Ep #313: How to Improve Your Coaching Without Judging Yourself



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Lindsay Dotzlaf

Ep #313: How to Improve Your Coaching Without Judging Yourself

Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills*, episode 313.

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.

Hi, friends. Hey, coach. Before we dive in today, I want to give you a little heads up. Today because I'm recording in a different location, I'm just going to keep this a little short and sweet and to the point.

So something that has come up recently, someone posted about this in the last couple of days, but it comes up often. And I decided I wanted to talk about it on here because I really think, actually, that this is something that comes up for coaches quite often, even if you don't talk about it. Even if you've never really considered it in this way.

I think it's really powerful for every single coach to consider what I'm going to talk about today. And that is thinking about or being open to improving your coaching without making it mean anything about yourself, without making it mean anything bad, right?

Being able to receive feedback maybe, whether that's from your clients if you're talking to them on an actual call, or doing things that I've been doing more recently because I'm now running groups and I'm running bigger things, now I'm starting to send feedback forms. So it could look like that too.

But I get this question quite often and I hear it come up in different coaching circles and all the things. And it's something along the lines of, I hear it in all different ways, but it's something along the lines of I am scared to kind of think about how the coaching is going for my clients, or even in the future how the coaching might go, or to consider if I'm a great coach or not because I'm afraid the answer is going to be no. Or that I'm going to

decide I'm not, or that my clients are going to say something. Like I'm scared that there will be feedback that I can improve on.

And I just think it's so fascinating. So I've been thinking about this all day because it can be a very, very painful thought for a lot of coaches. I've noticed this. So as I was thinking about it, I realized I just have different thoughts about feedback. And I'm not saying I always have. I'm sure that we could go back to a point, I don't remember it right now, but I'm sure I could go back in time and find a point where I was maybe scared to know, is the coaching working for my clients or are they getting what they came for? Are they getting the results that they hired me for?

And this doesn't even have to mean that you have to believe that you're a bad coach. You could believe you're a great coach and still want to improve your coaching or still have thoughts like, "I'm sure this could be better somehow. Let me figure it out." And so one of the things that came up for me when I was thinking about how I think about this that is different than what I see some of my clients bringing or saying, and not even my clients always, but just coaches in the world. Like what's different about the way I think about it? And one really big thing that stands out to me is I rely so much, in that situation, on curiosity.

And I kind of think of it like, it could be fun to think about what could be better next time. It doesn't have to be heavy, right? It doesn't have to be like, oh no, something has to be improved. This is going to be terrible. This is going to be painful. It could truly be like, "I'm so curious, how can I be better and better and better at this?" Not in a way that puts tons of pressure, right, because it can't go too far the other way.

But I think that's why curiosity is so genius. Because what I'm suggesting is not in a way it puts pressure on you and it makes you think like, I always have to be improving, I always have to be better, better, better, better. But really with kind of a lightness and a curiosity and what could be fun about making this even better for next time? For those same clients or for new clients, right? Clients that hire me in the future.

Ep #313: How to Improve Your Coaching Without Judging Yourself

When you can think about it like that, it will really shift the way you ask for feedback and it'll really shift the way you show up to hear the feedback and that you experience the feedback, and even implement the feedback moving forward, right? So I'll give you an example.

I just finished a week-long in-person event or whatever, four-day in-person event with my clients. And this morning I was putting together some questions that we are going to be sending them. I want to do it as soon as possible while it's still all fresh in their mind, right?

And as I was putting the questions together, and this is probably a good topic, I can probably make an entire episode just about how to collect feedback from your clients. That's not specifically what this is going to be about, but as I was putting the questions together, I was really careful to not just ask for positive feedback. Not just ask for negative feedback, but really to collect all of it, right?

Like to kind of take my clients almost through an evaluation. Like I teach evaluations where they're kind of thinking like, what did I love about this? What were my favorite parts? What parts could be better? Like if I could just wave a magic wand and make any part of this experience better for my clients, I would love them to think about like what could that be?

