

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lindsay Dotzlaf

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf, and you are listening to Mastering Coaching Skills, episode 304.

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, welcome to part four of the Unfinished series. This is a 10-part series where I am celebrating 300 episodes of the Mastering Coaching Skills podcast and I'm letting you in on a little bit of behind the scenes and what's coming next and just a lot of exciting things. But today, I have something really fun for you.

Before I dig into that, I want to remind you that one of the episodes I'm doing for this series is a listener Q&A and some of you have already submitted some incredible questions. So if you click the link that we'll put in the show notes, you can submit a question and I would love it, love, love, love, if you do it in an audio form. Now you don't have to, you can just type in your question, but if you send me a recording, you will get to hear your voice featured on the podcast, which will be so fun.

So if you can do that, that would be amazing. Again, I already have some great questions, but I would love to have as many as I can. Nothing is off limits. Ask away any questions that you have. The other thing is, as you might already know, there are some big changes coming and I have a big announcement for you coming very soon. So stay tuned for all of those.

But if you could do me a favor and rate, review, subscribe, whatever it is you want to do to this podcast and if you want to write a review and tell me things that you have loved, what you would love to hear me talk about in the future, and or what you don't want to hear me talk about in the future, that would be amazing and super useful for me moving forward. I love doing this work. I love showing up for you every week. It's honestly one of

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

my favorite, very favorite parts of what I do. So all feedback is very welcome.

Now, let's talk about what's happening today. Today I'm having a conversation with my good friend, my colleague, and a mentor that I have worked with over the last few years, Trudi Lebrón. Most of you might already know her. I'm not even going to give her an introduction. I'm going to let her introduce herself and I really hope you enjoy this and learn so much as you listen to us talk about the evolution of her work and her business over the last six years plus of her business. So, with no further ado, let's dig in.

Hello, hello. Thank you so much for being here today. I'm so excited to have this conversation with you. But first, tell everybody who you are and what you do.

Trudi Lebrón: My name is Trudi Lebrón and what do I do these days? I think that's the kind of point of this whole conversation we're about to have. I do many things. I study change and I build tools to help facilitate change and I teach people those tools. That's kind of what everything boils down to these days.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I love it. Yes, and we will be talking all about what do we do? We don't know. We're not really sure.

Trudi Lebrón: That's the point. Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: We're figuring it out. But I'm so excited you're here. This has been kind of a long time coming and as listeners might know, if they've listened to the last couple episodes, these final episodes are kind of a winding down of my current podcast and when I thought about like, okay, what are the 10 episodes going to be?

And I thought about, you know, what my podcast has been for 300 episodes. One of the things that I've done is have like some mentors that I've worked with or just people some different people that I've worked with.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

And I was like, Trudi has to come on because I have worked with you on and off for the last, I don't know, few years, I guess.

Trudi Lebrón: A while now, yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah. And, and we've become close. We're friends. So this is gonna be really fun. I can't wait to hear all the genius and I can tell that I have this feeling of like, I assume they all know you, but they probably don't. Like I'm sure not all the listeners know who you are.

Trudi Lebrón: Okay, so in case you don't know me.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yes.

Trudi Lebrón: I am the founder of the Institute for Equity Centered Coaching, the author of *The Antiracist Business Book*, I've been around these internet streets coaching for a long time. I've worked with some of your favorite coaches. And I've been doing like organizational development work and diversity, equity, and inclusion work for like 20 years.

And in about 2020, what year is it? In 2016, 2017, I really made a conscious decision to want to bring that kind of work into the coaching industry very specifically. I had been doing it in nonprofits and school districts and things like that. And I was running a consulting firm of my own, like a pretty traditional nonprofit consulting firm.

And as I was on my own entrepreneurial journey, and you know, getting fixed on podcasts and, you know, conferences and all those things, I realized, you know, this again, this is back 2015, 2016, I realized that world had a real big gap in terms of, you know, cultural competency and diversity, equity, and inclusion and just some like real basic kind of impact-driven, values-driven business approaches that I had been working with again in other places for a long time.

And I loved coaching. I was already a coach. I had a master's degree in psychology already. I'd been a professor already. I'd done all these things

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

and I was like, this field of the coaching industry, this kind of ecosystem feels like a good place to set up shop. And so that's what I did. And so that's how many people have come to know me over the years.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I love it. And I think the coaching industry is so ripe for like needing that kind of work because we're online, we're very visible, we're, I would say in general, maybe, maybe this is an assumption, but it feels like in general, the business world probably needs a lot of this kind of work.

Trudi Lebrón: For sure.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah. But coaching, especially because we're so, we are so visible and we're kind of marketing, we're not running most of us local businesses. We're like working with people from all over the place and all possibly all over the world and just all the things you teach. I think are so important. I'm a big fan. You know that.

Trudi Lebrón: Thank you. I will say that coaching very specifically, I think one of the reasons that I wanted to do it and I love coaching so specifically, doing this work so specifically in coaching is because any coaching that we're talking about for the most part is about improving people's life outcomes. That's kind of the essential, you know, the essential work of coaching, whether we're talking about like people's businesses or lives or relationships or health, the goal is improvement.

And when we look at diversity, equity, and inclusion work, and when we look at the ways that people are marginalized, we're often looking at things like life outcomes, right? And life outcomes really start to break down when we look at race and zip code and gender and DEI is a solution to that. So it just has, it just always made sense. It's like the goals of these two bodies of work are the same to improve people's life outcomes.

