

Ep #303: Unfinished: What You Don't See Behind the Scenes



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 303.

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 really happy you are here today. This is the third episode of the Unfinished series. So if you haven't listened to the last couple of episodes, just a little insight on what is happening. This is a 10-part series where I am wrapping up this iteration of the Mastering Coaching Skills podcast. A little bit of an off-ramp that leads immediately to an on-ramp of a new format of the show, a new podcast. All of those details will be released soon.

But today, I want to tell you a bit of a story. And it's actually a story about something I experienced this weekend. And it's going to sound like it has absolutely nothing to do with your business, but here's what I want to promise you. And here's the reason I'm telling it. Because every single piece of it has everything to do with your business. And hearing it in this format where I'm talking about something that isn't getting you specifically in your business mind, might feel very useful and relatable in a way that it might loosen some things for you and point out some things that are really important in your business and in your coaching.

First, I would love to encourage you if you have been a listener for a while, I would love, love, love if you could hit pause, leave me right now a quick rating, a quick review to just let me know that you're listening and to let me know moving forward for the next iteration of the podcast, what is your favorite part of this podcast. What do you hope I keep? What do you want to hear more of? Tell me all the things.

Also, in the show notes, we will include a link where you can go and submit your questions. Thank you to those of you who have already done it.

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Submit your questions to a Q&A episode, one of the final Q&A episodes I will be doing on this podcast. You can ask me anything. Nothing is off-limits about my business, about the industry, about coaching, about your business, about anything, anything you've been wondering. And don't worry, if you love this podcast, I am not going anywhere. There is just something new and improved coming your way. And I can't wait to share all of the details with you.

But for now, I want to tell you a story. Before I dig in, I will let you know there is an active, big thunderstorm happening as I'm recording this episode. So, if you hear any pops of thunder, just let it add to the ambiance, just get cozy, listen in, get swept away by a good thunderstorm and a story. All right?

So, this weekend, I was at a horse show. You may or may not know this about me, but my daughter who is currently 13 rides horses. And she actually rides horses in several different ways, but one of the things that she does is compete in dressage. Now, if you do not know what that is, just like I didn't a few years ago, if you have seen the infamous meme of Snoop commentating on the Tokyo Olympics where he's talking about horses crip-walking, that's dressage. So picture that, right? Get a good visual and don't worry. For this story, you do not need to know anything about horse riding, I'm going to tell you everything you need to know.

But if you have ever seen horse riding in the Olympics, specifically dressage, especially, it looks so fancy. It is riders, they have on often white pants, a white shirt, a fancy jacket, sometimes a bow tie of some sort, and they look very polished and very proper. And they are doing some pre-memorized routine with their horse, occasionally to music. That's one of my favorite dressage events to watch. Within dressage, there are several different types of tests and events that you can compete in.

So this weekend specifically was a dressage event, and my daughter was riding for two days in three or four different events each day. And the events themselves last maybe three to five minutes total. And it's just the

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rider in the ring with their horse by themselves. And as a spectator, you can stand at the rail and watch, you can sit in the bleachers if there are bleachers, or you can just stand around and watch.

For most people, I'm guessing if you've even seen it, your only experience with dressage is seeing it on something like the Olympics where you just see the rider on the horse entering the ring. Every once in a while you see a horse acting up, but usually it's just them doing their thing, you can't really often pick out like did they do a good job? Did they not? I still can't always tell. There are lots of things that happened that I'm like, okay, what did she do well? I don't know. But I'm sure for some of you, you do have more experience and you are going to know a lot more about what I'm talking about. But that's okay. I'm not going deep into the logistics of a horse show.

I just want you to imagine that visual and maybe the thoughts you've had about it in the past. I know for me when I've watched it in the Olympics, my thoughts were, wow, this is so fancy. This is a silly thing that's happening in the Olympics and there must be so much prep in this, but it looks simple but also doesn't, and how do they get the horses to do those things? And how do they know which is better and which isn't? I just had lots of questions, but also lots of thoughts about this has to be the fanciest sport. And I also thought it was always very interesting that often the equestrians are on the older end, if not the oldest, of many of the athletes in the Olympics. They vary in age, obviously, but some of the equestrians competing are in their 50s, which I always found to be fascinating.

