

Ep #309: Unfinished: The Episode I Regret



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lindsay Dotzlaf

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you're listening to Mastering Coaching Skills, episode 309.

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 glad you're here today. Maybe. I don't know, I'm feeling a little apprehensive because this is the next episode of the Unfinished series and it's the episode I've been looking forward to and dreading all at the same time. So, let me tell you why.

This episode is going to be about the podcast episode out of 300 episodes and out of, you know, 10 years of running my business, not that I had a podcast the whole time. But this is like probably one of the top things that I regret. I regret recording this episode. And it's still up so you can go listen to it. But I'm going to tell you what episode it is. I'm going to tell you why I regret it, and then I'm going to reframe the lesson or reteach the lesson I taught in that episode. And then give you some questions, some questions that you can take with you at the end of this to wrap it up. Okay?

So, the episode is episode 135, which was recorded in 2023. And it's an episode that I recorded about what to do when people are saying not nice things about you. And I know that this is a big fear for so many of my clients. So I do think it's a relevant topic, but the reason I say it's the episode I regret the most is simply due to the reason I recorded it and the tone of the episode.

So, in the episode, again, you can go listen to it if you want. I don't know. I don't know if I recommend it, but it's episode 135. But what I do in the episode is I read out loud some criticism and different types of criticism that was shared about me online. And then I give a six-question response on how to handle it. And I'll quickly just recap. The questions were, is it true? Is it kind? Do I want to do something about this and when? Is there anything

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here to process? Is there growth for me here? And is this something I would share with my clients?

Now, I don't necessarily regret the lesson, like I said, and the framework was okay. But I do again regret the defensiveness and the delivery. I can't even listen to it now because it's so funny. I immediately hear the defensiveness in my voice. And so I downloaded the transcript and I put it into AI because I didn't want to go listen to the whole thing and I had it give me an outline and I asked it, how many times did I say, I'm not being defensive, but...? And the answer was like five or six times, I think. Which, is there any bigger red flag about being defensive than someone saying, I'm not being defensive, but...?

Now, here are some clues that I was being defensive. First of all, I had haters in the name of the episode, which is not even a word I use. Like even on my worst days, that's just not a word that I use. It is not in my vocabulary. It's not even when I'm talking to like my teenage daughters. Like this is just not a word that ever comes up. But I built an entire episode around it anyway. And you know, I'm human. So there's this. This is the proof. When you're human and you're feeling very defensive, you just kind of grab whatever language makes sense or is nearby, even if it's not something you would usually say.

And I do want to be clear, and I'm only going to say this one time, I am not defending my actions in that episode. I am telling you facts, and then I'm going to give you a reframe. If I was defending it, I wouldn't be telling you how terrible it was or how defensive I was. I can even actually remember the feeling that I had when recording that episode. If I remember correctly, I think I had to stop so many times and like stop and restart and pull myself together and just like get myself on board with recording it. That should have been the biggest red flag in my brain to be like, what are you doing? But nope, I continued.

So you might be asking, why haven't I deleted it? Like why is it still up? First of all, because I number my episodes, which I never thought about this in the beginning. But when you number your episodes, if you delete

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episode 135, people will notice. And trust me, they will. Like you'll get messages. Or at least I will, for sure. Now, that doesn't mean I can't delete it. I still could take it down. That's fine. But I do actually think it shows a very human moment and over the years, that's one of the main reasons I've decided to leave it up.

The other reason is, even though it's the episode I regret recording more than any of the other episodes, it is probably also the episode that people talk to me about the most when I, you know, maybe if I'm at a conference, I see people in person or I meet someone who listens to my podcast, even just this year, I was at a conference and some, a coach that I respect a ton, shout out Janae, if you're listening, told me, oh my gosh, that episode was so helpful for me. You have no idea.