So if you're doing that work without the context for how those things impact someone's life, you're missing a big part of the puzzle. I'm really proud of the work that we've done over the last six years. A lot of people have come into that education, you know, either directly through us or indirectly. Yeah,

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

but I'm really proud of kind of, you know, there's still lots to do, but a lot of work has been done.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: A lot of amazing work. And that was one of the things you just said is one of the reasons, one of the things I knew I wanted to talk about today. It's one of the things that I've learned so much about from you and just love every time I hear you talk about it, but just like how you think about what coaching is in general. It's a lot more maybe broad than I think a lot of coaches, than like the way a lot of coaches think about what coaching is and what they do. So let's just talk about that. Like when you, if I just asked you, if I wasn't a coach and I was just like interviewing you from the newspaper or something and I was like, what is coaching? What would you say?

Trudi Lebrón: I'm one of those like real like coaching is life. Everything is coaching people. I really am. So, here's my real answer. Coaching is anything we do, anything that, you know, is a process by which we support other people in achieving their goals. Very simply. And I think if we look at it, now my definition and when I teach coaching, I specifically teach equity-centered coaching. So there's a lot more caveats in there about what that looks like, but generally coaching, even if we think about like sports teams, the role of the coach is to be a facilitator, an educator, a motivator, a strategist, an encourager, right?

So we do that in so many contexts. By that measure, like teachers are often in a role of coach. You know, any youth professionals are, you know, youth workers are coaches, social workers are coaches, all kind of human service support people are coaches, college advisors, right? So I distinguish between like coaches, we often talk about coaches as people who like kind of do that as their profession, but coaching, again, coaching is something that any of us can do and it's an approach to how we do our work to help people facilitate change and grow.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I think one reason that I really like thinking about it that way and the way you describe it as there are so many humans in our world

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

that are coaches or that are coaching that we wouldn't consider, that we wouldn't call, label them as coaches. And I think one thing that's so powerful about thinking about it like that is I think sometimes in this industry, and sometimes myself included, I'm sure, we can be very precious about like, this is what coaching is, you should be doing it this way or you should be doing this thing.

And coming at it with that lens, I think just really opens it up to like, actually, no, there are so many different ways that people might need that support or learning or strategizing or all those things.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, like that approach to, yeah, to learning. I love thinking about it. I definitely identify as a coach. Like when I think about my career and profession, like coach is one of the titles that really does resonate. That's not the case for everyone. I can't tell you how many people I meet who are like, oh, I'm in this certification program, but I'm not a coach. Right?

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I know.

Trudi Lebrón: And I get it. Like there's lots of hang-ups, but I also know people who like when I was, oh my God, my son is about to be 18 years old, so 17 years ago when he was a little baby and I was still working in schools, my job title, one of my job titles was graduation coach, right? I worked in a high school. I wasn't the counselor. I was a coach.

I was, you know, someone with a master's degree in the school whose sole job it was to like follow a case load of students to make sure that they were like getting to school and, you know, helping them navigate barriers and helping them with their credits and making sure they got tutoring and, you know, often it extended to like, is there food at home? Do we have to connect them to like resources? Right? So I came into understanding coaching way before this online world. You know, like way before any of this.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

So I get why we can sometimes be precious about it, especially like if we went to school for it or certified and invested all this money in like becoming a coach, but the approach of coaching, like what coaching actually does and the skills and tools that coaches use are things that we can use in all kinds of context to it's like as a style of communication, a style of motivation, a style of support. So I think, yeah, I think that we could all, anyone who works with humans, I think with some like coaching training would be much better, would have a lot more capacity to do their jobs.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Totally. Oh my gosh. I think this all the time when I overhear my husband like talking to his team at work or whatever. I'm like, oh my gosh. Can I just pop on there real quick and like say some things?

Trudi Lebrón: Asking the wrong question.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Oh, always, always. I'm like, oh, so bad. Stop.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: That's funny. Okay, so what you said something a second ago that was like, what I do specifically is equity-centered coaching.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: And so what would you say is like the difference?

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. So I think there's a lot of approaches, not I think, there are, there are a lot of approaches to coaching that profess to be neutral, right? They claim to be neutral. The person, the coach in that role is not supposed to have a side, not supposed to take a stand that they're this kind of neutral tool helping someone sort through their thoughts and, you know, all of that.

So there's that style of coaching. There is also coaching that's quite manipulative and coercive and like really pushes people in ways that are not trauma-informed, that often lead to people doing things that are out of integrity with their values or pushing people to take on strategies or do

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

things that they're not quite ready for. There's so many things I can say about that. Point is, there's a lot of approaches to coaching.

Because of the background that I have, because I'm a DEI practitioner and also because I grew up in an inner city and I am like a marginalized person and was a teen mom and have encountered all of these barriers in my life and have worked with lots of people, social workers, coaches, you know, have encountered lots of support people in my life, some who had really negative, you know, approaches to not trauma-informed approaches to their work and some people who had really equity-centered, you know, youth-centered approaches to their work. I'd felt the difference. I know what it feels like to be on the receiving side of a person that holds whether it's bias or not.

So I don't really believe that there is such thing as neutrality. I think that if you're trying to hold a neutral line, what is likely going on is that everybody's defaulting to like standards, right? And not really pushing or critiquing assumptions or why people want things or there's all kinds of things. Equity-centered coaching specifically is designed so that the coach holds a line or does hold a bias, but to equity, not to a predetermined outcome. Equity-centered coaching is one of our competencies is client led.

