

Ep #212: How to Identify and Replace Coaching Industry “Rules” That Don't Serve You



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 212.

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 am so happy you're here today, I want to talk about something very specific today. Something that came up over and over and over and over again during Coach Week. It came up specifically in one of the workshops I was teaching, but it also just pops up a lot actually in all my spaces, but it popped up a lot in kind of all the different workshops and it was so interesting for me to take note of this and just notice how often this is showing up for coaches.

So I thought I have to talk about this. And what we're going to talk about is finding methods, finding strategies for your business and for your coaching and your coaching style and the way you work with your clients that work for you, versus hearing, I'm going to say rules in air quotes, that you take on that don't really work for you but you continue using them against yourself.

So I'm going to give a totally made up scenario that has nothing to do with coaching that is kind of the equivalent of what I'm going to talk about just to give you something to consider, right? So just imagine that you, and by the way, this is 100% made up. This is not, I have no background in nutrition, so do not do anything I'm about to say. This is just something I made up on the fly, right?

So let's just say you join a nutrition program. And the goal of the program is that you will have more energy throughout the day, right? That you learn to eat in a way that you feel fully fueled to get through your day, to feel great, to have your body just like running the way it should. So you are like, yes, that sounds amazing.

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And I want to be clear, this isn't necessarily a coaching thing. This isn't a coaching program, this is just like a nutrition program that's just going to give you direction on what to do, right? So you join because you're like, that sounds great. And then you kind of find out like, okay, once you join, maybe you knew this going in, but it's like, they're going to give you a really specific menu and all you have to do is follow that menu.

And you're going to just do whatever they say, follow the menu and it's gonna, you know, there might be some check-ins or whatever, but you know, there's maybe a group that comes with it. And every day you're going to report like, yeah, I did this thing or no, I didn't or whatever. Right?

So you're looking at the menu and you're like, oh, the first thing you notice is that every morning, the first thing you're supposed to do is have two tablespoons of peanut butter, just like straight peanuts crushed into butter, right? It's real specific, like organic, no sugar, whatever, whatever. And that's what you have every morning. And like no substitutions. These are the rules. And immediately you're like, well, that's not great because I have a peanut allergy. I have a nut allergy.

And so right away you notice that, but you don't say anything and you're not like, oh, you know, like, is this for me? Is it not? You just continue on and you do the other things. You eat all the other things you're supposed to. But then every single day, when you look at the menu and you're like, oh, peanut butter, I can't have that.

Instead of solving for it, you think about it all the time and you're like, oh, this is never going to work because I can't do that part. Or this is never going to work because if I can't do exactly what they say, then I might as well just quit. But I don't want to quit because the rest of it seems to be great. And it's just like every day it weighs on you.

And then you finally quit, because after a while you're like, this just feels terrible. Like every single day, it's just a reminder that I can't eat peanuts

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and that this isn't going to work for me. And so then, but you still want the results.

So then you join another thing and it's like the same setup, right? But you're like, but surely this time I'm going to be aware that, you know, I need to be sure that it's like a menu that doesn't have a lot of peanuts on it, whatever, right? So it's allergy friendly.

So now you join a new one, but this time it's like for lunch every day you eat a salad. And it has options, it's like here are all the options. But you hate salad. That's silly, salads are so good. But let's just pretend like you hate salad, right?

And so every single day you eat the salad, but you hate it. And over time, it doesn't get any better. So now over time, you just start to dread the salad and you're like, ugh, another salad for lunch today. Nightmare. Right?

But you just keep doing it because that's what the menu says and you want the results. And so every day you eat the salad. And maybe you get to the point where you barely are eating any of the salad and you're just getting through it. You're picking at it. You're eating only the pieces that you like, or you force yourself to eat it, but it just feels terrible the whole time. Or it gives you a stomach ache or like whatever is happening, right?

This is what so many of you, so many, and even if right now you're like, I don't do that. Let's just be curious about it for a second. Because honestly, I was shocked after Coach Week, how many coaches are experiencing something like this.

This is what so many of you are doing with your coaching, like inside your coaching practices, the way you work with your clients and the rules you have created for yourself because you've heard them somewhere around building your business.

So I coached so many people on, and I specifically actually brought this up in one of the workshops and I said, very broadly, I said just tell me rules

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that you've heard about coaching, right? That it should be this way, or you should do this or shouldn't do this. And there were so many things, so many things listed, but I'm going to give you a few of the examples that come up the most often for clients that I am working with, and that obviously came up a lot during Coach Week and specifically in that workshop.

Things like you need to have a really specific program or process that you take your clients through, right? Like there should be a plan for every call and you should know exactly what that plan is ahead of time. And you don't really know what you're doing if you don't have that.