And knowing what I know now about this sport, I can only laugh thinking about my thoughts on what that appeared to be as I just watched it on television versus what it is actually like in person and behind the scenes.

Here's what I want you to envision. First, you have to go to your barn wherever your horse is, you have to get the horse bathed and ready to get on a trailer. Then you get the horse on the trailer, usually with friends, and you drive the horse for maybe a few hours to the horse show. You get there, you unpack, you have to get them into their stall where they might

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stay for a couple nights. That's what we do. And mind you, this whole time they're pooping everywhere. They're pooping in the trailer, they're pooping outside the trailer, they're pooping in the new stall that just has brand new shavings in it. And also, it's often 100 degrees or at least this weekend it certainly was 100 degrees with 1,000% humidity. At least that's what it felt like.

And so you're sweating, you're immediately exhausted. You get the horse in there, the first thing you have to do is make sure they have everything they need. They need hay, they need shavings in their stall, they need buckets of water pretty much immediately because horses need a lot of water, especially so they don't overheat. They might need electrolytes, they need supplements, they need to be hosed down to keep them cool. They have a lot of needs. And you might be standing in a stall with a 1,000-pound animal.

And me, as a parent, I'm thinking about not only the horse, but my daughter. So we think about it like there's two athletes that we have to take care of. We have to take care of the 13-year-old and we, and she, has to take care of the horse that cannot take care of itself and that can't talk to you and tell you what's going on.

So you're loading the trailer, driving for hours, you're already tired before you even get there because you're already dirty and sweaty before you even get in the car to drive to where you're going. You go to the stall, get the horse settled. That takes a few hours, then you go eat, then you might have to come back, feed them dinner, make sure they're okay. Maybe take them for a walk or do a bareback short ride just around to get them stretched out. Then you leave them, you go to bed. You go to your hotel, hopefully get some sleep, usually you do because you're exhausted, then you wake up the next morning early because you have to be there to feed them and to do all of the things, make sure they have water, make sure they were fine overnight. And you do it all over again.

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And you spend maybe a 12- to 16-hour day in the blazing heat taking care of a horse who's an athlete, the kid who's an athlete, or yourself for some of the people that are older that are competing. And all day, it is back to back. There's really no rest. You're cooling down the horse. You're thinking about what do I need to put on for my next event? When should I get dressed? How do I get dressed in my white pants and my white shirt, by the way, ridiculous in order to get on this dirty animal that I have just washed and I'm just going to hope that it doesn't lay down or roll over or do any other nonsense in the stall while I get dressed in these pristine clothes and get on the animal to walk out to train and get the horse warmed up for, I don't know, maybe 30 to 40 minutes before each ride. Meanwhile, sweat is just dripping down every part of your body. You are riding on an animal that is getting hotter and hotter. It's putting off so much heat. I'm shocked by how much heat the horses put off.

Then you are going into the ring, walking into the ring with these judges watching you by yourself, pretending you feel so composed and everything is going great to walk through a test that you have memorized step by step. You can't forget any of it. You have to be perfectly connected with your horse. You have to anticipate what's going to happen, what the horse needs, what do you need, which way should you lean, how should you position your hips? What about your shoulders? Are they in line? What about all of it? There's so much that goes into it.

You would be shocked. If you know nothing about this world, maybe I'll just speak for myself, I have been shocked every single time the amount of training. One thing I didn't even mention is all of the training. First, years of training, but also the training that happens in the week before the show itself. So my daughter rides pretty much every day. Her horse gets extra training on its own. She gets extra training and has extra workouts. And there's always a frantic, what equipment do I need? What food do we need to pack? What do we need to take that she'll actually eat because when it's so hot out, nobody really feels like eating.

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It is quite honestly one of the harder things I've had to do as a parent. But of course, she loves it. I am not driving this bus at all. This is all her. She loves it more than I've ever seen a kid love anything. And just in the last couple of shows, we've experienced pouring rain, the hardest pouring rain that I've seen at a show and she actually had to compete during the rain because unless it lightnings and thunders, they don't call the show for rain. You have to be on all day. You have to be at the height of your paying attention because you're dealing with a 1,000-pound animal. And you're dealing with heat and sun and mud and poop, so much poop. Did I already say that? I mean so much poop.