So the client is always in the driver's seat and they're the ones who's always like making decisions, but the coach's role is to specifically be asking questions that the client may not be considering or seeing.

And so if an equity-centered coach sees a red flag or, you know, is picking up something or notices like a bias coming out or some assumption, that coach is going to be prepared to challenge it or to hold a theme that might have to do with like identity or power or, you know, those kinds of things. So equity-centered coaches are trained to be able to kind of have different types of conversations and hold space that is, you know, kind of centering justice and equity and anti-oppression and liberation.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: What do you think is the, I had this question come up as you were talking about that. Like, okay, I think sometimes as coaches, one of our jobs is to, and you might disagree with this, so this could be interesting, but I think it's like sometimes one of our jobs is to kind of hold a vision for our clients that maybe they can't fully see, not...

Trudi Lebrón: Yes, I agree with that.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: See for themselves? Okay.

Trudi Lebrón: Mmhmm. Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: But in a way that aligns with what they've said they want. Like I'm always very clear about that. Like the client's always the one determining like, where are they going? What's the thing they're creating? What are their goals? Whatever. And I don't actually know how to ask the question, but I've it's something about like, what's the difference between that, what I just said, the like holding this vision in my mind for my client, like I know they could create whatever they want to create in this situation or...

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: ...achieve this crazy goal that they've set. I don't know, what's the question here? Like what's the, what's the difference between that and what you just said, the like pushing or leading them somewhere.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, okay. So I agree that one of the jobs of a coach or one of the tools, one of the things that we can do for our clients is to hold the vision for what they want. There's a difference between holding a vision for the, what they want because they've described that to you, right?

And again, as equity-centered coaches, the way I coach and the way I train people to coach is to take a good amount of time really understanding the context that the person is coming from. And so we're not just getting on a

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

call with someone and being like, oh, what's your problem? Let me like tell you what to do real quick. Like there's none of that happening, you know?

So we're taking the time to really understand the client, that means that we're seeing them and hearing their vision at different points of time across, so like over the course of time, which means that I can say to a client, oh, you're saying that today or you're feeling this way today, but three months ago, you were talking about this vision and I'm reminding that's me holding that. Like, remember, this is what we said and this is the strategy we made, has something changed? What is happening? We just in an off day today. Like, what's going on?

But that's different than making that vision up for them or assuming what that vision is. It's because I'm in the relationship and they've brought me into that vision. So I think that's really different than pushing clients to say like, for example, you know, like one of the kind of popular things is like, oh, like everybody should want to be making a million dollars or, you know, whatever the number is. And you know, often I will hear these kind of shamey messages around like, if you're not, you know, pursuing that, you're...

Lindsay Dotzlaf: What are you even doing?

Trudi Lebrón: What or and like I have heard some pretty, my stomach turns just thinking about it. You know, messages that are like, if you're not using your full brilliance, you're leaving people behind and like, how dare you not work to your potential? And like, how are you supposed to like achieve all these impact goals if you don't hustle, hustle, hustle. And it's like, what is that? Like how, how did we get here? Like, what is happening?

And that now for some people, that is the vision to have the, you know, multi-seven figure and like, great, there's space for that. And you shouldn't be shamed if you're like, all I need is X amount of dollars and I don't want a big business and I don't want to be an influencer and I don't want to, you should be able to get support to build the business that you want that works

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

for you at your stage of life and at your temperament and whatever, you know, whatever, without being made to feel like something is wrong with you or that you're a slacker or whatever, because you don't want to, you know, that you don't want to pursue that.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I can't tell you how many clients I've worked with who come to me, I think because and I think you have similar spaces and our clients are, you don't work with just coaches, but our client, our client temperaments are similar, I think. And I can't tell you how many times, how many clients I've had who come that are like, I don't know if I'm allowed to say this, but here's what I want. I don't want to leave my job. Actually, I love my job. Like I want to keep working full-time and I love coaching. I would love to have five clients at a time and just like have that be like a consistent, like how do I create that?

And almost like they're ashamed or like they have to like whisper it. Like I don't know if I'm allowed to say this, but And I'm like, what? Yes, of course. Of course that's the business we help you create. Like what are you talking about? And, yeah, it's wild to see how common that is.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, that's another that's I love that you brought that one up because that whole like quit your job, you should like the idea that entrepreneurship is like the ultimate success. It's like come on.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Or like I'm a full-time mom. I have young kids at home and I actually don't, like I want them to be home. I don't want them to, you know, I don't want to have to send them to daycare so I can make a million dollars a year or whatever, right? And like really like they're so scared to say it out loud.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: It's crazy.

Trudi Lebrón: That's the world we're in. And also, I will say because this is, you know, we that we also get to change our mind. That's also a hard one,

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

right? When you're like, you might have a season where you're like, yeah, let me do all the things and whatever. And then you might have a season where you're like, actually, let me take a step back, right? Like that is normal. I have been in business for so long. I started my side hustling like when I was in college. I have never not had some kind of side hustle or...

