

# Ep #285: The Spiral or the Pivot: When You're Not Using Your Coaching Tools



## Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Lindsay Dotzlaf**

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Lindsay: Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf, and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 285.

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. Today I want to talk to you about something that comes up very often in my coaching practice, which is coaches coming to me and asking for help on their own beliefs about their coaching and their coaching business, stemming from something very specific, which is they say something like, so I realized this thing. I'm doing this thing or not doing this thing and it's something exactly that I help my clients with. And I realized that I'm not using my own tools in the moment. I'm not using my own coaching tools.

And for many of them, it is creating a little bit of a spiral and a little bit of some shame and some self-doubt and maybe some fear that, you know, they're no longer a great coach or that they don't know what they're doing.

And recently I had an experience where I realized something similar to this in my own business a couple weeks ago. And what I did when I noticed is I quickly corrected. I course corrected. I made a pivot. I shifted. So I realized since doing that, that it's really important to talk about this and you'll hear why. You'll hear the importance of it throughout this episode and I'm going to share with you exactly what to do if you find yourself in this situation. Okay?

So I want you to think about this. Almost every coach I know has experienced some form of this. So I'm guessing this does sound familiar to you in some way, where you just have a realization that something that you coach your clients on often is happening for you and that you aren't using your own tools. Maybe you've seen it for a little bit, but maybe it kind of sneaks up on you all at once.

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And what can happen for a lot of you is that will start to trigger these thoughts about I am a bad coach. Who am I to even be doing what I'm doing. I don't even know what I'm doing, so how could I possibly help my clients? Or I'm out of integrity or who am I to possibly coach anyone else on this because X, Y, Z, right? And they start kind of spiraling a little bit.

And I'm just here to say first of all that it's very, very common. It's a very human pattern. It's why coaches have coaches because when it's you, when you're on the inside, it's harder to see it sometimes. You don't see it as quickly as you would as when you're working with a client.

But that's exactly why this is important to talk about because that moment that you realize, oh, I have these tools and I'm not using them, in that very moment, you have two choices and what you do from there is very, very important. Okay? Because what happens with that moment is that it takes you to a fork. It takes you to a fork in the road where you have two choices.

Road one is the spiral. This is the one I was describing, right? You make it mean something. You might go down a road of like full-on self-pity. You create a hole that maybe it's going to be a lot harder to climb out of or you feel like you have to climb out of it on top of the original thing, whatever the original thing was that was happening. Now you have a bigger problem or maybe even I'm going to say two problems instead of one.

Or the other fork, road two, is the pivot. The pivot is when you recognize that this moment is exactly what your tools are made for, that you shouldn't have seen it earlier, that you shouldn't have been using your tools for months now, because the awareness itself is a coaching tool. Right?

So the fact that you had the awareness that you saw it, that you are either here listening to this, thinking about it right now, or that you brought it to your coach or brought it to me if I'm your coach, and said out loud, "Hey, I noticed this thing." First of all, that alone is a tool. Right? Most humans wouldn't even notice that was happening. They wouldn't be thinking, oh my

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gosh, I'm doing this thing. I should have these tools for it. I should already have done something about it.

And here's the great news with the pivot, is that you didn't miss it all forever. You caught it in the moment. That's not a failure at all. That's actually the system doing exactly what it's supposed to be doing. That is your tools doing what they're supposed to be doing. Also, on top of that, when you go down that first road, right, the spiral, when you add the spiral on top of it, the spiral itself is another example of not using your tools, right? It is being aware.

So you had that moment of awareness, and then instead of choosing to pivot and do something about it, you spiral. So now not only were you not using your coaching tools, at least you were telling yourself you weren't using your coaching tools for the original thing, but now you're still not doing that and you're allowing yourself to spiral, again, not using the tools that you have or asking for help from a coach who has the tools as well.

And here's what makes this kind of higher stakes than a simple like, oh yeah, I've done that before or yeah, I can relate to this. What makes it a little bit higher stakes is that whichever road you choose, the spiral or the pivot, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. And depending on what the thing is or the circumstances are where you're not using your tools, this self-fulfilling prophecy can sometimes be a really big deal.

So what I mean by that is, whichever path you choose, the pivot or the spiral, it will tend to prove itself right. It will prove you right. So let's think about this. If you choose the spiral, right, you opt out of the tools, you kind of stay stuck. Eventually, over time, you'll look around and you'll think, I have all of these tools and they don't even work. The evidence mounts, right? It just gets bigger and bigger. The belief gets stronger. It just calcifies itself within you.

And let's be clear, it's not true that the tools aren't working. It is that you are not using them. But our brains can be really tricky and they like to protect

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us against seeing things like that sometimes. So it might really feel true that you're not using them.

