

Ep #197: The Sneaky Way Your Brain Keeps You Stuck (And What to Do About It)



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With Your Host

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 197.

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're here today. I want to share with you today something that I heard recently that blew my mind. It's going to be what the whole episode is about. It is related to coaching, obviously. And I think it's just a different way to think about why coaching is important, why coaching can be so effective, and really how tricky our brains and our bodies can be when we are trying to go after big goals or even just create change in our lives.

So as usual, in this episode one thing I'm going to do is frame this in a way that will be useful for you thinking about yourself and the changes you want to make or goals you want to hit. But of course, this definitely is going to be something that you could share with clients and use as examples with clients. But I think it's a really effective way to think about what coaching is and why it's important and just a different way to describe it that I have never thought of before.

Now, you may have heard this before, but maybe not. Hopefully not. We'll see. To me, I heard it just in an off-handed comment recently in a mastermind I'm in. It was the last call of the mastermind, someone was getting coached, and the coach just made this comment that blew my mind and I haven't stopped thinking about it since.

She said to someone who she was coaching – I don't even remember what they were coaching on honestly. I think I blacked out after I heard this because I wrote it down immediately, completely stopped listening to what they were talking about and started obsessing over this idea because it is genius.

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She said something like, you know, the client was saying words, blah, blah, blah. And the coach said, of course that's what you think, or of course that's what you're thinking, of course that's what your brain is telling you. Your brain has all the insider information and it's going to play dirty. And I was like, wait, what? I've literally never thought about it like that before.

So let's just rewind a second. If you think about what coaching is and why it's effective, it's because it really is helping you, or your clients, right, get out of that default brain, get out of your default thinking. The thoughts that just happen on autopilot, right? For most of us, we have constant thoughts running through our mind.

If you're anything like me, if you're sitting in a quiet room, your mind is constantly going. Now, I know this isn't true for everyone. And actually, from what I understand from what I've read, I think it's kind of a spectrum of like some people like me feel like my brain is constant. It is constantly talking to me if there's nothing else filling that noise. You know, even something as simple as music can disrupt it. But if there's nothing like that, then it's like having someone stand there just talking to me the entire time.

Some of you I know, a lot of you probably experience that. You know exactly what I'm talking about. Some people, and if you didn't know this, it is important as a coach for you to know because it could require some altering of coaching techniques if you have a client like this, but some people don't have that. They don't have the constant inner chatter or inner monologue.

I think that is wild in the most amazing way. I am so curious what that would be like to not have that constant thing going on. Anyway, just know everyone is kind of on a spectrum of that. Most people do have some constant monologue happening or semi-constant monologue happening in their mind.

So I want you to consider this. Imagine you have, let's say a best friend, but in this example, this is going to be kind of silly because this isn't usually

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real life. But let's just say this best friend is with you all the time, right, just most of the day. Like you wake up, that best friend is there. And you have told this best friend every single thing about yourself in a way that probably most of us haven't done with anyone, no matter how close we are, right?

Like every single negative thought you have about yourself. Every single fear you have, every single doubt, every worry, everything. Every single thing. And that best friend is there constantly every time you run an idea by them, or you tell them about your new goal, or you start to make a plan or a strategy to do something different or create a new habit in a way that you haven't done before.

That best friend just really wants you, and they think they have your best interest in mind, right? They want you to be comfortable, and they want everything to be simple and efficient. And they just want you to exert as little, really as little energy as possible. And so every time you offer something to them, an idea, a goal, a plan, that friend convinces you why it's not a great idea.

And because you've told them every single thing about yourself, they know how to use all of that against you, right? They really know how to play dirty. They will bring up, and they remember every single thing you've ever told them, right? Of course, in this fake scenario. So they remember every single thing you've ever told them.

And so you bring up, hey, I'm thinking of trying this new thing. And they're like, oof, you know, that really sounds like not a great idea. And then they start repeating back to you some things you have told them before. Remember how you don't really like to try new things, and you get really uncomfortable in rooms full of new people. And also, you know, you made that plan last week, and it didn't really work out. So I'm not sure why you would do it again.

And that friend could just keep going and going and going. And if you keep resisting, and if you keep saying, "Nope, here's why it's a good idea. I'm

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doing it anyway. I'm going to try it, they'll just play dirtier and dirtier, right? They will come there until they find an excuse that feels so true to you, it doesn't even feel like a thought or an opinion. It just feels like the truth, right?