Lindsay Dotzlaf: We have a lot of similarities that we've talked about when it comes to this kind of thing. We always joke that we start like 10 businesses by breakfast or whatever.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, yeah. So, and I know that like we all have different iterations of our work. Things expand, things contrast, our interest shifts, other things in our life take precedent at different seasons and like I just want to like, I can't stress how normal that is, right? And like just it is actually more normal. What we see online, the people who have the big companies and the programs forever and ever, that's actually the small minority and there's so much happening behind the scenes. People just don't have a context for like what that looks like.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah, they have like 20 full-time employees and, you know, it's like all or more. I mean, it's a whole, anytime someone says a name that I just know, like, not only is this not apples to apples, this isn't even like apples to like any other kind of food. Like we've gone outside of like this is a totally different thing that you aren't even aware of like any of the things that are happening.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, I gotta tell you, I like, I had a moment where I thought that I was scaling in that direction and real quick I was like, oh actually, hold on. This is not for me. And I didn't even have to, that's just from like also watching and kind of what was going on in other companies and just my, I think the biggest our team got was like maybe eight employees, which is like, that's a good size team.

And I was like, you know what? This is not. I remembered in through that process, like who I am and like why I came into entrepreneurship in the first

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

place. I was telling someone this actually very recently that I love being an entrepreneur. Like I do. I love my life on my own terms and I kind of needed it. I could not function in a traditional workplace for very long. I think the longest job I ever had was maybe 18 months, maybe two years and not because anything happened, like, you know, like because I was just like getting fired from jobs, but I was like moving so fast. I'd get bored, I'd get another degree, I'd get a new skill, I'd be like trying to solve the next problem.

But at the same time, I had ADHD, I had young kids, I was trying to get my master's degree, like I remember being in my last nonprofit job before I finally like left and you know, it was full-time in my own business. I remember like crying in the parking lot, like not wanting to go inside. And there was nothing. It wasn't like it was this incredibly toxic environment, but like I could not. I would sit behind my desk sometimes for hours and like just blank. Like nothing was happening because of my stress and my ADHD and all of these things.

And it was just, and so I would have to work late to overcome, you know, like all this stuff was going on and I was like, I can't function. And I couldn't function in school. I dropped out of school in ninth grade. I homeschooled myself through college. So it was just like me trying to get to my own business was a little bit of a matter of like, that is the only way I'm going to survive. I cannot be in these environments.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah, I remember when I have so many examples of this, like you, I've had many a job and it didn't last very long in most of them. I think the longest one I did that was in an actual office, it was a real estate office, but I was the office manager. So and it was very small. So I just I was kind of like I was running the whole thing. It was kind of like I was running a business and I was like, oh, this is great because no one was really there overseeing me and they loved the ideas that I had and let me like implement them.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

And besides that, which I also was a real estate agent. So I was like, whatever, being a realtor at the same time. And but besides that, I can't think of any job that I've had for longer than, I don't know, definitely a year that was just any kind of structure. I was like, this is not, this is not for me. Get me out of here. I need to be thinking about different things, doing different things, using my brain in a different way because I'm going to fall asleep.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. I think because I didn't have access to, and this isn't like a, oh, I wish I would have did all these things different. That's not the case. I've done amazing work over the last, you know, six years and I'm super proud of all of the things. And now that I'm here with the perspective that I have, also like with the perspective of all of like the businesses that I've seen and all of the coaching practices that I've seen, I realize that if I would have had coaching or if I would have been an environment, I was in a little bit of an echo chamber for a little while, right?

Like I was hanging out with everybody who was building these big businesses and there was a lot of hype around that and it was fun and I was like, let's all, you know, let's do it. And I...

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Let's all do it, let's go. Let's keep going.

Trudi Lebrón: Let's all go and, but once I hit all the goals, right? There was never a conversation about like, oh, you've hit all the goals. Like what now? There was no like coaching that like really pushed me and I think this is what I mean, like I think that I hope that of all of the people that we've certified, if I would have had an access to an equity-centered coach at that time, someone would have caught this moment, right?

And like, so there was no conversation around like, oh, like you've hit this goal. Let's take a beat. You have the financial cushion now, which you've never had before to like really think about your capacity and like what you want to do next and, you know, maybe do some things that you thought about wanting to do before, you know, like who, who knows what those

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

conversations would have been like, but all the conversations that I was in was like, okay, how do we do it again? How do we just sustain this? How do we expand? How do we grow? How do we grow? How do we grow?

And it was like, yeah, and again, I don't feel like I was misguided or anything like that. This isn't a complaint. This is like one of those, you know, hindsight moments.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Totally.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, like I just realized that I was going so fast and I didn't have support. The only support I had, because I did have support, but all of the support that I had was support that was about hitting the accelerator instead of being like, okay, let's, again, take a beat and assess. And so much of like what I believe fundamentally, all of my like philosophies around self-determination and liberation and all of those things, like if I were slowing down, I would have like, I would have been asking a couple of different questions. So, anyway...

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yep.

Trudi Lebrón: It is possible that I still, even if those conversations were had, it's possible that I would have made all the same decisions because I was meeting a moment in the world with like 2020 and Black Lives Matter and COVID, all of the things that were happening, like, it's likely that I just would have done the same thing, but I probably would have done it a little different.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: What was it like? So, okay, let's see, for listeners that don't have context besides this conversation for who you are and the work. Maybe we should set, I should set it up and say in 2020, you were already doing the work, you were already in the coaching world and all of a sudden, there was a huge demand for the work.

Trudi Lebrón: It was the overnight thing, success that took 10 years to build.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yes. Let's just talk about that for a second because I think it's, it's, this is rare, like most people do not experience this, what you experienced.