So, this is an example of like both things can be true at the same time. It helped a lot of people and I was very defensive when I was recording it, and they don't cancel each other out. Taking it down would have just been managing my humanity, right? It would have been like deleting a moment where I felt less than perfect, where I wasn't showing up as what I would consider like my best self, which is exactly the opposite of kind of my positioning and all of my morals and values as a coach.

However, I want to be very clear, if you're listening and you have a podcast or you have content that you regret and you really want to just delete it, go for it. Like that's okay. This is not a situation where there's a right decision. You can just decide what is right for you in the moment.

Now, here's what I would tell my 2023 self, the woman who was recording the podcast at that time before I recorded it. Here's what I would tell myself. First, pause and just take a breath. Second, it's really okay to be sad. It's okay to feel hurt. It's okay to have big feelings around any of it. And you don't have to turn it into a lesson. Some things can just be felt and then you move on. And maybe it's a lesson later, which I'll get to in a minute, but you don't have to make it content. You can just sit in it and feel the discomfort and the urge, the urge to respond, to defend yourself. It's okay. Like just be in it.

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And then before I recorded the episode, I would have asked myself, I would love to go back and ask myself, who is this for? Who are you recording this episode for? And I'll be really honest and say, I don't know if I would have been able to answer that honestly at the time, not because I would have lied on purpose, but because I just, you know, I was like really in it. And sometimes when you're in it, you're in the feels, you can't see what's true. If you've never heard this, one of my favorite things to think all the time is the higher the emotion, the lower the intelligence.

And so when you're in that super activated high emotion state, you can't just always see what's true. That's why hindsight, like hindsight's 20/20, right? That's why. Because often when you're in a situation, you can't just fully see everything that's going on. It's sometimes can be very hard to pause and just ask yourself like, what's going on here?

Here's one reason I knew I had to record this episode. So recently, like sometime within the last year, my daughter had some sort of school assignment in high school where they had to Google their names. And that day she came home, I don't know exactly what the exact assignment was or what exactly they were working on, but that day she came home from school and she was crying. And she wasn't crying when she walked in the door, but she came in, I said hi, we were talking and she started crying.

And I could tell, and this was very odd for her. And I said like, hey, what's going on? And she told me about the school project. And she said, or about her assignment, and she said, so I had to Google our name today. I can't remember if it was her name or just our last name or whatever. Which by the way, is like a weird assignment, right? I feel like that could be dangerous. Like that could be, kids could be learning all kinds of things that maybe they don't need to be learning in certain families.

Anyway, so she was Googling different people in our family, and of course, I have a big online presence because of my business. So anytime she put in our last name, it was mostly me, that my results that were at the top. And then we have a few family members who, you know, my father-in-law is a scientist and he has published studies and, you know, things like that. So

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it's like those things would show up, but often just because of the last name, I would be in the top of the search results. And when she Googled me, you know, she saw my website, she saw like all the typical things you would see.

But when she Googled some of the other people, for some reason, the result that popped up first was a Reddit thread. And so she was crying and I think she was mostly crying because she thought she needed to tell me about this, which completely breaks my heart. Like I actually feel quite emotional talking about it. Not because necessarily of what she read, because she knows me, but because she felt like she had this burden of like, oh, she has to tell me that there's this thing about me. And it was actually something I had never seen before.

And I couldn't find the exact thread to read what it said, but I do have a screenshot and the title of it was, is it just me or is Lindsay Dotzlaf vapid and soulless, dot, dot, dot, something like that. And she wanted to know, like, wait, is this about you? But then of course, she read the comments. She knows what I do for a living. She could clearly see it was about me. So she really tried so tenderly to deliver this news.

Now, I didn't know about this thread, so I was a little shocked when she said it, but mostly I was just tapped into what she was feeling and feeling just so much compassion for her in that moment, thinking, you know, that she needed to tell me and kind of realizing like, oh, this life I live online, my kids will see it and they'll see all the things, even the things that it's not me that's posting.

