

## Ep #211: Why NOT to Lead with Solutions



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hey this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you're listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 211.

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 have had kind of a crazy day, but that's okay. I'm here. I'm recording this podcast. I can't wait for you to hear it. And there are several reasons I'm recording this. This is about something very specific.

So this is something that came up quite a bit during Coach Week. It came up in some of the coaching sessions. And ironically, at the same time, I got a message about it on Instagram from someone who recently found my podcast and is in the beginning stages of diving into coaching, and she sent me this question.

So I'm going to actually just read her question. Her name is V. So V, this is partially for you, but also truly this is probably one of the most common things I get asked. I have a couple, I would say like three questions that are like top three that I'm going to be covering very soon on upcoming podcast episodes, and this is one of them.

So the question, the way V worded it is, "I'm a new coach. I'm just getting into the field. I'm a fixer. Can you explain how to go from fixer to coach?" And so I asked her a couple of questions and I was like, you mean in my DMs, like just explain it? And I was like, well, I guess my one word answer is curiosity, but also kind of tell me what you mean. Like, what do you mean by that?

She said, "I would say something like, I'll take care of the details so you don't have to worry about them. Or I can solve this for you, just follow my lead and we'll get it done."

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And I think this is so common for so many coaches. And I want to say that, first of all, if this is you, I want you to just remove any shame about this, right? First of all, because you got into coaching, you love to help people. I assume that is true for most coaches. Sure, not a hundred percent, but most of you, especially if you listen to this podcast, that is probably true for you, that you love to help people and that you really want to help them fix things as quickly as possible, right?

If you can just give them a solution and fix something for them, then they can just carry on and be on their way. Problem solved, all done. Now they're better, right? Unfortunately, that is not how coaching works. Not how humans work. It's not how our brains work. It's not that easy. If it was, we would all be gazillionaires. Is that even a number? I don't know.

If you had a solution, right, I say this all the time when someone asks me, like, how do you build a successful coaching business? It's like, oh, if I had just the answer to that, like the easy, perfect answer, I would sell it for \$5 to every person and I would have more money than anyone. That's just not how it works. It is how we want it to work. So just notice that.

Even as I'm saying this, notice if there's anything coming up for you that is like, oh my gosh, yes, I feel this. Like I want this all the time. I always want to tell my clients what to do.

Now, I want to be really clear. There's a difference between having a strategy that you teach your clients that you're like, here's a strategy that I know works in my experience, and it works for my clients, and it's what I teach. And then I'm also coaching along with it.

But there are many of you, and I used to be this, so I totally understand, many of you that are not teaching a lot of strategy, your clients are coming to calls and every week you're coaching them on whatever they bring. And sometimes it can be so easy to just want to say, I know how to solve this. I know what you could do. Here's an idea, try this.

And sometimes it can be useful to share personal experiences or to share solutions or to help a client brainstorm. But when you go there first, right,

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that's what I'm talking about in this episode. When you just go there first, when your brain is like, we know what this client needs. We know how to solve this. This is not a problem. Just tell them what to do, and then they can go do it. And then it's going to be solved. A couple of things are happening.

First, and this isn't actually where a lot of the problem comes in, but it also is huge. It's a big thing that happens when you're doing this. You're robbing them of the breakthrough, right? You're robbing them of a deeper understanding of who they are, how they work, how they're thinking is creating their results or influencing their results. And you're just robbing them of all of that, right?

So if you have had the experience of being coached and having that transformation, just think about how good it feels to experience that. You're just taking it away, right? You're like, I've already done this. Let me just give you the answer. Here it is. This worked for me, go try it.

Again, I want to be very clear this is different than if you have a really specific strategy that you're teaching your clients, right? If you're just like coaching them and walking through the curiosity of, well, what do you think? Or why do you want this? Or whatever, any of the questions that you could be asking that could really help them like wiggle some things loose.

When you just go straight to the solution that worked for you, or that you've seen work with other people, or that you have a strong opinion about, it just robs them completely of the breakthrough, of the learning for themselves and the more self-awareness. So that's the first thing.

And when I think about coaching, I think that creating awareness, like helping clients create self-awareness is like 90% of our goal as coaches, right? That we are helping them understand themselves better. We are helping them have a deeper relationship with themselves. We are helping them tap into and learn their inner wisdom, not ours.

So to me, doing that when you're just like, well, here's the answer, just go do it. Like that type of attitude is just robbing them of all of that. So just

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consider that, sit with it for a second. But I'm also going to tell you some really tangible reasons why it's important not to do this.

So when you are pulled to just tell your clients, well, here's the solution, go try it, here's some things to consider. First, they won't have the conviction, right? They won't be as committed to it. They won't be as bought in on like, this is the solution.

So even if they love your idea, even if you're like, well, but what about this, right? And they're like, oh, that's such a good idea. What you are taking from them is really the thought process of why is this a good idea? Why do I want to do this? Why is this the best idea for me? Because then they're going to leave the call and go take action, whatever the action is that you have now prompted them to take.

And it's going to be hard, or it's going to feel sticky, or it's going to bring up some things that they haven't worked through. And it's going to be super uncomfortable. And they're going to quit very easily because they haven't worked through, why is this important? Why do they want to do it? Why is this the solution they're committed to? Any of those things, right?

So the results just may not be, and when I say may not, I mean probably won't be as powerful as they could be if you let them kind of come to some of it on their own. Or even come up with some of their own ideas, brainstorm like, but what's the best path forward for me? When they do that, and go through that whole process, they're going to be so much more committed to the actions, right? They're going to remember why they said, I want to do this, I'm committed to these actions, like they might feel hard, right?

