

Ep #209: Reframe Imposter Syndrome: Uncover Your Personality Gap with Dr. Crystal Agyei



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 209.

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, Lindsay here, and before we get started on today's episode I want to give you a little prompt to join us for Coach Week. Coach Week will be October 28th through November 1st, and it is the third annual free Coach Week that includes workshops, trainings, and of course coaching, and a lot of fun.

We also have some added bonuses and just fun extras this year which we are including, some of it for free and some of it in the expanded experience, which will be if you choose to upgrade. But even if you don't, you can come, you can join us for free, you can dip in, watch whatever workshops you want to watch and pick and choose, look at the schedule. But no matter how you join, I can not wait to see you there. We are in full-time prep mode for Coach Week right now and I'm having so much fun creating it for you.

So click the link in the show notes, you can join and register there for free. You can also find the details about the expanded experience there. You can also find it in my Instagram bio, just @LindsayDotzlaf on Instagram. Or send me an email if you can't find it anywhere. Last ditch effort, shoot me an email and I will get you the link because you have to be there. If you're a coach, it's a must. All right? See you there. Now onto today's episode.

Lindsay: Hey coach, I am so happy you're here today. I have something really fun for you. Today I am interviewing a good friend of mine, Crystal Agyei, and she is going to tell us all about the work she does with so many things. We go down lots of rabbit holes, but the work with mostly imposter

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syndrome is what we're talking about in this episode. Although we do end up touching on a few other things.

There were so many things I wanted to talk to her about. I think she is brilliant, and I knew she had to be on the podcast to just teach you some of the ways she thinks about the work that she does with her clients, which I'm going to let her explain because she will do a better job than I will. I really hope you enjoy this interview. I would love to hear from you, let me know what you think.

And I do want to give a quick note, actually two quick notes before the episode starts. First, Crystal and I talked for a second after the interview, and one thing she said is she forgot to mention she does have a workshop coming up specifically addressing the kind of idea we talk about today about imposter syndrome.

So if you go find her, at the end we'll talk about where you can find her and all the things, so if you find her, that is the thing that's coming up. If you are interested in this work or in hearing more about it, definitely check that out.

And then the next thing is I want to also address this, which is that in this episode, we talk about imposter syndrome. And we mostly talk about it through the lens of when it's coming up for your clients or even for yourself in a way that's just kind of like that version that's like, who am I to be here or – Well, you'll hear us, we go deep into it.

But we kind of only address one side of it, which is when you label something as imposter syndrome, which allows you sometimes to just kind of smack that label on and then like move it to the side. One thing we talk about in this episode is that actually there's like a personality gap, which is what Crystal is calling it, that you don't dig into if you just kind of label it and move on.

The thing we don't address in this episode, but I think it's important to say is I think there's another thing that at least I see with my clients when you just

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kind of tell yourself like, oh, that's imposter syndrome and you don't really examine what's under it.

So there's the personality gap, which we talk about today. And then there's also on occasion, a knowledge gap. Like an actual gap in your knowledge. Maybe you're going to teach something, maybe you're going to talk about something and you're like, ugh, who am I to do this? And then you're like, oh, that's imposter syndrome again. And you just kind of label it and then you're like, I'm just scared. And then you move on.

What it sometimes doesn't allow you to see is that on occasion, there is an actual knowledge gap of what you're about to do or talk about or help your clients with, and that's okay. But the goal in that case would be to see it and close the gap or know, oh, this actually isn't for me to talk about. This isn't my area of expertise.

Sometimes people are so scared to see that, that they just kind of label it imposter syndrome and then just carry on versus pausing and saying, oh, what is that gap? And can I fill it? Can I learn the thing? Can I increase my knowledge? And for some of you, you're going to want to use that against yourself and say like, oh, of course there's always more knowledge to learn, which there is.

But I just think that it's an important distinction around another reason imposter syndrome can show up and kind of that attachment to, you know, no one can know that I don't know what I'm doing, that I don't know what I'm talking about. And that's just a little different than what we're addressing on today's episode.

So maybe I'll dig into that in a future episode, but for now, I just wanted to kind of pin that, bring it to your awareness and just know that what we are talking about in today's episode is a very specific situation type of imposter syndrome, I'm going to say like in air quotes. And you'll see why I say it like that as you listen.

All right. I hope you enjoy it. Here is the episode with Crystal Agyei.

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Lindsay: Hello. Hello. I am so happy you're here today. Tell everyone who you are and what you do.

Crystal: Hi everyone, my name is Dr. Crystal Agyei. I'm the Burnout MD for Entrepreneurs. I help entrepreneurs navigate life and business without compromising their health or burning out.

Lindsay: I love it. So concise. So good.

Crystal: You would think I practiced it.

Lindsay: Yeah, a few times at least, I think. So I am so happy to have you here. And I saved this for after the recording started, because I just have to tell you that I just think you're a genius. I love the way your brain works. I love talking to you geeking out about all things coaching, which they might hear through this episode. Hopefully we're going to try to stay on track. We decided that before we started recording.