So she wanted to read it, so we read the comments together. And there were a significant number of comments of people defending me, which, you know, amazing. But the top two things we noticed just from the original post was that one, the person said they've never worked with me, they've never been in my containers, that I just give that vibe. And the second thing she noticed is that people she knows and loves very much were mentioned in some of the comments. And even as a teenager, she could recognize like, oh, some of these are just lies.

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So it did turn into a very great conversation between my daughter and myself, but my takeaway now as I'm recording this is how different I felt in that moment than I did in 2023 when I recorded the episode because I knew in that moment, I wasn't going to get on here and talk about it and defend myself and whatever. I just had to process it. I just had to be sad. I just had to feel my feelings and just be in it and be there for her, which felt like the most important piece. I felt no urge to comment or create content or make myself feel better by letting the world know that that's not me.

Also, I actually went to find the post right before I started recording this and because there are two very prominent Lindsay's in the zeitgeist right now, that was impossible. I don't know if I was looking in the wrong place or possibly the post has just been deleted altogether and it's just not there anymore. I just couldn't find it.

And just in case your brain is like mine and you're like, wait, two Lindsay's, what does that mean? I don't know. There's some Lindsay on Dancing with the Stars. Reddit has a lot to say about her. And then there's the awful Lindsay Clancy case, which is taking place as I'm recording this or maybe it's already over, I don't know. But there are two Lindsay's getting a lot of press right now, which make it very hard to find anything about yourself on Reddit when your name is Lindsay, which is probably a good thing.

But because I went on this search before I was recording today, I will say I went into a lot of different life coaching subreddits, I think that's what they're called, and read a bunch of posts. And I want to share this only because I know so many of you listening, especially if you're in my world, which means you don't hate me, I assume, because you're here, I know so many of you have a fear of this. And so I want to share this with you.

There are two main types of posts that I saw. One, people that are genuinely looking for advice and support and asking real questions about coaching and coaching programs and coaches before they spend their money. And that makes so much sense. I love that. Truly. I absolutely think coaches should be held accountable for their delivery and their customer

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service and the way they treat their clients and people should be allowed to give their real opinions on people's work, 100% all of the time.

And then there were posts just being mean, just tearing people down. And the thing that really caught my attention as I scrolled through some of the spaces is in one moment, I would see coaches tearing another coach down for one very specific thing. And then as I kept scrolling down, they would be torn down for almost the exact opposite of what it was earlier.

And there was something about that that really unlocked something for me, even though I feel like this has been my work now for a while, is like letting people be wrong about me and letting people be wrong about other people. But it really unlocked something like, oh, this behavior is sometimes when it isn't just like sharing real experiences, sometimes it is really just tearing people down.

So because I know that so many of you are so scared of this exact thing happening, I want to give you a new updated framework from the one I shared before. And to clarify this framework is for when someone's upset with you, when you read something about yourself, when the thing you're scared of is the thing that happens, right? When someone is coming for you in some way.

Here's the new framework. First step, pause and process. And it might all end with that, just like the thing with my daughter, right? Like I didn't do anything about it. I didn't create any content. I just processed it. I was very sad. I cried with her, actually, like she was crying. I was in my feels, then I started crying. I just processed it. We processed it together, we talked through it, we read all the things, which in that example was very helpful. That might not always be the most helpful. Sometimes just don't read them.

But there was nothing to extract from it. There was not a teachable moment. There was nothing to fix besides just making sure she was okay. And then me sitting with, yeah, that sucks. I hate that someone said that about me, period. I felt really sad about it because I'm a human, and that's just where it ends. But there are also many times when there is something

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to do besides the processing of it. So let's talk about that, okay? So again, first step, process, and it might end there. Second step, has this person actually experienced the thing they are talking about? So this is like, is this real or is it gossip? Do they have a stake in this thing or do they not?

