisk, and the asterisk says, in many situations, but not all, right? In situations where you're safe.

Because sometimes transparency in certain situations, but this is not what I'm talking about, can lead to situations where you aren't safe. And that is not what I mean. I know sometimes your body might perceive you as not being safe when you think about sharing something. And that's okay. You don't have to push yourself like past your circle of safety.

But just even noticing when you really shut down, when you really are like, no one can know. And even without being completely transparent and sharing all of it, there are ways to still kind of accept what's going on and not have the thought no one can know, but just kind of choose like, oh, here's what I'm sharing, here's what I'm not. This feels helpful. This doesn't. This feels safe for me to share. This doesn't. That's a different kind of conversation, but I want to be very clear that I understand that that's a thing too, that you might be considering.

So here are some alternatives and some things for you to consider. Define what healthy transparency looks like for you, for you personally, not what

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anyone else says it should be, not what I say it should be, just what does that look like for you? And when are you open to being transparent and when are you not?

So for me, although this is something that's maybe shifting currently, especially with this offer that I'm currently opening up, Coach Unfiltered, where I'm really sharing everything in the moment, which, you know, feels a little scary, but I'll get over it. That kind of breaks my rules a little bit, but usually my rules are I share what feels useful after I'm on the other side of it.

Because normally, when you're on the other side of it, you can share it with a much more clear head, right? You're not still in the heaviness of it, you're not still wrapped up in the drama of it, but you're like, okay, this thing happened. Here's my kind of evaluation of it. Here's what I see went wrong, here's how I would fix it, whatever.

The next thing is to give yourself permission or let me give you permission if that's what you need, that it's okay that you acknowledge your humanity as a coach and your continued growth, right? Like the path that you're on, the things that you're still learning, the fact that you're human, that you make mistakes, that you have arguments, that you sometimes show up the way you don't want to, that you fail at things, right? Like literally these are things that happen for all humans.

And for some reason, sometimes coaches really get in their head about this and think that because you're a coach, you're no longer supposed to be this way. And I have bad news for you if this is the way you're thinking. Coaching is not an antidote for the human experience. It helps you navigate the human experience. It helps you navigate it the way you want to, right? With as much autonomy as is possible if that's what you want. It helps you have a better self-awareness. It's not like a hall pass to just get out of the human experience. I think that's so important for you to hear.

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The next thing is for you to remember what your clients really need. Again, they do not need you to be perfect. They do not need you to be non-human. They need you to be yourself, so you can show up calm, comfortable, paying attention, all the things. They need you to be skilled at what you do, right? A skilled coach so that you can help them with whatever it is they want help with. And they need you to be committed to them, to their growth, to their transformation, to their solving the things they bring you, like whatever commitment looks like for you with your clients, those are the things your clients need.

For you to be yourself, so you can show up unbound by all the drama that could be weighing you down. They need you to be skilled as a coach, and they need you to be committed to them and their transformation and the reason they hired you.

And then I want you to remind yourself, last thing, when you are transparent and you're not having the thought, no one should know, no one can know, I want you to think about the relief that people will feel when you share authentically.

And maybe even think about the relief you feel when you hear someone like me, like other coaches that you follow, like other experts, they don't even have to be coaches. Maybe when a family member or a friend shares something and you're like, oh my gosh, you too, right? Like just think about the relief you feel when someone you respect shares something very open and authentically. And let that be a guide for how you want your clients or potential clients or people in your audience to feel when you share things that you want to share.

So your homework, if you choose to accept it, as I wrap up this episode, would be to consider this question. What would change if people knew you were human? If your clients, if your audience, whoever is watching you, just knew that you were human, that you made mistakes, that you have struggles, that you have fails, that you even struggle sometimes with things

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that you help your clients with, what would change for you if that was a thing?

And even if you're the person who's like, I don't know, like I'm pretty transparent, I'm pretty open, I guarantee we could find some area where you're like, oh, but not that though. I don't talk about that thing. And again, I'm not suggesting that you go out and just dump all the things completely openly, right? You get to choose what you share, what you don't.

Just the feeling of being transparent and being more open will change things even if there are some things that you just don't share because they're too personal, you haven't quite worked through them yet, or they're personal maybe for other people in your life, right? I always want that to be very clear. It does not have to equal transparency.

But if you just answer that question, what would change if people knew you were human? My guess is, here are a few of my answers. I also want you to consider it for yourself because I'm sure you'll come up with many more answers, especially when you insert your very specific thing, the thing that makes you think like no one can know, right?

Likely outcomes would be more freedom for you, right? This is where my thesis comes in that transparency equals freedom, for you, right? Because now there's just not a thing that you're hiding. There's not a thing that you're like actively covering and thinking no one can know.

It also could create deeper client connection. What I find, honestly, I find my clients trust me more because they just know that when I say a thing, I'm being honest. I'm not always winning, right? I'm not always like, oh yeah, this is no problem. This is easy. That's easy for me. I don't know, I've never failed at a launch, right? I'm like, oh no, this is all these things, they've all happened. It's part of business. That's how I kind of address it.

