

# Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques



## 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 226.

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 listening to this episode and I think I have a really good one for you. I want to talk today about something that has been coming up in some of my coaching sessions with my clients, mostly inside The Coach Lab, and that I have actually also experienced as a client in certain coaching environments, not recently but just over the years that I have been working with coaches. And I think it's really important to talk about. And I don't think I've ever heard anyone talk about this, or at least maybe not in the way that I do.

And so a lot of my clients, when they come to me with this thing, they don't really see like, oh, there's this optional way of handling this thing. So what I wanna talk about today is what to do when you have really specific parts of your coaching practice that you, maybe it's something you teach or a step that you think all of your clients should be doing and they aren't doing it. And you just don't understand why, right? You're like, why do you keep coming back every week without like doing this one thing that we talked about?

And I'm gonna give you some really specific examples, but the first thing I want to say is oftentimes, many, especially one-on-one coaches, what will happen is you either, one of two things happens, either you learn coaching techniques and tools somewhere at a school, a certification program, whatever, and some of those schools and certification programs have very strict guidelines of how you coach a client. Right, they will kind of say like, here is how an entire session is set up and you aren't really supposed to do anything outside of that.

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

Now, I don't love that, I don't love that structure. I know some of you listening might be like, what? That sounds great. Tell me what to do. What I don't love about that structure is, it's at least from what I have seen in working with clients who have been to programs like that, is that they then have a hard time kind of adapting it to how do I take this and make it the best situation, the best process for my personal clients, right? And what they want to work on.

And so sometimes some of those – some of what they have learned, they might include really specific things within that process that might be like journaling or breath work or meditation or specific ways to set goals or to structure a calendar or anything like that right where and it's like here is the one way and it's a really specific thing or a lot of coaches come to me where you know they know how to coach they maybe they have done a certification or a training or whatever, but they base a lot of their coaching on their own personal experience, right? They're like, here's what worked for me. And so here's what I'm going to teach my clients to do, right? And they're like this, obviously, this was so effective for me. So if the closer to this process my clients use, the more effective it's going to be for them as well.

And while some of this can be great, right? It's like you could be learning things that are, you know, for example, when you come into The Coach Lab, it's like how do you help your client set goals? How do you really help them create that self-awareness that is such an important part of coaching? How do you help them make decisions? And I do teach a process, but I usually teach them in ways that are very adaptable and not every place that you're learning stuff like that teaches it in that way, right? They teach it more like here's the one right way.

And what I want to offer to you is that if this is a thing that is happening for you in your coaching sessions, where you have parts of your process that either a lot of your clients aren't, you know, it's kind of like, why won't people do this? I don't understand. Or maybe even like one specific client

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

has a really hard time with a certain piece of it. Especially when it comes to things like, you know, here's the way to do it and this is the only option.

For example, we'll use journaling for example, right? And it's like journaling is just a part of the process and that's just what you do. And maybe you as the coach, you've never considered, like, well, could you create those same results in a different way, right? Does it have to be journaling or could it be something different?

And what that can kind of create is if you have clients, because every human is just a little different, right? Every human interacts with the world differently, learns differently, processes information differently, all of those things. And so if you have clients who don't really love that form of learning or self-exploration or whatever it is, whatever the goal is that you're trying to get them to do, but you're doing it in a specific way, if they don't resonate with that, then it's really going to take away from their coaching experience, right?

So if like journaling is a huge part of your coaching process, but now you have a client who doesn't really like to journal or like that's just not a thing that they, you know, they're not good at processing information that way or basically like they're not creating the same result from journaling that maybe you did or that you have been told it's, you know, here's what's supposed to happen. And so what that can create is just a lot of frustration kind of on the client side and the coaches side, right?

The coach or you might be like, why aren't you doing this? Like I don't understand. It would be so helpful. And the client might be like, I just really don't like to do this thing. I wish I hadn't signed up for this coaching. This isn't gonna work for me, you know, whatever it is.