And mucking the stalls and for me, dealing with literally every allergy you can imagine because horses, I'm allergic to horses, I'm allergic to hay, I'm allergic to basically outside. You've heard me talk about this probably in the past if you've been a listener for a while, I'm just allergic to everything. So the heat and humidity and hay and stalls and all the things aren't really helping. So I have to take care of myself as well, have my allergy medicine there, just have all of the things.

So then you finish that one event, you go back to the stalls, you pretty much do it all again. The horse has to be hosed down and cooled off right away. The horse might need electrolytes, the horse probably needs ulcer supplement because some horses, it's common that some horses get ulcers. You have to do all of this, making sure to keep your white show clothes clean or beg your parents, aka me, to do the things or help you do the things so that you can rest before your next event.

And it is just a constant. There is no rest for anyone. And not only that, but we often go with three to four riders from our barn. So there's the three or four riders, there's those parents, there's the trainer from the barn who's there with us running the whole show. And it's everyone looking out for everyone. You have to be willing to lend a hand at any point and it's all very high stakes because there are huge animals that could injure people, that could injure themselves, or that could just not be okay if they aren't looked after really well.

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And on top of all of it, you're performing, I'm going to say in quotes, three to four times per day, often at these shows, and sometimes for judges who might not even like the type of horse you have, who might have a bias against your horse, who might not like you for some reason. They might not like the look of you or the way you're doing something. They might not appreciate the shirt you're wearing. I know that sounds ridiculous, but it's all part of it.

Just like any sport with judges, there are always judges that are a little more traditional, there are judges that like to see more modern aesthetics or moves. And you just never know. There's just a lot going on. You might have a ride that you think that was amazing, I nailed it. That's going to be my best ride of the day. And for some reason, you get a score that you don't understand. Or the opposite can happen.

And not only that, but when you see it on TV, it looks fancy, right? You only see the fancy parts. What you don't see is the porta-potties. And if you don't want to use porta-potties or the portable bathrooms all around, you can walk maybe 10 minutes to a regular bathroom. You don't see the cuts and the bruises and the figuring out how not to get injured and the band-aids and the blisters from the boots and the crying when things didn't go your way or the feeling exhausted and temper tantrums all around by adults and kids and horses, honestly. And the horses just having off days and not wanting to do anything. The horses kicking stalls and being grumpy about their accommodations because maybe they're used to being pasture horses and they don't love being in a stall. All horses just have their own personality. That's a whole other thing.

You also don't see the people being so hard on themselves and the tears in the bathrooms, the tears hiding in the stalls so that people can't see you. The going over and over and over your test and your moves in your head until you're annoyed by it. You don't see the figuring out how to change again into your ridiculous all white outfit when there's not a real bathroom, right? Where do you do that? In the car? Usually yes, it's 100 degrees or more in the car.

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So there are just so many pieces that you would just never know. You just don't know that any of these things are happening when you're watching that five-minute performance on the television at the Olympics or wherever else you might see something like this.

And one thing I've come to decide is that equestrians are literally the craziest people alive. The craziest athletes. It's, let's put ourselves into the hardest, dirtiest, hottest, craziest conditions to then dress all in white and get on this 1,000-pound beast covered in dirt, possibly mud, and dust and anything else that they might be covered in. And then go into a ring and ride for these judges and make it look polished and effortless and I couldn't have a care in the world.

And then when the day is over, you go back to your hotel, eat dinner, probably pretty late, hope that someone else is doing the night check for you or you have to go back to the barn and check on the horse and you get up the next day and you do it again. And obviously, I don't think anyone would do it if they didn't love it.

And then the very worst part, in my opinion, is after the last day when you've done all the things and you have your scores and you feel amazing or sad about how it went and it's all over and you're exhausted to your core. You then have to put the horse back on the trailer, go back to your barn and unload all of the things, put the horses back, do the whole process over again, hose them down, make sure they're cool enough, make sure they're taken care of. And the work just never ends.