Crystal: We surely had a pre-meeting about that. But yes, thank you.

Lindsay: Okay, so let's just first give them some quick context about how we know each other. Sometimes I interview my clients, sometimes I interview people I admire, coaches I've worked with, just all those things. And you are a friend and we have met through mutual spaces we've been in together, but I also just really love all of the things that you talk about when it comes to coaching and agree with so much of what you say.

Crystal: Well, thank you. So you want to say how we met?

Lindsay: Sure, go for it.

Crystal: We first met, hold on. No, we first hugged.

Lindsay: That's important. This is an important distinction.

Crystal: It was in Connecticut. It was at the coaches forum at Trudi LeBron's events where we first met. And then we were both in Trudi's

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mastermind, in Aim. And we learned about each other's thought leadership. And then we had the retreat and that was awesome. And we had a lot of conversations and really vibed well. And it was, yeah, it was great.

Lindsay: Yeah. And we stayed in a house together, which is always really fun to get to know people quickly.

Crystal: Lindsay likes to stay up at night.

Lindsay: Sometimes I like to stay up late and Crystal likes to cut my grapes for me when she makes me lunch.

Crystal: The anxiety went up that morning, yes.

Lindsay: You may or may not have younger kids, which I totally get. And so you were serving me lunch and I was just laughing because you cut my grapes in half so I wouldn't choke.

Crystal: Exactly.

Lindsay: So good. But my favorite memory of you, the moment I fell in love with you, which is such a random thing, it's like I don't even know why, but this just stands out in my mind is we were together in Puerto Rico and we were at a grocery store ordering lunch, as one does at a grocery store. They had like a counter where you order.

Crystal: A deli, yeah.

Lindsay: A deli where you order sandwiches. And I was trying to order mine and I have an allergy. And so you were standing there kind of listening to me as I'm trying to communicate with the person what I want and what my allergy is and whatever not to put on it. And he understood and he was making the sandwich and you said you didn't do it right. And then you just said things to him that I wasn't totally sure what you were saying in Spanish. I understood some of it, but not all of it.

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And I was like, what is that? And you were like, you don't even know how to order a sandwich. And then you told him how to heat the sandwich up, like how to, like can you heat the meat separate, I think.

Crystal: Yeah, because that was the sandwich, my mom had a grocery store and she had a deli and I'm like, that's how you're supposed to do it.

Lindsay: You just took over in the moment like, you are an idiot. Why would you even order a sandwich like that?

Crystal: No.

Lindsay: No, but like in the best way. I loved it, is what I'm saying. I was like, okay, yes. Be a sandwich expert. Good. Thank you. And it was delicious.

Crystal: You're welcome. I am actually a sandwich expert since I was like 10 years old.

Lindsay: And then you told me you just grew up, your mom or your family owned a grocery store.

Crystal: Yeah.

Lindsay: And then we talked about it for a long time because that was fascinating.

Crystal: Oh, interesting.

Lindsay: The sandwich was delicious.

Crystal: Well, you're welcome.

Lindsay: So there it is. That was the moment. I was like, okay, you won me over. It has nothing to do with coaching at all.

Crystal: Good to know. Okay, cool. It's based in food, our relationship.

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Lindsay: I think it was just the energy. I just love an expert energy or that confidence of like, no, no, you're doing it wrong. Let me just, let me just help you out.

Crystal: Cool. Okay, cool.

Lindsay: So that's so random, but that was the moment. There it was.

Crystal: My expertise, there we go. Leading the way to today's conversation.

Lindsay: That's right. So we're not here to talk about sandwiches, that's going to be a different episode maybe. But we are going to talk about just a post of yours that I saw on Instagram and we will tell everyone in your Instagram at the end so everybody can go follow you because you're amazing.

But when I saw this post, I immediately messaged you. And I said, I already knew I wanted to have you on, but I messaged you and I was like, this is it. Like, this is what we have to talk about because it aligns so much with the way I think about coaching and some of the things that I teach. And yeah, let's just do it. Do you want to just read the post?

Crystal: Okay. So here is the post. So it bugs me when people default to imposter syndrome instead of figuring out why they are doubting themselves. Oh, it's my imposter syndrome coming up. This is not helpful. What exactly are we to do with this? An invisible syndrome made up in the seventies that's a result of manipulating ourselves or conforming to fit into white supremacist or patriarchal ideals. Do not put lipstick on a pig, imposter syndrome is camouflaged and internalized oppression.

Okay, I said it. Anywho, a much more helpful reframe, I think, is a personality gap. There is a version of you that you want to be, that you desire to be versus the one that is showing up. The difference between the two is a gap, a personality gap. You're having trouble figuring out how to

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bridge the two because of a variety of reasons, but it's not because you have a syndrome.

So next time you want to say my imposter syndrome is coming up, replace it with, I'm experiencing a gap in between where I am with where I want to go. A few more syllables, yes, but a much more helpful reframe and more accurate. Stop having imposter syndrome slow you down and learn how to close the personality gap instead.