Trudi Lebrón: So I already had a multi-six figure business. That's important context. I wasn't starting from zero. I already had, I had a team, small team, but I had a team, I had all the online systems. I've been doing the work for a long time, but I went viral in 2020 for a video that I posted in response to some stuff that was going down with like Marie Forleo. And lots of people had videos that were responding to that issue, but my video was different in that it was a teaching video and it wasn't like just a rant going off about like the world, which there was plenty of that to go justified going around.

But because I was an educator around this particular thing that had to do with this particular intersection of the coaching industry and diversity, equity, and inclusion and community building and team, like those, because it was that particular group of things and I had been talking about that already, kind of warning people that this was going to happen eventually.

I had a bunch of people who I built relationships with who had big platforms, like, you know, kind of sharing my stuff. I did a training, it wasn't even a sales webinar, it was a training for around diversity, equity, and inclusion. I put it up in a day, like I did the video on a Saturday. I held the workshop on a Sunday. We sold 600 seats in 24 hours. It was like a \$97 workshop.

And then we sold like a million dollars in coaching and consulting, not just coaching, but coaching and consulting. Again, I was already a consulting firm. I had a team, I had support, there was, you know, we had the infrastructure to deliver. So that's important, that's important.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah, consulting as in bigger names coming asking you like, hey, can you actually come into my company and do some consulting work around this?

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, can you come into my company? Can you do some executive coaching with us? Can you write some strategies? Can you look at our curriculum? Yeah, so a combination of all those things. And again, I've been doing that stuff. And it was nothing for me to like work with a company of 20 people when I've been working with school districts for years, you know? So it was like, yeah, like absolutely.

So we sold a million dollars in coaching in just like a couple of months and scaled up, hired people, you know, and then it became this like, then we were able to roll out our certification. Our certification was another seven figure, like initiative. So that was speaking everywhere, working with all the people. It was, yeah, it was incredible.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: What did it feel like? What was your experience of it and how aware were you that like, oh, this is, oh my gosh, this is happening? Or were you just like trying to keep up with what was happening?

Trudi Lebrón: I don't want this to sound crazy, but like I knew this was coming, right? Like I...

Lindsay Dotzlaf: That's why I'm curious like what your experience of it was.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. It felt like finally, this many people are paying attention to the, because I was so locked into the work. Like I think a lot of people from the outside watching look like, oh, like influencer life, like traveling around, speaking on stage. I get how that can like how it may have looked from the outside, but I was a very serious equity practitioner, right? So like for me it felt like just more of the work I was doing. The new part was like the recognition, right? Like I would go places and people would like knew who I was and all of that.

But, you know, I grew up wanting to be a musician. So that was kind of fun. Like I was kind of like, okay, like this is like, this is as cool as I thought it might be.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah, yeah, put me on all the stages.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, yeah. But the work was really important and so I was like, I mean I was super, I was coaching nonstop. This was not like a, oh I have one program and everybody's in it. Like I was working my butt off. Like for real, for like years.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I know now like kind of being, knowing you and hearing about all the things, I will tell you my experience of that because I was at that...

Trudi Lebrón: That workshop. Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Workshop. Yeah. It was my first introduction to you. I think, if I remember correctly, or maybe I knew of you before. Whatever, it was the first time I paid you money, I think, and came to a thing. And I don't, I wouldn't have said this then. I wouldn't have had the words for it, but I think now, because then I didn't work with you like for a while and I think for me it was like kind of what you said, like from the outside watching, you might think that it was like, oh, who, I was kind of like, oh, wow, this is like, this is a lot.

I wonder what, I don't know, it's like I wonder what, how she's going to handle all this or, but now being on the other side and knowing you so well and now having worked with you and whatever, like now I know you were ready. You had been like the work was there behind the scenes and I think I'm pretty particular about who I work with sometimes and there was just like a almost like a I'm going to watch for a minute and like see. And then I did and I was like, oh, she's amazing actually. She does know what she's doing. This is really good.

Trudi Lebrón: I do. I'm actually really good at it.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: And I loved that. I just like fell in love with all of it then. But can we just say like, thank goodness you were there to do the work to be like, I've been preparing. Here you are.

Trudi Lebrón: Yes, thank you.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: It's so good. Okay, were you surprised about the money that like people just keep wanting this thing? Or did it just feel like I've been working for this and I'm prepared?

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, so the context is I was working in school districts. I had contracts that I already had, I was already in a situation where I was like, you know, I had a contract that was worth \$86,000. Like one single contract worth \$86,000. So it wasn't this like, oh, now we, now we had more people paying us that, but I knew what people in corporate institutions were paying speakers for this quality of consulting. I didn't see myself as like an online coach. I was a consultant, you know, and a coach, but like an executive coach.

So the online coaching world and how people talked about it and like how they priced it and stuff like it was very different than what I was used to. I was used to selling and developing proposals and sending proposals to people and like negotiating those. So, yeah, like the the fact the volume of it was different and I had to, you know, need to put some more systems in place, but it wasn't, we weren't starting from scratch and yeah, because I was, because I had been working in these other contexts, it wasn't like mind, it wasn't difficult for me to wrap my mind around selling things at that price, which I think for coaches is a big part of the thing. Like selling.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah, I just think it's interesting probably for people to hear this because I think that sometimes they see things like that and they think, not just you, but other examples of that and they think like, oh, just like overnight this thing happened.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, I mean, I was driving my car all over New England to like do work in person. Sometimes I like drive, drive to Maine for like a three-hour meeting, right? Like, with a school district. Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Were you like, excuse me, have you heard of Zoom?