Now, all of that and it probably sounds pretty terrible at this point, unless you're just a horse lover and then maybe not. But here's what makes it bearable and even enjoyable. First of all, we laugh so much. I'm not kidding. There's so much laughter that happens over the weekend. We also bring each other breakfast. We order lunch or go pick up lunch or bring lunch in. We go to dinner together and laugh some more and talk about how the day went and how ridiculous it all is. We joke about how poor we are because, I mean, I knew it was going to be expensive to own a horse,

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but I did not really know. Also, somebody always forgets something. Someone brought the wrong equipment or they left an important pair of pants at home or, you know, you just never know. And we all come together to make it happen.

We come together to make it look like those five minutes are effortless. And we share tack. We encourage each other. Again, we laugh with each other, so much laughing. It is so intense and it's so rewarding. We're consistently talking about how can the next test be just 1% better than the last? So there's a lot of evaluating, a lot of, okay, how did this go? What am I going to do differently next time? What's one thing I can improve? What did the judge say? Did I get feedback from them? How can I incorporate that into my next test?

And I truly cannot imagine doing any of it alone. Now, I'm not the rider, right? I can't imagine doing it without other parents, but I also know that if I asked my daughter, she would still want to do it, but she would not be as motivated or have nearly as much fun if she wasn't there with her friends and with the other girls from the barn who are having the exact same experience and doing all of this nonsense together. But I want you to really think about this for a minute. This is the part where I want you to really pay attention.

Here's what you probably don't expect, or at least what I didn't expect when I was going into this. It isn't just that it makes it more fun when you're with other people. It's that being around the community, being in that community of the riders and parents and trainers and everyone helps you find out what's normal. You would never know what to expect or what would be normal when you're watching the five minutes of performance that you see on television. You would never know. You would go in and experience one day of what happens at these shows behind the scenes, and you would think this is out of control. This cannot be normal.

But when you go and you see that everyone has a bad day, everyone's horse sometimes is difficult or tired or spicy. Ours is often spicy. You would

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know that there's this pattern that makes no sense to any of us except the rider and the judge. You would see that the rider who's riding next to you in warmups may have been crying in their stall an hour before because they were disappointed with something that happened or because they're exhausted. You cannot know any of this from watching, watching the polished performance, the one that's meant to be seen, the one that's meant to be judged because that's the thing that you're working towards. But all of the work that goes in behind the scenes, you don't know what's normal until you see it happening to literally everyone, even the most experienced riders.

Even this weekend, I had a moment where my daughter forgot something. I was devastated. I was embarrassed. I thought, my gosh, we're going to have to ask someone and none of our riders were at the stall. So I had to find someone who I didn't know and see if there was any way they had this thing that we could borrow. Immediately they said, of course, and it was incredible. They even came down and helped me because I have not known anything about horses until the last couple of years and I still am quite inexperienced. My daughter is so much better at all the things, but she really needed to rest. They came down and helped me put it on and it was just the nicest thing. I could have cried and wanted to thank them because emotions are high, right? Everyone is exhausted, but there's this feeling of we are all in it together. Even when the riders are actually competing.

Now, often they feel like they're competing more against themselves. They're trying to improve their score or improve what they did last time by 1%, 2%. But technically to get a first place or a second place, etc., you are competing against the other riders, but it just doesn't usually feel that way.

Now, often on this podcast when I interview coaches, I am not just asking them, okay, what's working? How much money are you making? Tell us all the amazing things. Hopefully, what you hear is sometimes me asking them, what is hard right now? What's been the hardest thing about your business? I tap into the real human moments and I do that on purpose. I'm

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going to be doing that even more moving forward. There's a hint for what's coming, but I have always known how important that is. Because as a coach, or really as an entrepreneur, building any business, I think we're all a little crazy just like the equestrians. We're doing something that is inherently hard, that takes a lot of work. We just know, or at least hopefully you know that is part of it. This is part of what we have signed up for.

So much of the work happens behind closed doors. It happens alone when you're in your office trying to figure something out. It happens often times with myself and with so many of my clients and probably so many of you thinking I'm not doing it right. There's some secret formula. Why can't I figure it out? Because you aren't sitting with other coaches like I am at the barn with other riders seeing the actual shit, excuse my language, that is happening all day, every day, just like with the horses. It's really easy to look at Instagram and see the polish and think, oh, this is so much easier for everyone and to conclude that you are the only one struggling.