Lindsay: So good. I feel like I'm waiting for applause, just like insert a round of applause.

So there's a lot to unpack here and I want to dig into several parts of it. But just for the listeners' sake, and I kind of already told you this before we started recording, but I think the reason it stood out to me and hit home, for me, and I was like, "Oh, this is it, we have to talk about this" is this just in general what you're talking about here is so much of the way I think about coaching and the way I teach coaching, is we're not here to diagnose people. We don't need to necessarily put labels on our clients.

And one reason that is not a lot of times helpful is because when I see coaches do this, or when I see it in their coaching, it's kind of like, "Oh, that's just imposter syndrome," and then they kind of move on. Like here's just this label. It's really easy to slap that on there and then just move on to the next thing. Or to say like, that's imposter syndrome, like how do we solve it?

But your reframe of, pause, like here's a much more useful way to talk about it. When I read that, I was like, yes, like that's the thing, to me, that gets underneath the label and says like, where did this actually come from? What do we really want to do about it? How are we really going to move forward with or without a label?

And then of course, I love that you add in all the context of your work with many women of color and just doing that kind of intersectional work

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between coaching and, you're going to say it a lot better than I do, but just kind of addressing it from all angles.

So that was a lot of me talking. So now let's just dig into you. Like, first of all, how did you learn this? Is this something you came up with on your own? Did you learn it somewhere? What's the kind of background of that?

Crystal: So I didn't really get into this work until like 2020, but I remember growing up, like people normalizing me having imposter syndrome. Being a Latina physician, Latinos only make less than 2% of the physician population, now it's up to four. But I remember it being normalized of having imposter syndrome because I was a woman of color and it's like, this is just what's happening. And that's what's happening and this is what you do. And like have white man confidence and things like that.

And then it wasn't until I got into the coaching space and I got involved, the timeline I don't think truly matters, but like in combination of being involved with Trudi LeBron's work and then having this internal inquiry, it was like, is it the human experience or is it internalized oppression? And imposter syndrome was something that kept coming up, especially as a new entrepreneur. Like, oh, this is happening. And in conversations and in groups, it was like, what is this?

And so in combination of learning Trudi's work and the white supremacy ideals of like, oh, this is what's happening and we're calling it imposter syndrome because no one wants to talk about internalized oppression. And so we'd much more call it imposter syndrome because it's so normalized in our society that this feels, it's almost like an end to the group of having imposter syndrome, while at the same time you don't want to stick out. It's like this weird dynamic.

Lindsay: This just came up for me when I heard you say that, but do you think when it's presented like that, oh, that's just imposter syndrome, or even, of course, the way you said it earlier, of course you feel that way, you are in a room of, you know, whatever, however many people that don't look

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like you. And when it's labeled as like, this is just imposter syndrome, does it feel like it's just kind of bypassing? Like, is it bypassing the issue?

Crystal: Yes. So like, I do want to name, like there is a biological happening where when you are one different than a group or the herd, like, yes, there's something biological that's not related to oppression, per se. But the bypassing of the conversation in the context of the opportunity for healing, because you put this stamp on it and you end the conversation, it's just like saying, I don't know.

I feel like I equate labeling imposter syndrome the same thing as I don't know, like you close the opportunity of exploring, like what is actually happening, or trying to cure this syndrome that is non-existent. And so you're like, chasing your tail.

Lindsay: Yeah. So when you say in your post, one thing that you said is this – Let me see, I have it here. I'm looking for it. I love that you said the difference between the two is just a gap, like who you are on the inside and who you want to be.

Crystal: Yeah, match your insides to your outsides. Yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah. How do you think labeling something as imposter syndrome gets in the way of you really figuring out what that gap is?

Crystal: So I mean, to put it simply, words are magic, right? Our brain interprets a multitude of things, and there's bias to certain language. And so, one, the word imposter, and second, the word syndrome has so many contexts like just the fact of calling yourself an imposter or tying association with that word will send a message to your nervous system of like, I am not supposed to be here.

And syndrome, it was originally called imposter phenomenon. And then because of media, it got labeled syndrome and that just kind of stuck. But the title syndrome just has so many contexts to like, oh, this is something I'm carrying with me. And because it's not a true diagnosis, there's no true

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cure. So it's just something you're holding on to yourself. And it just can build up into this invisible weight that is just part of your being.

Versus a gap is like you just see that like, okay, I either need to build a bridge or is this like a muddy interpass and I just need a rock to climb on. Like a gap just gives your mind something more tangible to work with.

Lindsay: Yeah, when you reframe it as this is a gap, to me, when I hear that I'm like, oh, right, so it's like, how do I get from here to there? Let's find that bridge or solution.

Crystal: Are we building a plane? Or do we need to get an Uber? Or do we need some walking sticks? Like, how are we going to cross this gap? Then we start solving for what is in between here and there, and then that's where the work is.