So for example, if it's a client, yeah, absolutely they do. If it's someone who's listened to this podcast for the last however many years and they love it and they have something to tell me about something I said here, absolutely they have a stake in it. If it's a client talking about not delivering in a program, for sure. Always something I will listen to. If it's family and close friends sharing something about who I am or how I've, something I've done to them, of course. If it's someone with just like a lot of things to say with not any actual experience of me or who I am, no, they don't have a real experience. They don't actually have something to add to the conversation.

And I want to be clear, this is not about who's allowed to have an opinion because anyone can have an opinion and they can post it wherever they want. It's about whose input I owe something to, whose input I'm going to look at and say like, okay, what do I need to do about this? There's a real, real difference between a client or a best friend like naming something that they experienced in an interaction with me versus coaches just being mean and talking about each other in threads. That's ridiculous.

The next question, is it constructive? So is this person trying to help? This is kind of like, are they calling me in or they calling me out? Are they trying to help or they just trying to land a blow? Which, listen, I know landing a blow is very common now, and it happens on social media, and it happens everywhere because people have opinions about everything, and that's just part of the world we live in. So it's a thing, which is why this question is so important. Is this constructive? Is there anything I can do about it? Are they trying to help me? Do they have a say in the situation?

An example of is this constructive is a long-time podcast listener emailing me and saying, hey, I have listened to your podcast since you started. I really love everything you share. I really disagree with this one episode. I

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think you got it wrong. I would be fully open to hearing that. Something not constructive, and this is an example I shared in the previous episode that I'm referring to, is I don't like your voice. I'm a podcast listener, I don't like your voice. Okay, I can't change that. I don't know what you want me to do about that. We can all have a laugh about that. I've shared this so many times. It's just such a good example of like this is not constructive criticism.

The next question, which sometimes can be quite hard to answer, is this true? So this criticism that I'm receiving, is it true? Sometimes it is, which hurts. Sometimes it's not, also hurts, right? But here's the difference. If it's constructive and it's true, that means you fix it. If it's constructive but not true, that means probably worth a conversation, right?

Because constructive means whoever's telling you the thing, they have vested interest in the situation and their opinion might mean something to you. So if it's a client and they have some criticism, but you're like, whoa, that's not true. They misunderstood or they got it wrong. Great, worth a conversation, like fix it. If it's not constructive but it's true, this might be the one that hits the hardest, right? Like someone says something really unkind, but deep in your gut, you know it's right.

And not just like the nasty things you sometimes tell yourself, but like the thing that you're like, god, yeah, this thing really does suck. This program is really quite bad. I phoned it in or, you know, whatever. Don't let the delivery give you the permission to skip it. Sometimes that can be a reason to say, okay, I notice my reaction to this. Let me give it some attention. And if it's not constructive and it's not true, that's the biggest flag to just say like, skip it. Just keep going, move on. Nothing to see here.

Next question, does this need a response? So the first way to know if it needs a response is if the answer to number two, has this person actually experienced what they're talking about, is yes. If they haven't, then it probably doesn't need a response. And a response can mean many different things. I don't mean like a reaction on your podcast or on social media.

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A response can be like fixing something in the back end of your business, changing how you do something, questioning your methods, having a conversation with your team about how client conversations are handled. There can be so many ways to respond to something that is constructive criticism that means something to you. And sometimes it could even just be a conversation with that one person, making sure that they are okay, that everyone's on the same page and that everyone's happy moving forward.

The next question is, what is my growth here? So sometimes your growth, my growth, or your growth might be ignoring a stranger who's just being mean, who says something that isn't true, they say something that's not constructive, and they're not really trying to help. Sometimes the growth is learning to block out that noise, right? There's nothing you can do, and trust me, I've tried. In these situations, there's actually nothing you can usually do to convince them otherwise. So it's all wasted effort.

And anytime you're talking to the people that are just saying things about you that are not true, who aren't really super invested in what you're doing anyway, that's time taken away from talking to your ideal client, talking to the people that you really, truly want to help.