I'll give you just one tiny example. Let's say you are trying to create a new morning routine. And you wake up and your first thought is like, okay, new morning routine, my alarm went off, I have to get up and go on that walk, whatever the first thing is on the routine. And that friend is right there, of course, because in this imaginary scenario they're with you all of the time, and it's not creepy.

And they say, oh, no, you don't want to do that. You want to sleep. And like, that sounds tempting, right? Because you do kind of want to sleep. They're not wrong. And you're like, yeah, but I committed to this. And I'm getting up, I'm going for the walk. And they're like, yes, but it's pretty early. And you didn't sleep very well. Right now it's a little more convincing. You're like, you're right. I didn't sleep very well.

And then that friend says, and remember, you have that big thing, you know, going on in your business today, or at work today, or whatever. You have that big, important thing today and you do not want to be tired for that. So it's probably more important that you get the couple extra hours of sleep, you could just go back to sleep right now, get those couple extra hours of sleep. And then you'll be fully rested and prepared for that presentation you have to give later at work.

And you hear that, and you're like, well, that is really true. Like that, yeah. Okay. Hadn't considered that. You're right. Right. And then you crawl back in bed, pull the covers back up, go back to sleep.

Now, what has happened is that friend has just convinced you to not do the thing, because it doesn't like change. It wants you to stay comfortable. It wants you to just stay in that bed with the friend, maybe, right? And

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obviously, in this example, the friend is your brain. It's that inner monologue. It's the thing that's telling you like, are you sure?

And notice the difference between right, like that example I just gave, where I walked you through kind of thoughts that might come up for you that get increasingly more believable, until the point that you might, if you don't know what's going on, right, if you can't override it, you're like, oh, yeah, that actually is true. That's a great point.

Notice how convincing that is versus a different version or different brand of that, which might be a little less convincing that you might be able to use maybe like willpower or commitment or whatever to overcome might sound like, yeah, but it's early. And you're like, no, I committed. I'm doing it anyway. And, you know, if your friend was like, yeah, but we could really use more sleep. Yep. But I committed, I'm doing it. Yeah but, right? And it sounds a little whinier.

Sometimes that is what it sounds like. And it's so easy to identify, okay, this just is going to take some commitment. Right. This is going to, like I'm going to hit the override button on my brain. I'm going to do the thing that I said I was going to do. But it gets a lot harder when those thoughts sound a lot more convincing, a lot more like the truth instead of thoughts, the truth instead of just your opinion or you just not wanting to do something. Right.

So when you think about it this way, I just think it's such a genius way to think about it, right? If you think about like, oh, your brain is going to play dirty. I have noticed myself thinking about this since I heard the coach say it because it's such a good way to really address those things that are coming up for you to really like when you remember, right, it's like imagine if an actual friend was sitting there next to you saying those things.

If it was another person, you might be able to say, why are you trying to talk me out of this? Like what's happening? Or, you know, you might be able to have a back and forth conversation.

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But in this case, when it's your brain and your brain is just on default and it's like, well, let's stay comfortable. Let's not do the thing. Let's not rock the boat. Let's not go outside of our comfort zone. And it's kind of more of a one sided conversation because it's just, you know, you having thoughts to yourself, then it can just become so convincing.

I want you to think about examples of times that this has happened, right? Of times that you have had this kind of voice in your head, the running dialogue, the thoughts that you're having that just sound so convincing. And later either you're able to override, right? And say, nope, doing it anyway. It's okay if I'm tired during that presentation today, I'm going for a walk because it's what I said I'm going to do.

Either you were able to do that or you gave in, you went back to bed, you did the thing, but later you were able to see, right? Like with the 20-20 hindsight, it was like, oh, okay. That was really a trick. That was just like me not wanting to get up. I think I actually would have had more energy if I got up and went on the walk than if I laid back down in bed and slept for two more hours.

I want you to consider this when you're thinking about your clients, right? When you're thinking about it, sometimes I think it's really powerful to have different ways to explain to your clients what coaching is and how to really talk about mindset and the power of our minds in a way that isn't just, you know, well, that's a thought. Like, can you see the difference between a thought and a fact, right? And pointing those things out.

Those things can be really powerful, but sometimes to use an analogy like this, right, where you are really showing them like, of course, this is what you're thinking in the moment because if you feel scared or if you feel uncomfortable or if you feel sad or if you feel any of those things, any like negative emotion, your brain, your person is like, oh, we don't want that. We don't want to feel that. What's the quickest way out of this? Let me throw everything at it.