Lindsay: And one thing that stood out to me that you said a minute ago is also getting, like closing that gap isn't telling yourself, let me just have like white man confidence.

Crystal: Right. You know what, I'm just getting a download right now, it's like and through the healing, through the healing and unpacking ideals that we think we're supposed to live up to, what if the gap is not even like, in some cases the gap is not even there. Like it's just you returning back to yourself.

Like when you disrupt all the ideals you're supposed to live up to like, yeah, maybe a fear or maybe a skill I want to learn or maybe something but like, sometimes there's a perception of the gap and it's really no gap. There's just a return to you after you shed all the ideals you think you're supposed to live up to.

Lindsay: Yes, that is really powerful. And if you relate it to what I just said of like why is it not useful to say like, oh, just have like the confidence of a white man, to me when I hear that, even just applying it let's say to myself, which is a little different than adding on oppression and the lens that you

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are sometimes looking at it through. But even if I just apply that to myself, it actually is just reinforcing the imposter syndrome because I'm not that.

Crystal: Yeah, the imposter syndrome, right. You're trying to pretend something that you will never be, you know what I mean?

Lindsay: And the gap definitely isn't going from me to white man confidence, right?

Crystal: Right. And why is that the point of reference? And so why is the white man confidence a point of reference for us? And why are we not questioning that point of reference?

Lindsay: So good. I love that. Yes. I feel like there are 10 different directions we could go with this, which is of course what I love about doing some of this work. And you and I, we had a talk about this, we both have a tendency to just overthink all the things and talk about things in our heads all day, all the things we have to say and tell people.

But I do think something that could be interesting to explore just for a second is two things, the history of imposter syndrome, just like a quick blip of like where did it come from? Like an understanding of that because I think so many coaches use that terminology without any of that knowledge of like, where did it come from? How did we get here to use it how we do today?

And then after that, maybe talking about some of the ways that might come up in coaching, like how you see it come up in coaching and how you address it.

Crystal: Okay. So originally named, termed imposter phenomenon. It was a paper written by two white women psychologists, and it talked about that it was only occurring in high achieving women. And it basically just defined it as feeling like a fraud despite having achieved success. And so it was a persistent feeling wherever this person most commonly, and back then a woman, but they later found out it affects all genders.

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And the context of them being two white women psychologists in the seventies is like we weren't explicitly talking about systems of oppression, like patriarchy, white supremacy and things of that nature. So originally when it was created, there was an application of an intersectional lens.

Dr. Valerie Young has taken this, forwarded this work and has continued to have conversations around applying the intersectional lens. But again, all these three women are white women, so it's important to add that context.

Lindsay: Yeah. So when they created it, I would say, right?

Crystal: Yeah, they were psychologists so they just saw a pattern in their practice of women not going for the job, like keeping themselves from going for the position, even though they had the skills or having patterns of self-sabotage where they procrastinate on purpose. Like it's almost like a strategy. So they were seeing these different patterns. Or the inability to ask for help or delegate of super woman identity.

So it was showing up in different patterns. And so they categorized it into five different types to explain what was happening. And because it was more spoken about, the experiences were more coming from women because men weren't talking about their experiences like that at that time, they assumed it only affected women.

Lindsay: So interesting. It's interesting to think about that now from the point of view of like, of course this is something that affects everyone in some way, even if some people are just talking about it.

Crystal: Right, because the patriarchy hurts men too.

Lindsay: Yeah. So good. Okay, so does this come up in your coaching? Like do you ever have, like sometimes I'll have a client say, "Well, I know it's just imposter syndrome." Like they'll lead with that. Now, I'm often coaching coaches in this scenario, right? So it's like they've added that label themselves to themselves.

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What would you say, or how would you navigate it if a client said that, or just kind of brought that to you, put that label on and just kind of tried to move just past it?

Crystal: So I would only name the context of imposter syndrome if they had offered it. I would never put that label or interpretation. And that actually is one of the things in the imposter syndrome Institute, is like you, as the coach, to not give that label to the client. That is like a big no-no.

Lindsay: Totally agree. Yep.

Crystal: So it was basically starting with like, what does that mean to you? Assuming the perceived definition of imposter syndrome, I'm like asking them, what does that mean? Give me like, where's this coming up? Like, why is it coming up and getting more context of what's happening and start like peeling the thread and depending on the experience with applying an equity centered lens, if you can apply that power dynamic intersectionality, then keeping that in mind too.

Lindsay: So even just hearing someone say that could lead to a whole unpacking of all of these, looking at it through all of these different lenses.

Crystal: Because one key question I always do is like, what is your point of reference to this internal dissonance that you're having? Like, what are you referring to that's making you feel like, or think that you are off track? And sometimes they're like, oh, because... And then usually it's like, oh, society or they, the vague they group, they're going to say something. Like, what is that really about? And start exploring. That is like kind of the first idea.

Depending on what they say, and I feel like because I've very much dived deep into the work and like, what does that actually mean? And I've even started reading about critical race theory and the application of what certain thoughts or biases mean and how that can show up. So then you can just, there's so much opportunity.