Also, maybe you've heard clients should just bring whatever they want to each session. Like that is definitely the best way to coach because that way you're kind of flexible and you can kind of go with what they want to do and like really speak to whatever is bothering them that week.

Two totally opposite things, but some of you are really convinced that one of those might be the right way to do it.

Something else that came up when I was kind of talking through coaching processes, actually during Coach Week, someone said, wait, I was taught that you never ever strategize anything with your clients. Like there's never a strategy. It's just questioning, like the deeper dive, right? Like only thinking about their thoughts, their feelings, like checking in with all of those. Letting them come to any conclusion and whatever that you want, but never going with any kind of strategy.

Versus some of you I know have learned in different programs or certifications or trainings that your coaching should contain some type of very specific strategy that solves a really specific problem for them. And then the coaching would be around that.

Maybe you've heard that in the beginning, your marketing should all be organic, or maybe you've heard the opposite, right? That you should start ads as soon as possible. Or that you should have a very specific niche, or

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that you don't need a niche at all. Or that you should only have one offer, or that you should really diversify your offers. You should have a whole menu so that if a client doesn't want one thing, then of course, there's going to be something else that works for them.

Just notice, and I could keep going, right? Those are just, that's just like the tip of the iceberg. I could just keep going and going and going. And this is something that just comes up so often in The Coach Lab. And I find myself kind of laughing about one thing people come to me to work on, even though I am teaching specific things if that's what you want to learn. But I always teach them in a way that's like, and you have to figure out what's your way to do this.

And I always laugh that one thing that like half of my coaching is just giving permission for my clients to not do something, to like unlearn something that they've learned, or to not do something the exact way that they learned in one specific, maybe from one specific coach or one specific expert.

And something to consider as well when we're talking about this is just how quickly things change. How quickly things evolve, how quickly the industry is changing and growing and shifting. And so especially when someone comes to me and they're like, oh, I learned this five years ago in whatever, whatever program.

And usually when someone tells me that it's delivered with so much certainty, and they are for sure that I'm going to know exactly the program they're talking about, because obviously it's like the same rules that everyone follows and we've all heard of it. And often I'm like, I have no idea what you're talking about, as far as the program, like I've never heard of that. And sometimes that blows people's minds. They're like, wait, what?

So this episode is going to be me telling you that you need to find the thing that works for you and not just hear something that you then determine is like a rule, and then just keep using it even when it's not working. Just like

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the example of the nutrition, right? Of like the, well, that's just what it says, so I just have to keep going. I have to keep doing it.

Now I want to be really clear too, that if you have learned something and it's working really well, then maybe don't question it. Just keep going, keep using it, keep whatever. I'm going to give you some things to consider when you are thinking about how to structure your coaching, how to structure your business and just how to make decisions or maybe some things that I use to make decisions when I'm thinking about some of this for myself and for my clients.

So the first thing is, especially if you're new, if you're a new coach and there's a lot of learning coming at you all at once and a lot of new things, one of my favorite things to say is just take the path that has the least resistance, right? Like choose the one that feels simple. I can get behind this. I can do this.

So for example, let's say you joined The Coach Lab, you learned your foundational coaching skills and you're like, okay, I'm ready to start a business. And you're starting to make decisions about business and you hear somewhere, like you should only, like the best way to make money as a coach and to market your business is to go to networking events.

Like that is the best way. That is what you have to do, right? Maybe there's even a program that teaches you exactly what to do at networking events, exactly how to show up, how to convert people that you meet into clients, whatever, right? Like whatever it is that's teaching.

But you immediately feel dread because you didn't know that that was the way that you had to build your business. But now you see this thing and it clearly is the rule because the person, whoever's saying it, is so certain and they're saying it and it's like, okay, everybody else is doing it and it's working for them. And so now you have to do it, but you're full of dread.

It's like forcing yourself to eat the salad, right? Like you're full of dread. You hate networking events. You are like, I would literally rather do anything. I

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will show up in so many other ways. Just don't make me do that. But then all the messaging you're hearing is, well, that's the only way. It's the best way. It's what you have to do. If you really want to be successful, if you really care about your business, that's the path you have to go down.

And so now it comes back to the salad, right? Like, I just don't want to eat it and every day I dread it. And I don't question anything about it, I just beat myself up for not liking salad. This could be the same thing for networking events, right? If you really believe because you've been taught this is the best way, then every single day you're like, but it's like the last thing I want to do. I definitely don't want to go to networking events.

And then you start using that against yourself and making it mean something about you because you don't like networking and you obviously should because other people do. And so now you're broken and this is never going to work for you. But you want to stick with it, so you're going to keep going, but there's always going to be this constant thing on replay of it's never going to work. It's just never going to work. Like this just isn't for me. I'm not cut out for this.