Trudi Lebrón: Oh, no, this was before, you know, no, we couldn't do...

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Of course, no, I know.

Trudi Lebrón: This is when everybody thought you couldn't do your work at home, right?

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Right. Right, right. Now it's like, who would drive, who would do that? Why, why in the world would you drive for three hours? Okay, so I think one thing that's interesting about that is then you've now had a shift. So that happened then. And since then, one of the most, I was telling you before we started recording, it's been really fun for me over the last kind of year watching you make some big changes to your business and shift some things and so I want to talk about that a little bit, but maybe first let's talk about like going from that to not like where you are today, but like where you were maybe like a year ago.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. So in 2023, the landscape for diversity, equity, and inclusion work really shifted, right? And at that time, actually there were a couple things shifting. In DEI and in coaching, which were like my two, you know, the two intersections of my work. So in the DEI world, we started to see, we started to see affirmative action be dismantled at the Supreme Court level, we saw Roe fell with the Supreme Court level, we saw an election, you know, did not go in favor of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles for our country.

And with that came actually a lot of funding restrictions on funding, not only just restrictions on funding which impacted like our nonprofit clients and school clients, but you know, it also came with kind of like a culture tone across the United States where people were actually being sued for running explicit DEI initiatives in like, you know, law firms and corporate institutions and things like that. So it really, so there was a sector of people who like started to change, you know, people were wiping DEI language off of their websites, had to pivot their funding initiatives, people getting laid off.

So, you know, we had some clients who were unable to renew their contracts with us due to funding restrictions. But also, and then some, you

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

know, just the again, the tone, like the the tone in the world had shifted, so people were not looking for like DEI specific work. There was also a bunch of like just misinformation about what DEI is.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I want to pause you for a second.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I want to ask this for context for people, for listeners.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: How would you describe, like what DEI is versus what sometimes people think it is?

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. So diversity, equity, and inclusion is about helping all of us, right, you see it mostly in companies, but really it's about an approach to our life and our work that asks us to account for the needs of everyone, right? This is a very oversimplified description.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: We could record a whole episode just about this. For the listener, this is going to be very simplified.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, the short answer is like we live in this country, we live in this world really, but for the context of the United States, we live in this country where we have wildly disparate outcomes for people based on race and zip code, right? So that means because the science says that there is no inherent difference between people who, you know, of different races, there's no inherent reason that our graduation rates should be so different, that our incarceration rates should be so different, that our home ownership rates, that are, you know, the numbers of people of color who are CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, right?

Based on just humans, right? There's no human difference that accounts for that disparity. It's all manufactured, it's all based on the history of this country. And DEI asks us to take responsibility for that history and to do things not by reducing expectations, but by elevating standards for

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

everyone and elevating access for everyone. So that is the kind of short answer. Do you feel like that...?

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I think so. Yeah. I think, so that's like what DEI is and then maybe, if I were to oversimplify it...

Trudi Lebrón: If people talk the way that it has been kind of like publicly, you know, by certain media outlets, it's like DEI is about lowering standards so that black and brown people could like get, be promoted or it's about hiring people based on quotas instead of their qualifications, which is all not true, right? Or it's about, for in some extreme cases, you know, people it's about hating white folks, right? Like there's some people who talk about it that way, which is not, that is not what DEI is.

Now, there are people out there in the world who teach things that are not right. Like that's every industry, right? Every industry, you have bad actors, but if you look at DEI research and like practitioner, like serious practitioners, what you hear is that like this, that this work is actually about improving everybody's outcomes and the way that we do that is by centering the needs of people who have been marginalized. So that is what DEI is.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Perfect. All right, so now back to you being like, so 2023 things are changing.

Trudi Lebrón: So the world changed, we saw, everyone who like was inside that work kind of saw it coming, like, you know, there were signs like that things were going to shift. Also at this time, I started having some health things that ultimately were attributed to like perimenopause and PMDD and some birth control that I was on for way too long that was causing me to have severe migraines almost daily and crazy mood swings all the time. And between that and watching the industry that I had been, you know, in like fall, oh and then in the coaching industry like certifications were not, you know, people weren't just investing in certifications anymore because

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

the economy was changing. Like there was just so many things happening. My health was changing.

And so I was like, I, it got to the point in the year where a couple of our kind of corporate clients were coming to an end and a mastermind that I was running was coming to the end around the end of last fall. And it was just an opportunity for me to be like, okay, instead of just like making something up so that I could keep the team and just kind of keep things going, let's offload the team. We can see it coming. We can do this in an equity-centered way, right? We can like make sure everybody has time to like make other arrangements and whatever.

So we started that process to like let go of team members over the course of last year and then finally offload offboarded the last team members at the end of last year. I do have like a VA team that I work with and other contractors, but I essentially shifted from internal support to fractional support in, you know, just because I didn't need, I didn't need as much anymore.

And I started to like just experiment with some content that I was helping people with in my private coaching and an intensive and in like my mastermind program, but I didn't want to run, not only did I not want to run like several weekly programs anymore, but I was just seeing a need in the world that like people need to get outside, people actually need to get off of this computer. I don't need our clients to be on a weekly mastermind call and a co-working call and a this, no, like we need to just do the work and like do other things, right?