And what I wanna offer is, especially if you're a one-on-one coach and you can be adaptable, is that you could start thinking through some of these things through parts of your processes when they become an issue, right? No need to like overturn everything if it's all just working. But when you

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

have a client who's like, this just, I just don't resonate with this, or this isn't working for me, instead of thinking that it's the actual tool that is creating the result, so I'm gonna stick with the journaling example, specifically because this is actually something that I personally as a client have had to tell a coach like this doesn't really work for me. Like I don't want to do it this way.

Now I am a coach so I was able to take a step back and offer like but here's how I like I understand what you're going for and here's how I would prefer to do it. Like is that okay by you?

And but not all clients can do that, right? Because most of your clients probably aren't coaches. And so you have to do that work. They can't do it. So you could just take a second, instead of thinking that, again, that it's the tool that's creating the result, to question it and say, what about journaling, for example, is useful in this process? Like, what is the thing that I'm getting when I do the journaling that's going to help me move forward in this process that you're helping me with?

And so when you have the answer to that, that be that's like way more important than the actual mode of doing the thing, right? So for example, if I was, you know, coaching on relationships, and let's say I'm working with a coach who's coaching me on relationships in my life. And part of that coach's process is that every time I interact with that person, at the end of the day, I, you know, maybe journal about that interaction. I don't know. I'm making this up, this part up on the fly.

And then we do something with those journals, right? Maybe I bring them to coaching sessions or maybe there's like some questions I'm supposed to ask myself after I do it or you know, whatever, whatever that is. And then maybe as the client, I'm trying the thing over and over, just like the coach is telling me to do, and it's just not working for me, right? It's not, and I hate it, and I dread it every time, and I don't look forward to it, and now it's creating a weird, some weird thoughts on my end about the coaching relationship or the coaching itself.

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

And instead of, like just consider how powerful it would be for you as the coach, like if you're the one who's the coach and this is your client who's showing up like this, to instead of saying like, well, you just have to journal, that's part of the process, you said, oh, well that's not a problem. Maybe there's a different way for you to create those same results, right? And you could brainstorm with your client. What other things, like what, how would you prefer to do this?

The goal is to just have, you know, some awareness around these conversations and interactions that you're having and for you to kind of process it and think through it in as close to the interactions as possible without waiting weeks to do it or letting, you know, maybe it's like in order to bring awareness and bring some feelings to the surface instead of letting them, you know, stew or whatever it is, right? Like whatever the reason you're doing it is. And then you could say what – like do you have any ideas? How might you do this? What would be your preferred way? How do you prefer to process these types of things?

I recently coached a client on this in The Coach Lab and her example was actually really similar. It was – I don't know if she called it journaling, but it was writing something. She was going on and on about how important that is and then how her client wasn't doing it and she didn't understand and the client wasn't getting results and she thought the client wasn't committed to the coaching, but that also the client was coming back each week with like, well, I was thinking about it and, you know, so she was still, she was in the coaching. She just wasn't doing the actual journaling piece or the writing, whatever the writing was.

And I simply asked her, I said, well, tell me what is so important about the journaling or the writing exercise, right? And she told me. And then I said, okay, now tell me other ways. Like let's just explore it for a second. Can you think of any other ways that you could help that client create the same result?

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

I don't actually remember all of her answers, but there were answers like, well, maybe she could just go on a walk, grab her phone and record like a voice note, right? Or open up her notes app and just talk into her phone instead of actually writing in a journal. Or she could, while she's commuting to work every day, she could connect her phone to her Bluetooth and just talk out loud in her car to her car and say it that way. So it's like that using your voice to process the things instead of actually writing it on a piece of paper. Or maybe she could visualize it, close her eyes, visualize it, spend some time doing that and then take some notes about the visualization after.