Or I'll use a coaching specific example when it comes to how you work with your clients. Maybe because I know different coaching schools, different coaching certifications and training programs teach very different things. I have learned this from working with coaches from all over the industry that some teach really specific, like here is exactly what you do. And they give you almost like a breakdown of like call one, here's exactly what happens. Call two, here's exactly what happens.

And what I find so interesting, like sometimes that can be really useful, right? Just having a really specific direction. And some of you probably love that. And some of you probably just hearing me even say it, you might be like, oh God, no, thank you. That's not for me.

But what I see happen with the clients that come work with me is they'll say, well, here's how I learned I was supposed to do it. And I've been doing it

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that way for a year and hating it the whole time. And knowing that this, like just thinking I'm doing something wrong, something's wrong with me. I'm a terrible coach. I don't know what I'm doing. My clients aren't getting results. I feel confused. And having that be there, let's say for a whole year.

Just imagine what that creates for you as far as your confidence and your clarity in what you do and your even confidence that spreads into your marketing and your selling, because now you've taken a hit on like if you don't love the way you're doing things and then especially if your clients aren't getting results and you've been doing this for however long, and now you've just failed, right? Like think about that over a whole year, telling yourself that over and over and over.

And some of this might be very extreme. For some of you this might be happening in just teensy little ways, especially if you are not a neurotypical human. Especially if, even if you don't have any kind of diagnoses or you don't necessarily relate to things like, oh, my brain works this way or my brain works this way.

But even if there's something there that's like you don't normally operate the way everyone else does, or you find it really hard to fit into these certain boxes, but you force yourself and force yourself and force yourself. And now not only is it exhausting, but it's probably also just not working on so many levels.

And even if you have learned to figure it out and force yourself to do it and maybe even create some results along the way, it still feels terrible. I work with so many clients like this who are just like, and I'm just kind of beat down from doing this, right? And I'm like, well, then why are we still doing it? Like what's happening? Let's break this down and figure out what you want to do.

So that's the first thing, right? Thinking through what is the simple path for you. What's the way that aligns with what you want and how you want to do it? Because everything you've learned, I promise you, is made up.

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Now, not made up as in just like completely made up, pulled out of thin air. But it usually comes from like, okay, here's what works for me, so I'm going to teach this thing. It's literally why I teach the way I do and the way I teach what I'm saying to you right now, because this is kind of how I learn things. Like here are some suggestions, but you have to figure out your way.

So just check in with yourself, right? Listen to what kind of fits naturally. And also holding space for as you move forward and as you grow, it doesn't always mean that everything is going to feel totally comfortable and completely like, oh, this is just easy.

That's not what I'm suggesting because sometimes maybe you have big goals, maybe you are doing things that you've never done before. But there's a difference between that and then doing things that just feel so unaligned that it starts to really like eat away at your confidence and your certainty in who you are and what you do, and eat away at your powerful coaching because you are trying to show up following certain rules that just aren't working.

One rule that I love, which is like a rule that's an unrule, I guess, is take what you want and leave the rest. This is always a rule I follow in any coaching situation I'm in, right? Some of this is for me, this is a thought I always have. Some of this is for me and some isn't and I'm just here to figure out which parts are for me.

And I'm open. It's not like I'm just closed off, like, ew, hate that, never doing it. I'm open to hearing it all. I'm open to learning it all. But I never, I'm just going to fight against something for a long time, right? And sometimes, as we know, we're coaches, sometimes it's like, oh, this thing feels really hard. I need some coaching. I need some help. I need some support to get on the other side of it. Great, that is always an option.

But let's be clear that I'm talking about the thing that happens over and over and over that even you're like, I should be able to coach myself out of this, or I should be able to get coaching and just get on the other side of it.

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But when it continues for a long time, I've even seen some coaches that are years down the road, that their business has never really taken off the way they want it to. It's never really gone far and literally, they've been doing it for years.

And usually when I dig into that, and I'm like, okay, tell me all the things like, why is it this way? How are you running it? What are the things that feel terrible, we can usually find things that they're like, well, here are the rules. And I've been trying for years to just fit into these rules.

And so by the time I'm talking to them, on occasion, these are more like extreme cases, but I'm sure that there are probably way more that I don't know about. Now it's like years down the line, and their confidence is so shook at this point, that they're like, I don't even know if I have a business. I don't even know what I'm doing. I just am going through the steps every day.

And maybe they even keep investing in more coaching or more things, or more learning, that's one thing I see a lot of my clients doing, right? Like I need this, I need one more certification, I need another certification, I need this thing, because they're trying to find the thing that solves for them not moving forward. When really, oftentimes, it's because they're just trying to follow rules that just weren't right for them to begin with, or weren't made for them.