Now, I already happen to know because it was a fairly small group, which was so fun. And we talked about it a lot and shared a lot on the last day and the last couple days. So I feel very confident that everyone did have a great experience. So I don't expect there to be anything that stands out that's like this thing was really bad.

But I do like to be sure that when I'm asking for feedback and collecting feedback, that it isn't just all like, oh, it was all so lovely and I loved it all and everything was amazing. But truly, like what could be better? What can make this experience more fun? Because it's fun for me to think about it in those terms as well, right? And I think it allows me to loosen the grip a little bit everywhere for all of the feedback.

Ep #313: How to Improve Your Coaching Without Judging Yourself

If I go into it expecting that there's always room for improvement, and I think maybe this is just one thought that I have that is different than maybe what you're thinking about feedback. Whether it's your own personal feedback or someone actually giving you feedback, my thought is there's always room for improvement.

And how exciting is that? How fun is that? Of course there's always the possibility that you might get very negative feedback that you're not expecting. Hopefully, if you're working with your clients one-on-one and you have that much closer relationship and consistent contact with them, hopefully you know fairly soon if something has gone wrong.

If that's not happening in your coaching, definitely consider why that is. If you're a one-on-one coach, if you talk one-on-one with your clients every week or however often it is you're doing it and you don't know if they're getting the results that they hired you for, or if you don't know that they're happy with the coaching, I would definitely question that.

And I think that's one of the main reasons that I hear from clients why they're scared to ask. I think there's a fear that I won't be able to fix it, right? Because if you knew you could fix it, wouldn't you want to? Even if it's fairly negative feedback. Even if your client is like, "I don't know, I'm not getting results that I hired you for." If you knew you could fix it, wouldn't you want to be able to, right? Really think about that. Of course, it might hurt for a second. It might be like, okay, I have to like, you know, whatever comes up for you, right? I have to sit with this for a minute. I have to process whatever is coming up for me.

But that's fine, you can process an emotion. You are a coach, you know how to process an emotion, or I hope you do. You know how to probably sit with an emotion. I bet you know how to feel disappointed. You probably know how to feel shame, right? You probably know how to feel all of the things that you might feel if you receive negative feedback from a client. And if you could do something to change that client experience, wouldn't you want to? That's how I think about it. Even if I get very negative

feedback, wouldn't I want to have it so that I can change things moving forward?

It gives you so much more control over what's going on. It allows you to see specifically, oh, this thing, like this client had a bad experience because of this thing. And then really consider, is that something I want to change? Is that something I can learn? Sometimes it just could be something that is a little outside of your control, or maybe something more like, either way you're going to have learning from it.

It could be, oh, here's this thing I can improve in my coaching. But it could also be something like, oh, I can see this specific type of client, I'm having a hard time thinking of an example right now. But like this specific type of client, maybe I just know I'm not the best at working with that, whatever that is. So either way, it's just going to be learning, even if you have to process some difficult emotions first. But here's what I can promise you, is that if you're willing to do it and you're willing to see the things and you're willing to ask for the feedback, then you're going to learn and you won't keep having that same thing over and over and over.

Because my guess is, if you're listening and you're like, oh, yes, there are things that I just haven't wanted to see, that I just haven't looked at, my guess is those things are still there like bubbling under the surface and it still feels kind of bad. And maybe you're just doing a good job at ignoring it or shoving it down or whatever it is you're doing with it. Instead of really looking at it and saying, how could I improve this thing, you're probably just ignoring it, bypassing it, like whatever it is that you're doing. But that negative emotion is probably still there underneath.

Okay, so that's one thing that I'm always thinking about, is there's always room for improvement and I'm really curious what that could look like in every situation. And kind of on the other side of that is, even if I think or even if I know, because clients have told me, this space is amazing, my clients are getting results, like all of those things, even if I know those

things, I still have the thought, “I wonder what could be better next time.” Like just for fun, right? I wonder what could be better next time.

And one thing it actually really helps me do too, this might be something for you to consider if you aren’t currently doing this with your coaching, it also really helps me lean into what could be better for me next time? Not just for my clients, but even for me, right?