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Lindsay: This is something I ask often, even not applied to imposter syndrome, but even maybe my clients as well. And this thing, it just didn't work, right? Like it failed or whatever. They'll present something like that. And it's always like, wait, pause. What does that mean to you?

I think there are so many things that our clients say that if you don't catch them, you can just take them, you can put your definition on it, right? Like, oh yeah, I know what that means. And to me, this imposter syndrome in general is a place where it's really, I think, important to pause and say like, wait, what does that mean?

Crystal: What are we talking about right now? It's the same thing, it's similar to values work. Like a value of integrity or honesty or like love. Love, for example, can mean one thing to me and completely different to you. Same thing with imposter syndrome. It can just mean a drastically different thing, actually.

Lindsay: Mm-hmm. So I know that there are a lot of coaches right now that are listening to this, right? And they're thinking, oh my gosh, how many times have I told myself, I've even heard it said like this, like this is my imposter syndrome coming up, right? Like it's something that just bubbles up and there's nothing you can do about it.

What would you suggest, it's probably similar to the answer you just gave, but is there any different way that you would think about it? Like if it's just them on their own, sitting with themselves, like what are some questions that they could ask themselves in that moment to really kind of discern what it really is. Like what's really under this?

Crystal: I would suggest going to naming the experience. Like what is happening? So I kind of created this acronym, like NEON, like name the experience, explain what's happening, explain why that experience is happening. And options, like what are your options? Like, do you want to continue labeling it imposter syndrome? But if you can't even go there, what are your options in that moment? And then decide on the next thing.

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Sometimes it can be an overwhelming response, especially before you're going on stage and like, oh, this is because I'm having imposter syndrome. Or it can be really simple like before you're writing a piece of content online. Like I want to say this, but I don't think I'm allowed or experienced or achieved enough to say this thing. And so it's my imposter syndrome coming up, blah, blah, blah.

So depending on that, regardless if it's to that extreme or you're alone in your office, it's like really getting curious on what is happening and why is it happening? It sounds really simple, but it's really just naming the context because you need the information below the label to actually do something about it. I would start there.

And something that may be helpful is like, what I actually have found to really interrupt this pattern is like the conversations with myself outside of those situations that helped me build my self-concept like in maintenance. Like one practice that I love to do is practice affirmations while I'm working out, while strength training, because I truly believe as you're building that muscle fiber, you're also building a neuron network to have that thought come up.

And so as you're strengthening your bicep, you're also strengthening the brain pathway that will eventually override the automatic default to go to imposter syndrome.

Lindsay: Okay. You just said that like it was so simple, but let's just dig into that for one second, because this is actually something I talk about sometimes as well. Not with imposter syndrome, but how when you're working on believing something new or just having a different experience of kind of who you are as a human, that it is so useful to do that while you're moving.

So I'll give the example of going for a walk and practice feeling like, what does possibility feel like in my body? What does curiosity feel like in my body? What does, like and just practice, like can I feel that as I'm moving? I

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think it's a lot harder to do when you're just sitting still at your desk in the moment.

Crystal: Yeah. It's the same reason why you're like in the flow of consciousness when you're moving when, yeah, exactly.

Lindsay: Like why all the good ideas come in the shower.

Crystal: Exactly. Because, I mean, water is healing, but like doing something. Or when you're cleaning the dishes and your hands are full of water and soap and you're like, crap, I need to write this down before I forget, like it's the movements. You have a human body. Like when the nervous system conversation started being more popular, I'm like, your brain is part of your nervous system. Like what you're thinking is part of that, like it's not just, like I get body work, but it's all in tandem.

Lindsay: So good. Oh my gosh. This is another podcast episode for sure because I've been thinking about this a lot recently because I just see it popping up. And my thought is exactly that, like these two things are not separate.

Crystal: They're not separate.

Lindsay: They can't be separate, ever.

Crystal: We act like we're floating heads, but we're actually not. Not yet at least.

Lindsay: Yeah, the conversation becomes very one or the other, right? Like it's either just like, I'm here in my thoughts and I'm thinking something.

Crystal: It's either somatics or thought work, and it's like, we're on the same team.

Lindsay: Yeah. The way, I think we could go down this rabbit hole for just a second, if that's okay. But I think it's connected, right? I think all of this stuff is connected. But I'm just curious, even from your medical standpoint, how

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you would think about this. But the way I describe it is it's like it doesn't matter the point of entry you go with whatever you can access in the moment. Maybe it's a thought first, right? That just pops up and you're like, oh, interesting. Where did that come from? With yourself or your client?

Or maybe it's like, oh, what is this feeling in my body? Why do I feel this heaviness, dread, whatever? Do I get a stamp of approval for that?

Crystal: Yeah. I totally, I co-sign on that. Co-sign.

Lindsay: Yeah, do you have anything to add to that?

Crystal: I think just to add the layer of like, humans love to be right. They love to be right. And that is part of, I mean, that's a whole different rabbit hole, but I'll just say like, we love to be right. So trying to get the point of entry right is missing the whole plot.