I was thinking about that so much this weekend as I was watching each rider and I thought if each rider was doing this on their own in a vacuum and not knowing, not seeing what everyone else was experiencing, it would be so much worse. There would be so much less laughing. There would be so much less teamwork. It would just be one person and a horse and maybe a parent struggling on their own, thinking there has to be a better way because I didn't know this was going to be so hard.

And when you think that you are the only one struggling, that is what sends you shopping over and over for the perfect formula. How many things have you bought that promised to be, here's the perfect formula for signing clients. Here's the perfect formula for social media content. Here's how to make a zillion dollars in one day. Here's how to do this. And the promises really entice you because when you aren't seeing everyone else going through it, it's really easy to think that everybody knows something else that you don't.

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Or maybe even to think that everyone else is pretending and no one has it figured out, which is the opposite but also interesting. I've heard that from coaches as well, some of my clients. When they're really in it, sometimes they question, is this actually working for anybody, or are people just lying or not being transparent or not telling the truth.

And I know that my job as a coach and one of the reasons I am here to do this work and continue to do this work is because, first, I love coaching. I'm obsessed with it just like my daughter, as much as my daughter loves horses. And I love working for myself and I love helping other people figure out how to do that as well. And one thing I'm just really good at is helping people through the muck, helping them tell their story, helping them know they're not alone. They're not the only ones that find this hard because it is inherently hard sometimes, not all the times, because sometimes there's also celebration and laughter and all of the things.

But one thing I can promise you is that consuming content where people are open about, here's what's working, but also here's what's hard. Here's some of the behind-the-scenes that most people aren't talking about. It can be so good for you when other times you're spending so much time alone at your desk thinking that you're the only one that doesn't know what's going on.

It's also one reason I believe so much in community and think it's super important for coaches and for entrepreneurs who work often at home by themselves to find community, whatever that looks like for you, whether it's in a mastermind or a membership or whether it's out in your actual physical community or having friends or colleagues that you meet with regularly. I know I've said this so often on this podcast, but I'm just going to keep saying it because this is what gets you through. This is what keeps you going.

If I think about that comparison for this weekend, it's that's what keeps the riders going when they get a really bad score, and it feels devastating. And then they have to go out an hour later and compete again. Or when they

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are so exhausted and completely worn out and have sweat more than they've ever sweat in their lives, and they still have all of the tack and stuff to break down when they're back at the barn.

The community is what keeps you going. Helping each other is what keeps you going. And I know that in my spaces, this will be one of the main things, along with everything else, of course, but this will be a main part of probably every offer I have moving forward. And it will be a lot of what is talked about in the upcoming rebranded podcast.

So, I hope that this story, that some of this, the ridiculous things that goes on behind the scenes at a horse show, had you laughing and had you at least thinking that maybe building your business isn't quite as bad as all of that. And maybe it will fuel you or maybe it will at least give you a visual next time you're sitting at your desk thinking about how hard it is. Remember something I said today and find the thing that's going to fuel you in the moment, even if it's just laughing about how ridiculous the horse world is, the equestrian world.

And remember, everything you're doing is thinking about how you can be just 1% better, not perfect, not an expert of every single thing, but just 1% better than whatever you did last. That is how you will get to where you want to go. And then find some other coaches or entrepreneurs that you can truly laugh with about how ridiculous everything can be behind the scenes.

One thing that you can look forward to is that I want to invite you to a podcast party, which is going to give you a place to come and gather with some of the other listeners of this podcast. I am still working on some details and the exact date, but I just wanted to plug it now and get you thinking about how fun that might be. We're going to tell stories, we're going to talk about how ridiculous some of this is. We're going to talk about what's working right now. You can come meet other coaches, other entrepreneurs, you can come meet me and ask me questions. This will be virtual, by the way, unfortunately. Although an in-person podcast party also sounds fun.

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But soon I will have a date, a registration link, and all of the information. If I have it complete before this podcast comes out, it will be in the show notes, but if it's not, it will be very, very soon. All right?

Thank you so much for being here today. I really appreciate you. Hopefully this one gave you some laughs about what goes on behind the scenes sometimes on my weekends. And I'll see you back here 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.