So I started shifting, I started experimenting with a curriculum that was around like thought leadership and methodology and helping people really center their own bodies of work. Still equity-centered practice is a through line through everything I do, but I just wanted to kind of shift the kind of conversations I was having, who I was working with. I wanted to see how far we could take the retreat program that I had built a couple of years ago because I love, you know, being with people in person.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

And, yeah, so at the end of last year I was really like just like trying to take off anything that was optional. Like I just couldn't, once my health started to like, you know, really become a problem and then at the beginning of this year I was in the hospital with high blood pressure and hypertension and I'm still, it's August and I'm still getting that under control. So I've been really, I thought I was going to like clear my calendar and scale something else up, but it was like, nope, like you're just going to like, you know, like really slow down, which is exactly what I needed, you know what I mean? Because what I realized now is that I wasn't just like shifting an offer, I was building a whole different business.

Lindsay Dotzla: What do you, what does it feel like? So I think we are similar when it comes to this thing, which is like having a drive that's like, but having all these ideas, having work that you want to put into the world and experiencing what you experienced where kind of not optional. It's like you must rest. You actually can't do all of these things that you would love to do. What was that like?

Trudi Lebrón: It was the most, it is, it continues to be the most frustrating thing because I forget, like I just want to do all the things. I have a million ideas a day. These days, I do feel like the ideas that I have are less all over the place and more about like building this one thing, like my kind of things feel much more focused these days, but still like I want to, I would love to move faster, but I cannot, you know what I mean? Like I really, I really just can't.

And so it is frustrating and it's also asking me to think a little bit more sustainably because now I'm kind of figuring out, instead of just, oh, I have this idea, let me just kind of go with it, let's see whatever. Now I'm like, okay, what does it really look like to put something in place that's a little bit more sustainable that still protects your time? That's a different business model and a different way of, for example, for years I've been running a certification program. Certification programs, the way we teach them live, everyone starts at the same time, it's a like a 10, 11 month program.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

You have one start date, right? So like that is just how it works. But with what I'm building now, it's like, does it need to go that way? Like what does a slower build look like? Like what are opportunities here? So, yeah, again, it's just like I'm rethinking everything.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: You have a podcast, it's called Trudi Lebrón is Ambitious & Exhausted. Did I say it right? Okay. And it's my favorite because, and I was on it. The people that are listening, go listen to the podcast. And, yeah, you and I just had a conversation around kind of this very thing that's like, I just don't have the energy I used to have and sometimes I write down, I don't know if I said this on the podcast, but I think about it all the time. I'm like, sometimes I make the list, like here are the things, the focus for the week, here are the things that I need to get done today.

And it might have 20 things on it and at the end of the day I'm like, oh good, I did three. It's like, what? Now, I've always had a little time blindness, like ADHD situation. So that's like always a thing. It's just that now instead of getting like 10 out of the 20 things done, I might get three of the things done. And so I think there is, I don't know, kind of what you just said, there is like a, okay, I can't just be get further and further behind on everything, so I have to figure out like which one like there's maybe it's like so much of my work right now is simplification.

It feels like, like really simplifying, not putting less workout really, not necessarily working with less clients, but just like simplifying my processes, simplifying like my that voice that's like, do this and do this and like just telling that voice like, okay, shh. Just put this, that's fine. Put it all on the shelf. It can be there. Maybe someday, who knows? I'll be like, oh, look at me having all this energy and all the ideas will be there waiting for me, but not today. Is that, is that how you experience it or does it, is it like different for you?

Trudi Lebrón: First I'll say this, like I do have like a running list of ideas that, you know, and that I I'm going to get to all of them.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Oh yeah, might, oh, in my mind I'm definitely doing all the things on the shelf for sure.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, yeah, yeah. In terms of how I work, like with my to-do list, what I will say is that I'm like, I've gotten much more realistic about what my capacity is on any given day because I've gotten really into cycle seeking, cycle syncing. Also, I work on tasks together, but I don't time block, which is a trap for me. I feel like I'm doing a lot better between like, you know, just what I'm preparing for based on what time of the month it is, like what I have the energy for, whether like I have cramps or not, whether I'm in that that week where the only thing I want to do is burn down everything.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yep, yes.

Trudi Lebrón: I have a lot of that. I have days on my calendar, like literally on my calendar that are like, no decisions. Like no, all color coded because I just like, yeah, because I've I've just had to be really diligent about it.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Like a different type of time blocking. Like the time is blocked for no work, no decisions, nothing important.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. And what that is, what that looks like for me is just space, right? Actually just like giving myself, like optimizing for space instead of optimizing for like getting tasks done. The worst thing is like if I can get to my count, if I can get to the computer and there's like nothing, I'm like, oh, this is going to be a productive day.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yes, oh my gosh. I have that exact feeling. Also, do you have days? Like I have days where it's like, I don't know ahead of time. It would be nice if I did, but I have days where I might get more done in that day than I did like the last two weeks combined.

Trudi Lebrón: Oh yeah.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: That's my favorite. I'm like, yeah, that day was great. I think I also just know that I have them. so it's like maybe one of the things that helps me not freak out about like not getting some of the things done sometimes.

Trudi Lebrón: Well, this is one of the things that like was part of my personality all the time and why I didn't do well in school and why I didn't do well in like a typical work environment because I just can't, again, this is classic ADHD symptom. I, it's so hard for me to be like, oh, I have to do this thing, let me just do it. Like that is not how it works.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Who can do that? That's crazy.