Those are just two examples, but we could come up with probably more, right? If I spent some time brainstorming this, we could keep going. So the same could be true for your clients. I just want you to consider this. How powerful will it be? Not only will you be helping your clients create whatever the result is they're wanting to create, you're adapting your process to make it more friendly to how they like to work and what, you know, works better for them.

Even if it's not a, this isn't a good fit for the way I process or learn, maybe it's like this isn't a good fit for where I am in my life right now. Maybe I don't have an hour a day to sit down with my journal and write, and maybe it's like helping them figure out, okay, well, let's find a time that you could squeeze it in in activities that you're already doing throughout your day, right? Like how powerful will that be?

It will not only, again, help them create the result, but it will also help them trust themselves even more, right, because so much of the point of coaching isn't just for you to teach a client, here's what worked for me, do this exact thing, or here's the process, do this exact thing, right? It's not just learning the process or learning from you. Really, most of the point of coaching is to learn about themselves, to learn how to solve problems like this when they don't have you as a coach, how to create their own



## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

self-awareness, like find the things and adapt the things in this world to work for them.

So not only is your client happy because the results are going to be better, but you're actually teaching them and helping them work through so many skills that are gonna help them on the other side, right? So one very specific example I have of this for myself is I am, again, I just don't, there's something about writing things down. You've probably heard me say this before. I've mentioned it, I'm sure, in other podcast episodes where it just doesn't, like it doesn't help me process things.

It's like my brain is focusing more on the writing and like what I'm writing instead of it. Instead of creating more awareness, it creates kind of less awareness. And so even when I'm coaching, I don't take a lot of notes. I might jot down some things that I want to remember, like one word here and there. But like while my client is talking, I don't just take a ton of notes, which hopefully a lot of you aren't doing this anyway, unless that is a way that really helps you pay attention.

Right, so for me as a coach, if I was doing that, it takes me out of like paying attention to what the client is saying. I'm just thinking about like, what are they saying? Okay, get it onto this paper and it's like it doesn't, I don't absorb it. It just kind of leaves. Also now with AI, there's not a lot of reason to take notes. There's so many options when it comes to that. Again, unless it's something that really helps you as a coach. If it like helps you zone in more, then go for it, right?

So I was at an in-person event. This was, I don't know, months ago. And there was this, I don't actually remember what we were working on, but she had us do this exercise where it was like everybody get out your notebook and right away I'm like, oh no, I already know this is going to be like a – because of what we were doing, I just knew I'm like this is going to be like a journaling prompt or something.



## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

And she said, okay, what I want you to do is, I forget what it's called, it's like free writing or something, where it's like you just start writing and you don't stop. Right, you just write every single thing that comes to your mind. It doesn't have to be in complete sentences. It just is like writing, writing, writing until the time was up. And it was like for X amount of time.

And I almost didn't say anything because it's easier to just be like, no, just do like whatever everybody else is gonna do. But I really wanted to work on the thing that she was having us work on.

So, and I knew the coach pretty well, so I like raised my hand and I was like, hey, do you think it would be okay, I just don't want you to think I'm not doing the exercise, right? Because it was a small group and she could see me, I was sitting right there in front of her, and there were only like, I don't know, six of us or something. And I said, do you think it would be okay if I just sit here with my eyes closed and think about what you're saying? And then if you want, I can take some notes at the end or whatever, but that will really help me connect more to what we're doing than just writing.

And she said, oh, no problem, right? She was 100% adoptable in the moment. And she said, actually, if you're open to it, I want you to try something else. I was like, of course. And she said, I don't want you to write words. I want you to do what you said. I want you to think about the things. But I want you to take your pen and just let it do whatever it wants to do on the paper, right? So like just draw circles. And she's like, just don't stop the whole time. Just keep going. You're not going to do anything with it. It's just going to look like scribbles. But I just would love it if you would try that and of course I was open to I was like sure I've actually never really done that before so of course I'll try it and I tried it and it was amazing it was really helpful for me so not only did it create really powerful results and help the way I was able to concentrate in the moment, but it also taught me this new technique that I have actually used multiple times since then.