If you choose the other option, the pivot, that it means using, you know, catching that drift and then using the tools in the moment or asking for help from another coach, you generate real lived proof in that moment that coaching works. Even if it's slow, maybe, even if it's not 100% transformation overnight or in five minutes or whatever. But that's not theoretical proof. That's real proof. Like, oh, I started using these tools and guess what?

They worked. You get to be your own proof for exactly what it is you help your clients with. So not only does it become that self-fulfilling prophecy and help you believe in coaching even more, but it also helps you be a better coach to your clients because it just strengthens your belief and teaches you a lot more about the actual tools that you use or that you go to other coaches to use with you.

So for coaches specifically, this is not a small thing, because your belief in what you do and your tools and the things that you've learned is part of really what makes you so effective. And the choice at that fork, it's not just about how you're feeling right now in this moment as you make the choice, it's about that kind of case that you're building for yourself over time, over and over and over. Because usually doing this once or twice, maybe not that big of a deal.

But let's say you keep choosing one or the other, it becomes a lot bigger deal. Right? If you keep going down that spiral path and you're spiraling out often and it's kind of taking you out and really affecting the way you're showing up day to day, over time, that's exhausting and it's really going to start to mess with your head, right? About coaching, about the tools that you have, about everything.

Whereas if you often are choosing the pivot and choosing like, oh, I can actually do something about this right now. It doesn't matter that I haven't

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been using my tools. Now that I have the awareness, now that I see it, I can instantly change my mind and start using them without shame, without judging myself. And if you do that over and over, first you're just going to move forward so much faster. But you're also going to build that case for yourself over and over and over throughout time that just overall helps you increase your belief in everything it is that you're doing.

So I want you to think about this. Have this visual in your mind. I want you to picture a speedboat versus a cruise ship and turning them around. Right? Because I had this thought last week when I made a bunch of changes in my business that felt so scary. They felt like, what am I even doing? But I also knew they were the exact right decisions for me in the moment. And it was like I turned on that speedboat motor and just turned around and just instantly started going a different direction. Obviously, that means I'm going to get wherever I'm going much faster, right?

Sometimes when you spiral and when you start to go down that deep, long, dark path, it's a little more like turning a cruise ship around. If you've ever been on a cruise, I have, they're pretty great. But if you've ever been on one and you've had to actually turn in real time, or you've been out on the deck when the cruise ship is turning around, you know it takes a minute for them to get turned around.

Now, it's okay. As long as they're turning, it still works. They still get there. Right? And the same is true with the pivot versus the spiral. So if you're like, oh no, I've been spiraling. That's okay. As long as you see it now and you start to turn even if it's slower, you're still going to get where you're going.

So I find that a lot of coaches when they come to me with this, they think that there's this like big correction required of them, right? Like turning something huge around, like the cruise ship example. It feels like the hard should be proportional to how long the like drift went on or how long the spiral happened or how long you forgot to use your own tools.

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And that's not always true. It's almost never true actually. It can literally happen in a moment, right? Like the minute you see it, you can just make a change, start making shifts, even if it's small shift after small shift, tool after tool. That is more like the speedboat. It's learning to just trust yourself that okay, I'm going to turn fast, I'm going to make some changes, and then I'm going to keep moving.

So I just need you to hear me when I say the drift doesn't determine the length of the correction. It's not like a punishment. It's not like a, oh no, I was spiraling and now it's going to cost me all of this time to course correct. The moment you have the awareness and choose to pivot and start using the tools and start leaning into the coaching, you are actually already correcting. You've already done it. You've already turned the ship.

So in closing, what I want to say is this drift, right, the part where you like forget to use your tools because you're human, totally normal and again, human. And catching it means that your awareness is working, that at least some of your tools are working. They didn't actually fail you. At some point, they might just be so ingrained that you don't even notice that you're choosing them. But even just to have that awareness does actually mean that you're making a choice right then.

So the real question just becomes when you find yourself at that fork, which one are you going to choose? You have to first know that you have a choice and then with that awareness, you get to decide where do I go from here? Am I going to take the spiral or the pivot? I highly recommend the pivot. It's a lot more fun, even if it's scary. It's like, think about, I mean, I guess a cruise ship is pretty fun too. But a speedboat is really fun.

But maybe that's not the best part of the analogy right there, but just consider that, right? It's going to be a lot more fun if you make the changes that align with you, that make sense for you, if you lean into your tools instead of shaming yourself, which is always an option or always optional, I should say, and never fun.

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So if this tracks, I just want you to know, I'm here for you. I'm rooting for you. You can literally decide to pivot right now in this very moment. And this is something we talk about often in *The Complete Coach*, experimenting, pivoting, learning to move forward, using your tools for you, using your tools for good, not just in the world, but for yourself as well. All right, I'll put the link for *The Complete Coach* in the show notes. And I'll see you next week. Goodbye.

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