So for example, with this live event that I just had, I really want to know all these things for my clients, but I also want to explore them for myself. So we tried something a little different with food this time. Like last time we tried one thing, this time we corrected for it and tried another thing. And I can still see like, that also just wasn’t the right thing. Like it just wasn’t great. It was just something I, as the person leading the retreat, spent too much time thinking about more than I wanted to, right?

Now, this time I had people there helping me, it was incredible. Like it was day and night from the time before, it was a huge improvement. And I still think it could be better. So I’m already exploring, like I don’t have to make that mean anything bad. I’m just already exploring what could be other fun options. There might be options I haven’t even considered. And there are already a couple options that I have considered that are on the table for next time.

So when I’m open to hearing all those things from my clients, I’m also open to exploring them for myself. And even when it comes to non-client facing things, right? For me, for my energy, how did I take care of myself throughout the week? How could I be better at that next time? Like, are there creative solutions for things that I’ve never even considered?

And I just think that’s so interesting for you to consider, right? If you remove judgment, because everyone can improve at all the things. Even if you really get something wrong, right? Like, are you willing, I think the willingness to just say, wow, I really got that wrong. I’m sorry. Here’s how I’m going to do better. Here’s the learning I need to do. Or here’s what I’m

going to do next time. Or here's how I'm going to make it right with this specific client.

Just the willingness to be able to say, "I got that wrong," I think is, one, very powerful. And two, really helps you stay in the space of there's always room for improvement. Something could always go wrong. Like that is always a possibility. Even though at this live event, like I said, I think everyone had a great time. The feedback so far has been incredible. That doesn't mean that something couldn't have gone wrong, right?

It's not like it wasn't just incredible. Yes, I did a lot of planning. We did a lot of thoughtful – Like there's a reason we made every decision that we made. All of that is true. And when you're bringing a group of people together, something can always go wrong, right? What if I got really sick the day before? I was thinking about this, like what would I do? How would I solve for that? There has to be a solution. I don't know exactly what I would do.

You all, there were clients, there were people at the retreat from five continents. Five. How is that possible? I don't even know. It blew my whole mind. Just that alone, right, just that, the thought diversity that was in the room, the fact that there was a Christian coach, a sex coach, just all the different coaches, coaching on all the different things, something could always go wrong.

Sometimes they're things I can control, things I can solve for ahead of time or after the fact. Things I can know ahead of time. Okay, I'm going to be really great at holding space for anything that happens. Like these things are all true. And they all come with learning, but you can't get the learning without being willing to question it, without being willing to say, how could this be better next time? How could my coaching sessions be better? How could my group coaching be better? How could my coaching on specific topics be better? Any of it.

Okay, I hope this was super useful. And for those of you that really get in your head about this and that really are scared to think about it, I hope that

this shifted something for you. Or for those of you that are like, I'm a great coach, I know what I'm doing, there's not a lot of room for improvement.

No matter which end of the spectrum you're on, I hope this really shifted something for you. I think it's one of the most useful things that you can practice in your coaching, in your coaching business, with your clients, all of it. And it will be so helpful as you grow because consider this, if you are scared of it now, let's say right now you don't have a ton of clients, you're working one-on-one, you just have a handful of clients, let's say. Maybe you have two clients. Amazing.

If you have two clients and you're scared to think, "Could I be better? Where could I improve? How could my clients be having a better experience?" If you're scared about that now with two clients and you never look at it and you just shove it down, right? Like just don't examine it. Like, oh, we're just going to pretend like it's not there. We're going to put it in the closet. My favorite analogy is we're going to put it in the closet and just slam the door closed. Pretend like it's not in there.

What is that going to feel like when you're doing that with 10 clients? With 20 clients? In group coaching, right? I have hundreds of clients. What would it look like if I was doing that with hundreds of clients? That would be so much weight that I'd be carrying just all the time in my business, in my body, right? Like so much weight that I would be carrying in my body because it's just all shoved in there being ignored.

Hopefully this was super useful. Thank you so much for being here. I'll be back next week, bye.

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.