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And it will make your coaching so much more powerful because you won't have the distraction of any of those things playing in the background. And then the last thing that I think would happen when you answer that question and you see all of your beautiful answers for it and you start to apply them is that you'll start to make different business decisions and different decisions for your client relationships, right? Because you won't be actively guarding anything about yourself as a human and therefore you won't be making business decisions to cover those things up.

And I know that most of you, I want you to really hear me say this, I know that most of you are never doing that on purpose. It is just what happens when you're having that thought, no one can know, right? You just will start to make decisions based on that thought and based on not letting anyone in or letting anyone know that this thing is happening.

So, I hope this was really useful for you. I hope that if you needed this message today, that you let it soak in and that you really sit with it. I'm serious. Like if this hit you in a way that you're like, oh, I needed this. Just sit with it and answer that question. Really visit it. What would change if people knew you were human and that you accepted that you were human, fully human, even though you're a coach?

Okay, so very last thing, I just want to tell you, because this relates very much to this topic, is that I am currently enrolling for something I'm calling Coach Unfiltered, which is a three-month documentary-style experience. July 16th is officially when the doors open, but we will have a kickoff party. I'm calling it the Before Party on July 18th, and then we officially start on the 21st of July where I will be sharing everything that I'm about to change in my business, letting you in on the entire process, literally think of the most transparent thing you can imagine.

That's what will be happening so that you're not just seeing the after, as I unveil all of my new things, all of my new branding, all of my new positioning, my website, my podcast redo, a new signature program. I'm

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basically really mixing it up and making lots and lots of changes, and I want to let you in on every part of the process.

So for three months, I'm going to be sharing every week what I'm working on, how is it going. I'll be sharing some of the frameworks that I'll be using. I will be even sharing some of my personal coaching moments, even on video, my meetings with some experts, my decisions that I'm working on, the decisions I make and why I make them, just literally every part of the behind the scenes that you can imagine. That's what's going to be happening, and it'll be leading up to a really big launch in September, October timeframe, and I cannot wait to really experience it with you.

I feel, honestly, you can probably tell I'm like a little nervous even just talking about it because I do feel a little scared. There are moments that I'm like, why in the world would I decide to do this? Because I don't know how it's going to go, right? I don't yet know the after. And that's usually, that's why I'm calling it a Before Party, so I can celebrate all the things that have brought me to where I am right now, instead of just deciding like, oh, this is all bad and it must be changed.

No, it's all amazing. It's all part of the business that I've built. And there are very specific reasons that I'll be making some changes, and I will let you in on all of those. So I want to invite you to join me for every behind the scenes moment that you want to see.

And there will be a community aspect of it with monthly Q&A with me as well on Zoom where you can ask about any decisions I've made, anything I'm working on, plus even ask about, you know, how to apply some of the things to your own business. It won't be an active coaching offer, right? So there won't be any sort of like weekly coaching or anything. It'll be really more of behind the scenes, just you watching all the things with opportunities to ask a bunch of questions.

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And as a just added bonus, which is really fun, some of the experts that I'll be working with and coaches that you'll get to see some of my sessions with, some of them have agreed to also host Q&As and or coaching sessions for you. And that will all be a part of it as well.

And it is a very low-priced offer. It is \$250 to just join in, be in the community, have a bunch of fun with me, possibly see me cry, but also definitely see me celebrate, and just watch the transformation unfold so that you kind of can see what it's like when you see a coach, maybe that you follow and they're making a bunch of changes. And then you think like, oh, I should be doing that. But what I'll be showing you is really like all the work, all the behind the scenes that goes into it.

And this is a new era of coaching that I am stepping into is just being for the most part completely transparent. And I only say for the most part because there will be some things that, you know, I won't share because of client confidentiality or because something is very personal and doesn't really have a lot to do with my coaching or, you know, I can see examples of when I wouldn't be 100% transparent about all the things, but it would never be something that would affect your experience or help you understand why I'm doing all the things that I'm doing.

So I really hope you join us. We will put the link in the show notes. I am very excited. And everyone is welcome to join the Before Party whether or not you join us for Coach Unfiltered. Although you should obviously just do it. And for the first 100 people, which could already be full by the time this podcast comes out, but if it is full, then you just won't see the option to do this. But for the first 100 people, you actually get \$100 off, which means it's only \$150 to join me for three months and see every single part of my behind the scenes kind of reinvention, reimagining of my business.

All right. I cannot wait to see you there. You are perfectly, beautifully, imperfect. And that is exactly how you're supposed to be as a human and as a coach. And I really want you to start taking notes anytime you are

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thinking, no one can know because if I can just help you release that thought so that you are never having it again, I can't even tell you how different you will feel on the other side of it. I promise you, you will have so much freedom on the other side.

Okay. Goodbye, and I will see you back here again 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 lindsaydotzlafoaching.com. That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. see you next week.