You're also just kind of taking away the opportunity for you to hear them kind of work through it on their own and hear all the obstacles and conflicts that get in the way in their brain. When you're just like, well, here's the answer, and then they just hear that and take it on as like, well, that's the truth, because that's what my coach said so I'm going to do it. And now

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they haven't considered all the things that are in the way of them creating that result, whatever the result is that they're wanting.

Another piece of it could be if they're not fully bought in and maybe they're going to people please you a little bit and be like, yeah, sure, that sounds great. And they now feel weird about bringing up why it doesn't actually feel great to them, or why they don't like the idea or why it's not the best solution for them. It can turn into performative on their part, right?

So they might leave the call and be like, okay, well, I tried it. And they come back and they're like, well, I tried it, and it didn't work. So now what? Kind of like, see, it didn't work. And I think that when I see that happen with my clients, when they bring this to me, that usually turns into like a revolving door. Like, see, it didn't work. And then the coach's brain is like, oh no, panic. What's the next solution, right?

And now it's like all coaching has gone out the window. And we're just trying to solve the problem, which of course is what we want to do. But we're trying to solve it with just like band-aid, band-aid, band-aid, instead of really like a deeper, possibly more uncomfortable dive into what's going on.

If you've experienced that, and you feel like you're in that cycle, maybe take a step back and say, wait, am I just giving solutions? Or am I helping create self-awareness so they can find their own solutions? And maybe then I help them with and we talk through and we question it and we build on the strategy and all of that.

I'm not suggesting that you never ever help a client figure out what to do. I'm suggesting that you just don't lead with it.

And then the biggest thing, the most important piece, in my opinion, to all of this is that, I want you to really deeply hear this, when they are not fully bought into the solution and if you're just telling them, here's how to solve this, this is obvious, just go do whatever. And then they go, and they do the thing, even if they're bought in, even if they're like, you're right, that is a great solution. That is the solution I should want. That is the solution that should work for me.

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And they go try the thing. They have the difficult conversation. They tell someone what they're thinking, because that's what you told them to do. Like very nuanced, there can be so many different actions that they go take. And it doesn't work, and maybe not only does it not work, but it fails on a big level. Like big scale. And it's something that's really important to them, right? Like the result they're trying to create is really important to them. And they think that you have told them, like they trust you and now you have told them the solution. They will blame you when it doesn't work.

And we don't want that for so many reasons, right? First, we don't want that because it's going to feel really bad to you, obviously, right? Like you don't want that as the coach. It's going to feel terrible if it creates an outcome that you're like, wait a minute, like I did that thing. And that is not how it worked for me. Why is this what happened for you?

Because you just can't know. It's just not the same, right? You can't know exactly the outcome of every solution that you give a client. Also, because if they blame you, they aren't going to have any of the learning at all. And not only that, but it might double them down on whatever beliefs, like the negative beliefs that they have about themselves, about coaching, about you, about the situation that they're in, like any of it. It could have the exact opposite effect than what you want to have as the coach and that's for sure different from why they hired you, right?

And so not only will they be upset, and you can come back from it, right? You can come back from a client being upset with you, but it depends on the situation. So not only will they be upset, they could want to quit coaching. They might be feeling worse about themselves than when they hired you, which I think we could all agree we do not want that. That's the opposite of what coaching is, right? And they've learned nothing about themselves, because they weren't given that opportunity, right? Because you kind of took that away.

Now, that is an extreme situation, but it can happen. I've seen it happen. I have coached a lot of clients through situations like this, and helped them kind of navigate it on the back end. But the easier thing is to not have to

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navigate it, right? On the back end is to avoid it altogether by not having the thought, oh, I know what's best. I know how to solve this. I know what's best for you and what you should obviously do here.

Just check yourself anytime you're having that thought, right? When you're just coaching someone and you're looking at like, what's the mindset you're in that's creating results? What is the feeling state? Like what are any of the things that are creating your current results? Don't bypass those. It's so important. Don't just jump to, oh, I know it's best.

And sometimes it might even feel so obvious. I can even rewind to when I had one-on-one clients and there would be times that it was like, okay, but, obviously, can't you just do this thing? And it would help, it would solve this. I wouldn't say that, but that would be my thought.

But the cure for all of this is curiosity. So even when you're feeling that, even when it comes up on a call, it is going to, when I say call, I always just mean session, right? Whatever that looks like for you, a phone call, a Zoom call, in person, whatever. When that comes up in a session and you're like, oh, I know how to solve this. Just notice it. Take a deep breath and find the space in your body that feels like curiosity.

Practice this right now. I had people do this in a session during Coach Week last week, and they were like, oh, that's so powerful, right? Notice the difference between feeling certain or like, I know the solution here. That feels one way. And then find in your body what it feels like to be curious.

To me, it feels so open. It feels like a big, open space in my kind of upper chest area. It feels very spacious. I don't know how else to describe it, but it feels kind of just warm and comforting and spacious and open in my chest, mostly. That's very different than, to me, certainty or a knowing is like more of a constricted, tight, not in a bad way tight, but just like a tight, direct feeling. Maybe also in my chest, but it's very forward leaning and like, you know, I've got you, which sometimes is amazing.

And I want you to feel certain about some things in your coaching, but maybe just not in the cases where your clients are bringing you things and



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you have that thought that is, oh, I know what's best for you. Anytime you think I know what's best for a client, there's always time to just pause, take a deep breath and just check in there.

All right, I hope this was super helpful for you. And I will be back next week. See you then. 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](http://lindsaydotzlafoaching.com). That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.