So just think about how powerful that is right and think about that for your clients. Are there any places within your coaching practice where you have

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

a really specific like here's how this thing is supposed to go that actually could be flexible.

And then the last thing I'll offer is if you're thinking about that and you're like, "Well, I do see that, like I do see some areas where I might, you know, where I could be adaptable, but because of the way I work with my clients or the way I prefer to work with clients, I just don't want to do that." That is completely fine as well. I want to be very clear about that. I'm not suggesting that you have to, you know, change every single piece of your coaching practice.

But if that's the case, right, and there's something like that, that is pretty important in the work you do with your clients, maybe, again, coming back to journaling, maybe it's journaling, but it could be so many different things, right? Anything like that that's like a part of the process, but not like that you could replace with other things, right?

If it's like, "Here's this very specific scheduling strategy," which there are so many of them. I know as a coach that anything that you're teaching your clients like that, like you could easily remove that and replace it with just a different strategy. But if you don't want to be flexible with that or the whole point of your coaching is to rely on a very specific strategy and there's a reason that you do it and you love it and that's all you want to do, then I think that there's an opportunity there to just be really clear about that in your – maybe in your marketing and the way you talk about how you work with clients, right?

Like if I would wanna know if it were me, if I were hiring a coach, I would wanna know if there was some sort of like requirement for me to journal every day. And I've done that before. I have done it. I have experience doing it. It's not like I just decided it's not for me. I just happen to know that that isn't my best modality for creating you know awareness or whatever the result is I'm trying to create. So if that was me and I was hiring that coach I would want to know so I just know ahead of time I'm either going to really commit to this and be open to doing it anyway even if I don't love it

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

because it's the process and that's what I'm supposed to do or I can just decide this isn't the coach for me.

And I know for some of you that might sound really scary because you're like, listen, Lindsay, I don't have, maybe you don't have a lot of clients, you don't have the number of clients that you would like, or you know, maybe you don't have any clients. And so the thought of one person saying, this method isn't for me, could be really scary, but I'm sure you've heard this before, but I'm gonna say it anyway, the more clear you are about how you work with clients and the more specific you are about, you know, kind of your process and your methods and all of that, the more you're going to call in the people that do align with that, right?

Because some people will love that. Some of you right now, guaranteed, are listening and you're like, what do you mean you don't like journaling? Or you might even be thinking, this is crazy. Like how can you – how do you even get the results that you want to get by not journaling or not, you know, doing some writing exercise every day because maybe it's been such a huge part of your process.

Hopefully this was helpful. I know for some of you, you might not even have things like this in your program or in your coaching process, but my guess is if I sat with each of you and I was like, okay, tell me all the things, like all the ways you work with your clients, all the, you know, whatever, all the things you teach them, all the things you do with them, I could probably find some areas where this thinking could apply, right? Where you could think like, are there other ways? Can I be more adoptable to people that, to my clients who don't really resonate with this method?

All right, friends, thank you for being here today. I will talk to you again next week. And if you love this topic and you're like, yes, I wish I had a place to talk about this kind of stuff all the time.

You can if you want in The Coach Lab. This is the kind of stuff we're always coaching on and talking about and people are bringing to me to be like,

## Ep #226: Empowering Clients Through Adaptable Coaching Techniques

okay, help me solve this. My client is doing this thing and I don't know how to solve it or this, you know, my client is having lots of resistance, that's a word I hear so often, my client is having lots of resistance to doing this activity or to, you know, the coaching or whatever.

If you resonate with this, you should come join us so you can be part of these conversations of this coaching. Let me help you make your coaching and your coaching process the best ever for all of your clients.

All right, Otherwise, I will see you back here again 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](http://lindsaydotzlafoaching.com). That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.