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And the more uncomfortable you feel, the more discomfort you feel, the more fear you feel when you're trying to do something, the dirtier your brain is going to play, right? The more important things they're going to throw at it, the more believable things. It's why coaching is so effective. It's why when as a coach when you can see, you know, when you can really listen to your client talking and hear them saying things that they believe that are just facts, they throw them out there like these are just the facts of the world today in their world. And you're able to see that some of the things that they're saying are not facts.

It's kind of like you're in conversation with your client and their friend who is throwing all this at them, right? And it's kind of like an intervention. It's like, wait a minute, let's actually examine these things that your friend is telling you, again, coming back to your friend in this case is yourself, your brain, that running dialogue. And you're really able to step in and like show them actually what's happening is you're feeling really scared. And we just need to get that prefrontal cortex back online, right?

We need to get your logical brain on board with these goals that you're trying to create. Not the amygdala. Not the fear center. Not the part of your brain that wants to take over, which really is the voice of that friend, right, it wants to take over and say like, oh, you're right. That is very scary. Do not do that. Do not put yourself out there. Do not launch that new offer.

If you've been listening to the past couple episodes, I've been talking about this new mastermind that I've been launching, and it is very exciting, but I will say like, I am thrilled about it. I cannot wait. If you don't know what I'm talking about, go back and listen.

But I'm launching a new business mastermind and I would be lying if I didn't say that, you know, a couple weeks, maybe even months after I decided like, okay, I think this is really happening, every reason you could possibly think of came up for me about why I shouldn't do it. About why it was a terrible idea. Everyone's going to hate it. No one's going to buy it. It's going to ruin my business, right? Like all of those things.

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And some of them felt so personal. Some of them were like, listen, you can't do this because you have said that you're not a business coach and you're going to confuse your audience. Like they felt so true. I was like, yes, okay. You're right. I shouldn't do it. Even though it was so clear what the offer was, it was so clear why I'm offering it. It was all of those things.

So the trick is once you see it, you can use this with yourself or with your clients. Once you see it, once you hear the thoughts and you remind yourself, okay, yeah, this is my brain. It knows all my secrets. It knows how to play dirty. It knows all the ins and outs of every single thing I've ever thought that I've ever told it, it has it all recorded. It literally has responses ready to just throw at me when I feel scared or when I want, you know, I know something's going to take a lot more energy than what I'm used to.

And when you offer yourself that, and then you come back to thinking about whatever it is, the big goal that you're setting, the new routine, the habit you're trying to create. When you can see that and see that it's just your brain playing dirty, it really does give it this interesting reframe, at least for me.

And maybe this is a little bit of my personality showing where I'm like, oh yeah, watch me, right? Like I've been known to have a little bit of that pushback with other people. And so when I reframe it like that, that it's just my brain playing dirty, trying to keep me safe, trying to keep me small, it's a lot easier to turn it around and say, okay, watch me. Or yeah, like I hear you. It is going to be really scary. It is going to take more effort than what we might like. It is going to be way outside of our comfort zone.

It is going to fill in the blank, right? Whatever those things are for you. But also here are all the reasons I want to do it. Here are all the reasons I want to launch that new mastermind. Here's why it feels so important. Here's the response to actually all those things that you're throwing at me, right? Here's why I'm going to do it anyway. Here's why I want to create that new morning routine. Here are all the reasons it's actually really important, even on the days that I have that big presentation.

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I hope this was really helpful. I have literally been obsessing over this ever since I heard it. So hopefully if you're listening, it feels really helpful for you. Let me know, I can't wait to hear.

And don't forget episode 200 of the podcast is coming every 50 episodes. I do listener Q and A. So if you have any questions that you want to ask me, any questions at all, personal, business, about coaching, tips for your coaching, anything at all that you have been wanting to ask. Even if you're brand new here, this is your first episode and you have questions about this or anything else that I've ever talked about. There will be a link in the show notes for you. You can go click it and submit your questions.

You can submit as many as you want. I usually answer all of them. If there are lots of repeats or something I've gone deep into before, I might skip it, but maybe I'll reference it and tell you which episode to go listen to if I've done a whole episode on it. So I cannot wait to see your questions. I hope you have an amazing week. Get out there, get coaching, go change some lives, and I will talk to you 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 lindsaydotzlafcoaching.com. That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.