Lindsay: Totally. Yes. Oh my gosh, this is so good. Okay, I love that. And it kind of reminds me, actually to circle back it reminds me of the white women coming up with this theory, applying it to just their lived experience and saying like, oh, if it's true for me, it's obviously true for all the women, all the whoever they were talking to, and I'm right.

Crystal: This is what's happening, of course.

Lindsay: This is labeled, done, now let's move on. And I feel like I spend half of my time teaching my clients and teaching on this podcast and wherever, just trying to like debunk, I'm right. Not necessarily I'm right, but like what other people are teaching as like, I'm right, here's the truth. And I'm often saying things like, this is my opinion or that's their opinion.

Crystal: Yeah. And I think people confuse being right with stewardship and leading the way. And so then that just goes down to like, I mean, another rabbit hole, but like your relationship to power and that shows up, whether it's wanting to dominate, being right, perfectionism, all those things. And it's

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like the adaptability and flexibility of not needing to be right is actually the right, like the best way.

Lindsay: Yeah. I was actually thinking about this when I went down the rabbit hole of going back to your Instagram and seeing all these things.

Crystal: There are so many rabbit holes.

Lindsay: But your brain is so similar to mine that I was just like in it with you as I'm scrolling through trying to find this post that I had seen earlier and said we have to talk about this. One thing that I think about often is how, kind of the balance as coaches and as, for most of us, people that are showing up online kind of saying like, here's my expertise. Here's what I know about. Here's what I can talk about.

Like finding the balance between that and having the confidence to be that balanced with and also I'm not right about any of these. Like a lot of this is my experience in working with myself, with my clients and all the learning I've done and all the trainings I've done and all the things combined.

I'm curious if you have any thoughts about that, because I know you work with entrepreneurs and some of your work is focused on that. And so I'm just curious if you have any thoughts about those two things and finding the balance between them. I'm just putting you on the spot, I didn't tell you we were going to talk about this.

Crystal: Like owning your expertise, essentially?

Lindsay: Yeah, and balancing it with like, and also this isn't like the truth of the world.

Crystal: I will just go straight to, Trudi taught me this, like starting with, this is what I have found. Like simply, this is what I found. And I can apply this to a personality gap. Someone might be like, this is completely hogwash, but I'm like, this is what I have found. With all my studies and degrees and

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curiosity and application, this is what I have found. You can take it or leave it. You know what I mean? Like kind of that kind of energy.

But that's also the work of your self concept of being able to be okay with teetering back and forth and maybe, yeah, okay, I might be called out for this. And I'm okay with that because I feel like I did the work to support it.

So to navigate that whole thing goes back down to like, what is your relationship to power and being right? And like, are you okay, like this is just what I have found and I stand by it.

Lindsay: Yeah. What I have found – It's so natural now because I have also worked with Trudi, I've just heard her say it so many times. But what I really have found in working with my clients and watching them and kind of studying them is this kind of, it's like they go through levels of like, kind of they're a new coach. They're kind of a beginner. They question a lot of what they think about coaching, what their coaching style is, all of that.

And then they kind of have this, they hit this point, and this isn't a bad thing. I think it happens for most coaches from what I've seen. It's like, I'm an expert. I'm right. Like, here's the truth of how we operate as humans and everybody needs to know, everyone needs to know this because it's going to make their life better and whatnot.

And then the next level after that is like, I'm not right, but I do have a lot of great tools, a lot of things that can help people. And it's kind of like settling back down into the middle ground between. And that, to me, when they have that calmness around it all is when I am like, oh, you are really good at what you do. Like, there's just something different that happens.

Crystal: I think, and how my brain is hearing you explain that is like, oh, that's the journey of healing. Because you're returning back to yourself because really that thing about being right is actually a form of internalized oppression. That is white supremacy in vivo in your life, because you think it has to look like a textbook boom, boom, boom way.

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And that's just not the way the whole world works, especially with people with indigenous backgrounds and oratory customs. Like not everyone wrote everything down, and so having it have to be aligned in that way is actually a form of internalized oppression. So your release of that is a form of healing and returning to who you are. And you may not have been aware of like, that was your healing journey, but that's how I see it.

Lindsay: So good. I love that you're like, "Yeah, what I hear is..." And you said totally different words, but I completely agree with you. And I think it is the same thing, just said in different ways.

Crystal: Yeah.

Lindsay: I really appreciate that.

Crystal: Thanks. Yeah, no, I appreciate you offering it because then the next thing I'd go to like that thing of wanting to be right, I would then explore like, where are you not asking for help? And so you think it's like, oh, power. Like I just want to be in control, I do it better myself. But that actually is internalized oppression of hyper-individualism and not having access to a community because you've been conditioned that way.

So like, if you're willing to go down that healing journey, it's like a relationship with asking for help.