So think about all those examples I gave, right? They're like opposites, right? You need a very specific niche, you don't need a niche at all. You should only have one offer, or you should have tons of offers so that your client can always find something they want. Think about those and just consider any of those that you have learned, I just want them to be on the table. I want you to question them because I guarantee if there's something that's not working for you, you can always find someone teaching the opposite, right?

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You can always find someone that's like, you know, if you don't want to build your business organically, and you want to just start ads right away and understand how to do that, don't join the program that teaches you how to build organically, right? Find the one that's to teach you that.

But here's the other, and I think what I would say is the most important piece of all of this. So when I say take what you want and leave the rest, the other important piece of that, in order to get everything you can out of spaces that you're in and to have the most learning and self-awareness that you can in the moment, you can always ask yourself – So let's go back to the nutrition program with the menu.

You can always ask yourself, okay, I can't eat peanut butter, because I'm allergic to peanuts. So obviously that is not for me at all. But here's the question, what's the purpose of it? Why is that the thing that they say to do? Now, hopefully, this is really extreme, right? Like, usually, if you're in a program like that, you could say to someone like, oh, hey, I can't actually eat peanuts. And they will say, oh, no problem. Here are all the replacements, right?

But the more important question is, what's the purpose of it? Now, again, I've made this example up, and I'm not a nutrition expert. So if you are, you can just go ahead and laugh at this. But it's like, okay, what would be the purpose of that? Is it just to have that mixture of protein and fat first thing in the morning? Does that do something? Maybe that does something specific to your metabolism or to your whatever, like it does something specific to your body that gives you that instant kind of boost, right?

But that's the question. That's the important question. The measurement isn't, did I get it right? Did I eat the peanut butter every day, move the measurement to, am I finding my thing that fills this purpose?

So for example, sometimes my clients come to me, especially in this mastermind Reimagine that I started recently, we're about a month in at this point, I think. And one thing that some of them say to me, just as an

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example, I'm going to oversimplify it, but let's say they're like, I just really don't want to be on social media. Like I do not want to be on social media. I want to continue, most of them have quite successful businesses and they're like, I want to continue this. I want to keep that, but I don't want to be on social media. So there are so many options, right?

But what I always say is, okay, fine. Great. Perfect. Don't. Let's make that a plan if that's what you want to do, but we have to figure out what role is it playing in your business and what are you going to replace it with? Right?

So for example, going back to the networking example I gave, if you're like in a program and it's like, all you have to do is go to networking events and that's where your clients are. And you're like, I hate networking. Let's say that's a part of a program, right? And you're like, I hate networking. I really don't want to do that part.

Of course we could always coach on like why, maybe there are some things you could get over. You decide you want to go to the networking event. Just like social media, right? I always question that too. Like let's look at the why, like why don't you, and is there some kind of middle ground? This is one of my favorite questions. Is there a middle ground?

But with the networking, right, it's like, but what's the purpose of it? And if you're not going to do that piece, what will you replace it with? So what's the why behind the action and what are all the other actions that could replace that, that will fulfill that exact same why?

So back to the nutrition example, if you can't eat peanut butter, okay, but what's the purpose of it? Is it to have a very specific mix of a certain type of fat and some protein? Okay, great. What are all the other options that have that exact same thing that I could just swap out?

All right, I hope that this was really helpful. I will be hosting a – I did this last year, I'm doing it again this year. It's something called the big picture workshop, a planning workshop that is coming up in December.

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And this is one of those things that I will help you kind of identify when you are thinking about what type of support is useful for you in your business, what are your next steps in your coaching, not just your business, but your coaching and your business, like what are your next steps? What's the support that you need? Kind of what's working, what isn't? How do you get closer to that bigger overall goal and picture that you're trying to create for yourself? We will be doing all of that.

So if you love this topic, you should definitely come to that workshop. We don't have a link for it yet, but we will get it for you soon. I believe the workshop is going to be December 10th, I think 1pm Eastern. So mark that on your calendar now, if you want to come. It was so fun last year. I can't wait to do it again this year. And hopefully you'll join us. I can't wait to see you there.

And if you don't need to come to the workshop and you're like, no, this makes so much sense. I have to be in The Coach Lab to break down all these things that come up for me and my coaching, all these rules that I learned that I don't love, or learning new rules that if you want to replace them or new methods, come join us. We're having a lot of fun in there right now, and we're just waiting for you. So hopefully I will see you there in one of those places, and I'll be back next week. Goodbye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Mastering Coaching Skills*. If you want to learn more about my work, come visit me at lindsaydotzlafoaching.com. That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.