Sometimes the growth is having a difficult conversation with a best friend, with a client. It's owning your part of it. It's saying like, yeah, I got this wrong. I'm so sorry. Or I got this wrong. Here's how I'm fixing it. And just sitting in it, sitting in the discomfort without defending yourself. And those two things can feel equally as hard. And then the last question, which I'm not really sure if this is part of the process, but it's the question that would have saved me in 2023 from recording the episode I now regret. If I'm going to talk about this publicly, if I'm creating content around it, who is it for?

So maybe this doesn't apply to every situation, but if you find yourself wanting to create content against something or in reaction to something or to defend yourself against something, maybe just question it first. Just ask, who is this for? And even if you're certain the answer is that it is for your clients and not for you, perfect.

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My recommendation would be take that content and put it on the shelf for like three months, and then make it, then use it. Because if you're like, no, no, no, I have to do it right now, that is a very good signal that it's not just for your clients, that it's for you, that you need to say the thing right now. I'm not telling you what to do. I'm just saying if you want to not regret content years from now, maybe try that one on.

And last, I want to consider why these things sting so much in the first place. And I think there are three main reasons. One, because we're afraid it might be true. The thing that was said, we're afraid it might be true. We don't want to look in that scary, scary corner. So we deny it as hard as we can. We defend, we deny, we back away. Like, oh, that's scary over there. Don't go there. I'm going to distract and put people's attention over here.

The second thing is, it's hard to let people be wrong about you without defending yourself. That's always true for everybody. And the third thing is, sometimes it's coming from someone that you love, a client that you like, someone whose opinion you really respect. And that one can really sting even if they're wrong, or maybe especially if they're wrong, or especially if they're right. I don't know. I don't know which one's worse actually.

In one of my recent episodes, I think it may have been, may have been last week or a couple of weeks ago, I talked about how I moved a lot as a kid and I had to learn how to be friends, how to make friends, how to be friends with people. And I see that now as a gift in so many ways. But with that comes a big side helping of not wanting people to not like me, not wanting to be immediately disliked for something that might be true about me. I had to be really good at fitting in.

And so I literally, on my computer right now, at my desk, on a post-it, it's one of my favorite ways to remind myself of things, I have this. Am I willing to let people be wrong about me in order to reach the clients that are looking for the support that I give? Basically, it's just like, am I willing to let people be wrong about me? It has been my work since I started a business. It's been my work honestly since I hired a life coach years and years ago because that was one of the things that drove me into constant

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anxiety, constant panic was just like, can I be the person that everybody wants me to be?

And it's always been a work for me to unwind that. So this is my life's work. It is ongoing. You might not relate to that. Yours might be something else. But I want you to think about that for you when it comes to this. If this episode really struck something within you, I want you to consider why. What is your work here? Maybe it's the same as mine. Maybe it's can you let people be wrong about you? Maybe it's different. Maybe it's can you let people criticize your work without being defensive?

And in this case, I mean, people that experience your work. Can you let them help you improve what you do? Maybe your work is to not ignore people that are trying to help you, who you have determined do actually get a say because you care what they think. Maybe your work is to stop listening to the voices that aren't in the arena with you.

I think it's a Brené Brown quote, maybe, that's like, I only take advice from people in the arena, in the same arena I'm in or something like that. Totally butchered it. Whatever it is, you get the point, right? Like maybe that's your work, is to stop caring about all the opinions and just consider like which ones matter. I can't tell you what your growth is. Only you can know, but hopefully this episode gave you something to think about.

I'm not going to lie, re-recording this episode or doing like a redo of the episode I've wanted to delete for years has felt very vulnerable. So I would love to hear, was it useful? What is your takeaway? Please come share it with me. You can email it to me. You can come to Instagram and DM me. If you're a client, send it to me in our community or post about it. I really, really want to hear. Thank you so much for listening 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 lindsaydotzlafoaching.com. That's Lindsay with an A, D-O-T-Z-L-A-F.com. See you next week.