Lindsay: You have no idea how much unpacking I do with all my clients around this topic, which again, I think could be on its own a whole nother episode. But yeah, I think just being willing to let go of that, of the needing to be right, the needing for everything to be perfectly in order, the obsession with extraordinary, which you talk about, which I also love and seeing that it's not useful for you or for anyone.

Crystal: No, it's not. This all like, and I was thinking about this before we got on. It was like because I know some people are like, I don't want to talk about internalized oppression. Like, no, that's not me. But I was like, I just want to name, like that resistance to even exploring how it's showing up for

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you is exactly the same thing that's keeping you from feeling truly free because it's so subtle and it's sneaky and it lives in the underbelly and the work is unpacking it.

Lindsay: Can you, we don't have tons of time left, but again –

Crystal: The challenge.

Lindsay: Here's the 10 episode series coming. So for someone that's listening, just in case there's someone listening and they're like, okay, she keeps saying internalized oppression. I don't even know, did we even define it? Can we start there? So for the people that are having those thoughts right now, how would you define internalized oppression? And yeah, let's start there.

Crystal: To simplify internalized oppression is essentially using societal ideals or dominant narratives against yourself. Like if you don't fit into this narrative, you hide your inner truth. And so for example, ways that it comes up is lightening dark skin. Like using chemicals to lighten black skin. Straightening your curly hair because straight hair is more professional, more beautiful.

Speaking in a certain way, using certain vocabulary or vernacular to fit into certain conversations. Or hiding or not bringing in your cultural foods at work because you don't want people commenting on the smell. Or not wanting to wear your cultural clothing because you don't want looks or names.

So like hiding who you really are in order to try to fit in into the dominant narrative or the societal norms. And so you're hiding your inner truth to do that, to fit in.

Lindsay: Yeah. Okay. I was like, can I put you on the spot? Can you define it? And then you just gave a perfect, perfect definition. So good.

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And how do you think, so working with the clients that you work with, and I think just having a background in medicine and in just, you have so much in your background, I think, that has probably led you directly to this work. Like to me, it's like I could listen to you talk about this all day. It's just it's such in alignment.

You know, when you just hear someone talking about something and you're like, "Oh, they're just like nailing this thing." I think that's what I love about it so much is I love hearing you talk about it from your perspective and from the clients that you work with. I don't even know if I have a question. I just wanted to say that.

Crystal: No, I appreciate that. I feel like this is definitely, I've done the work to finally feel at home in my business and what I'm talking about. And so I just appreciate you saying that.

Lindsay: There's probably a piece of me being in rooms with you, like hearing you talk about it, you and I having conversations around it, being there for some of the figuring it out, unpacking it on your own. Like, how do I talk about this? How do I teach it? That just makes me, like gives me kind of chills when I hear you talk about it so clearly. And it's so good. Everybody needs it. Everybody needs to know what you do.

Crystal: Thank you.

Lindsay: It's important work.

Crystal: I've got to get louder.

Lindsay: That's okay. I talk about it like you have to figure out which burner are we using? What's the recipe we're making? Like before you can really turn up the heat.

Crystal: Yeah. Yeah, and I think that's where I'm at. Yeah.

Lindsay: Yeah. Well, I can feel it. So good.

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Crystal: Thank you.

Lindsay: I'm so happy for you and for every person that works with you and learns from you.

Crystal: We're starting generation cycles. Yeah, we're starting new ones.

Lindsay: I love that. What do you want to say to anyone listening? Is there anything we left out? I know there are so many different rabbit holes we could go down and it always feels like when I'm ending these interviews, especially when it's something really powerful like this, it feels like, wait, is this the end? Like what?

Crystal: Yeah, I think I would like just to give a walk away tool. Well, one, stop calling it imposter syndrome. Let's just stop. I'm like, at least do that.

Lindsay: Yeah, just a little pause. Like let's dig under it.

Crystal: Yeah, just a pause. Exactly.

Lindsay: Let's see what it is.

Crystal: Let's just start working with that. But once you're ready to apply, this is one of the tools that I learned from The Imposter Syndrome Institute under Dr. Valerie Young. She talks about, well, what I'm calling it, like 1% timeline where you just identify, like name the situation that is happening either after the fact, or if you're in the middle of it that would be great too. But you just follow the 1% timeline.

Like I sat down on my desk. I opened the app. I started writing. Like just get the timeline. And I call it 1%, like each little step. And so then you identify the point of entry of when that intrusive thought of imposter syndrome comes, like that you want to say my imposter syndrome is coming up. Yes, pause, but just identify where was that point of entry? Like get the context of why that pattern is there and start asking it questions.

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It would be incredible if you can do it right when it's happening. This happened to me when I was going live for a video and I was like, this thing is happening. It wasn't even live, it was like a prerecorded video and my throat started feeling all closed up and things. Like, no one is seeing this live. Like there was no one in the room. Like what is happening?

And so I was like, okay, I sat down, blah, blah, blah. And I was able to identify the emotion and the thought simultaneously and started to like, why is this here? Where did it come from? Like just really getting down to the context of the situation. And so having that point of entry, then you can then explore. Obviously you can go down whichever way you're skilled at going down that route and then get the information to start doing the work.