Trudi Lebrón: No, it might be that like I have an email sequence that I got to work on and the best time for me to work on it is going to be like when I'm waking up at like 3:00 AM in the morning, right? And I'm just like up for no reason. And so like I kind of make a game out of that. Like when I have those moments, I'm like, oh, like what can I do? I feel this energy, like let me see like I'm going to be up, let me see if I can go like put those things in. Like I just I'm past the stage where I'm judging it, where I'm like, oh, I'm up in the middle of the night, I should be asleep or oh, I should be, it's 11 o'clock in the daytime, I should be writing that email. Like I'm just, I'm just so over it.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Not available. Yes. I couldn't agree more. My thing is, I can't do the middle of the night, but I can do the like 9:00 PM, like my brain, it's like my brain sometimes, not all the time, but sometimes it's just like turns on and I'm just like instead of telling myself like, nope, you shouldn't, you're not supposed to be working. It's like, no, why not? Go for it. Like if this is the time that you want to do this thing, do it.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, exactly.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: It is nice that we're having older kids. I will say this a little privilege here because with older kids, there's no...

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Trudi Lebrón: That's true.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I'm not getting up early to deal with little kids that need me to like do the things for them.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, I don't even like get up in the morning to put my son on the, like my son, he's in high school, but I have friends who are like they have to get their kids up for high school and I'm like, my son gets up and is gone sometimes I don't even see him in the morning.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah. Yeah, my kids are pretty self-sufficient. They've, they've learned, they have to be pretty self-sufficient. I also have a husband living the corporate life, so he's up and can just check and make sure that they're awake.

Trudi Lebrón: I think it's because my son was homeschooled for seven years and he really wanted to go back. Like he really advocated to go to high school, so he's like just happy to get up and go. Yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Okay, so we we kind of talked about how it all started years and years ago, the all the changes that have happened along the way. So what are you doing now?

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. So right now, I am concentrating on one thing, which is or one ecosystem is how I'm thinking about it. And the podcast, Trudi Lebrón is Ambitious & Exhausted, is really a fun part of that because what I'm looking to do now is really kind of gather my people, my fellow exhausted and ambitious millennial women and Gen Xers too.

We we don't age discriminate here, but the majority of folks who are, you know, hanging out with us are in this kind of millennial and younger Gen Xer stage where they have like, you know, 15, 20 years of experience and they're trying to figure out like, okay, how do I make a business or make my career work for me? Like how do I leverage all of this experience so that I can pull from all of it? And I think some of the best moments of the last five

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

years have been the moments where I've gotten to be with people in person. You have been at many of...

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Oh yeah, some of my favorite moments as well.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah. And so I've just started to play with this idea of like what does a, you know, what does a practice look like that can allow me to be a professor, right? I have a master's degree, I'm ABD in social psychology, I love teaching and coaching. How can I position myself as like a public scholar, educator, thought leader, and create a community that isn't about building the next seven figure thing or certifying people to get more education, but bringing people who have done all of that together to find their signature work, right?

And to have the space and the support to be thinking about their work in a rigorous, scholarly way. I just really miss those creative, intellectual communities and that feeling of being in school where you're not in class, but you're like hanging out in the lounge and you're just like talking and thinking and working on your work next to someone who's working on their work, changing ideas.

So I'm, you know, my work right now is like trying to build that space that kind of spans like digital and in person so that you kind of wake up every day in your life feeling like you have that community accessible to you.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: I love that and being in your spaces, I will say, you're doing it. That's exactly what it feels like.

Trudi Lebrón: That community is called The Residency.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Yeah, I love the name. It's so like, it reminds me of exactly what you're saying. It's like, it's a very scholarly name. I think we're just all here studying, doing our different things. And your in-person events are my absolute favorite. They're so great.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, I like to think of them as experiences, right? Like that they're like from the moment you get there, like there's just like lots, it's a multi-sensory. You're not just coming to learn, like you're going to taste some things and feel some things and hear some things and do some things. It's, yeah.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: So that being said, because now everybody needs to come find you. So where can they find you? Where are you hanging out?

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, I'm hanging out on all the socials, Facebook, Instagram, even a little TikTok these days.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: TikTok? Are you dancing?

Trudi Lebrón: A little, no. I'm not. I mean, maybe, who knows? My work in all of this is to be more me, right? To get again like the less time I have to spend in corporate institutions and like with my people, the more time I can be more me.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: So maybe some dancing coming because you can dance, you can sing, you can dance.

Trudi Lebrón: Yeah, so, so maybe all of that, who knows? Maybe that's a good idea. Oh, and I write a weekly newsletter, Working Hypothesis, for living, leading, and dreaming through chaos. So you can get on my newsletter list. That's another way to start, you know, just getting familiar with the kinds of things we're doing and thinking over here.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: And where do they do that on your website?

Trudi Lebrón: Just on my website, yeah, trudilebron.com.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Awesome. We'll link it all in the show notes for everyone. Thank you so much for being here today. This was...

Trudi Lebrón: Thanks for having me.

Ep #304: Unfinished: Coaching, Equity, & Evolution with Trudi Lebrón

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Just as I knew it would be and you're gold, everything you share is gold. I love it. Thank you.

Trudi Lebrón: Thank you. You're so welcome.

Lindsay Dotzlaf: Bye.

Trudi Lebrón: Bye everyone.

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. That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.