Lindsay: If we follow that thread of what you, you started to like give an example where it's like, I sat down at my desk. I opened it, or I grabbed my phone. I opened the app. What I think maybe the rest of that would be is like I opened Instagram to make a post.

Crystal: Yeah, so what happened to me is like, I opened the app, then my throat started feeling very scratchy and closed up. And so that was the point of entry, was like the emotion that comes or the sensation that comes up for me when it comes to public speaking is my throat starts feeling closed up, like just pressure. Like something essentially wants me to shut up, right?

And so that has its own like Freudian reasons, but in this situation it's like why are you here? So it's like having a conversation. For me, I had a conversation with that sensation. So like, have a conversation with like, if you give it, whether you're willing to admit it or not, you're already giving it this power or it's being with you, not really. And so you're in conversation, like why are you here? What do you have to say? What do you think has happened?

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Like in conversation with that sensation, with that thought. Like, don't just take it as – It may look as one thought, but there's a whole storyline behind it. So start being in conversation with it is the best way that I can explain it.

Lindsay: Yeah. And I know a thought I used to have often in a similar experience in like, oh, I'm going to make this post or I'm going to, and I hear this come up with my clients a lot and they'll say the thought is like, who am I to... Say this thing, talk about this, whatever. And so that's like a similar thing, right? Is that what you're saying?

Crystal: Yeah. So then I remember the context of the situation of the throat thing because it comes up a lot. But it was essentially like, it needs to be smooth. It needs to make sense. It needs to flow. Like it needed to sound like what I see online. Like it needed to be like a public speaker kind of thing. And it's like, no, I just need to sound like me, however messy that is. And obviously there's self-acceptance and love and all the good juice.

So it's really about what's the point of entry? What's accessible to you? What can you work with that can help you get to where you want to go, rather than otherwise you continue doing the thing you're trying to push through, trying to do the video while thinking I'm an imposter, but I'm doing it. And you're like pushing through and it's like, you're trying to push through the resistance. But pushing through the resistance doesn't do anything for your nervous system or your self-concept because you're just constantly trying to push and suffocate this thought that needs to come to light.

And then, who am I? I'm always like, yeah, who are you? Like, I don't think it's a bad thing that's questioning because you're stepping into a new version of yourself. So answering the question, yeah, who are you? Like what's up?

Lindsay: Yeah, that's my favorite way to handle that as well. That's always my first question to my clients is like, yeah, who are you? Let's explore it.

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They're like, what? No, I was just scared and so I didn't want to do it. And I'm like, no.

Crystal: Because we're afraid to claim who we are. Like, especially, I mean, depending on our background, we're taught to be humble, to be meek. You can claim who you are and have a great relationship with power at the same time without it holding you back or anyone else.

Lindsay: Yeah. Well, thank you. Thank you for all of this. It has been so great. I think we talked, we covered a lot of ground. So the listeners might need to go back and just listen a couple of times. And, of course, come find your work where you talk about a lot of this more in depth.

So let's lead into how can they find you?

Crystal: So I'm both on Instagram and LinkedIn. My preference is LinkedIn, so find me on there. It's just my name.

Lindsay: Oh, I don't even know what you have going on over there. Like even better than Instagram?

Crystal: I don't know. I think it's a different flavor, but I definitely feel like I'm a refreshing – I still think it's Instagram flavor on LinkedIn, but I love LinkedIn because I just access it through my computer. I don't do it through my phone. And so it just creates that boundary.

Lindsay: I hear that from a lot of people. You know you can do that with Instagram too. It's different.

Crystal: I know, but I'm working on it.

Lindsay: The experience is different, for sure. You don't get sucked in and go down the rabbit hole of scrolling for a whole hour if you access it on your computer.

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Crystal: Yeah, the training of Instagram contributing to our attention span. But anyways, what was I going to say? Yeah, Instagram and LinkedIn. I was going to give a link to my Burnout Proof Your Life and Business Guide.

Lindsay: We will link all of these in the show notes. So if you're listening and you're like, wait, what? Probably easiest to just go to the show notes. You can click on the links. We will add them all there so that you can just get right to them.

Crystal: Cool. Yes. Thank you.

Lindsay: And you have a podcast, right?

Crystal: I do, The Whole Entrepreneur.

Lindsay: Do you want people to know or no?

Crystal: Yes, people can know.

Lindsay: Okay.

Crystal: People can know.

Lindsay: If they're listening to this, they probably like podcasts. People need to know.

Crystal: That is true. That's a good hypothesis. The Whole Entrepreneur Podcast.

Lindsay: Perfect, we'll link that too.

Crystal: Cool. All right. Thank you so much for doing this. I've had the best time and we're for sure going to have to have you back sometime because we have so many things to talk about.

Crystal: Yes, this was awesome. Thank you so much for having me.

Lindsay: You are so welcome.

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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.