Ep #314: Working with Your Energy Instead of Against It



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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Hey, this is Lindsay Dotzlaf and you are listening to *Mastering Coaching Skills* episode 314.

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 so happy you're here today. I want to talk about something that has been on my mind a lot lately. And I know it's been on a lot of people's minds because I've been having these similar conversations with friends and colleagues and coaches. And I just want to talk about it today.

I want to talk about your energy, managing your energy in your coaching practice. And those of you that have been here for a while, you know that so much of what I teach is kind of the art of coaching, right? The skills, how to coach your clients, how to handle all the things that come up when you are coaching. And today, this is going to be a little more focused on the running of a coaching practice. And it does, of course, affect your coaching as well, it's just going to be a little more broad.

But what I'm going to talk about is just kind of your physical energy and how it impacts how you show up in your coaching practice and what you can do about it when it feels off. And I'll tell you what I mean by this. So this could look like just many different things, right? Like when you just feel like, I can't get this work done today that I thought I was going to get done or that I have on my schedule. Or maybe you do it anyway, but it just feels really, really hard.

And I've coached clients on this a lot, right? When they're like, well, I have this thing on my schedule, but then that day comes and I physically can't do the work. And that could look like either I'm too distracted. I'm having a really hard time managing my energy or my focus. That's the word I was looking for, my focus around it. And I'm just really struggling to put the energy into getting this thing done for whatever reason.

And this can show up for so many different reasons. This could look like something has actually happened that's taking your attention away, right? So maybe you are sick or you have recently had a diagnosis that is just taking up more of your time, right? Like you actually are more tired than usual due to a specific reason or putting more energy into something.

Maybe someone in your house is sick, someone in your family is sick, and you're putting a lot of time and care into taking care of them. Or maybe you're kind of on vacation or traveling and you plan to do some work while you're doing that, but your energy and your brain aren't quite 100% on work, even though you need to get some things done, things you had planned to do while you were traveling.

Or maybe, and this is the context where this has been coming up quite a bit recently in my spaces, is thinking about just maybe this also comes down to a neurodiversity, right? An actual function of your brain is that certain times of day or certain times of the month or certain times when you're feeling more stressed or whatever, don't function in the way that you would love them to or don't function as well as they do at other times, right?

So like sometimes you might notice, like you have days where you feel really on, I'm going to say in quotes. And then sometimes – Or even hours of the day where you feel really on. It could also feel a little bit like a hyper fixation or you're just on and you can turn that on and you can just go and get the things done that you want to do.

And sometimes maybe you feel a little foggy or you feel a little off and maybe that's for a day, for multiple days, for hours during the day, for certain times of day. Or for some of you, it could even be, and I say for some of you, but really for most of us, I'm sure this affects most of us, even if it's just in smaller ways, but it could be seasonal, right? In some seasons you may find yourself less motivated, not wanting to get things done, not moving as quickly, maybe feeling the need to be more internally focused or to like cocoon a little bit.

And I forgot to say the last one, which this is the one that's been coming up, especially a lot for me and for some of my clients and my friends is just a change in hormones, right? Or just like, as you get older, as your body changes, as you go through certain stages of life, maybe your hormones are changing. This is for men and women. Obviously I am more versed in speaking to people that have the hormones of a woman, right? Because that's who I am. Like, that's my experience.

So that could be, you know, through pregnancies. That could be through just even certain times of the month, right? Your energy can vary from certain days of the month. There are people who specifically teach things like this where they kind of teach you how to design your schedule, your month around your hormone fluctuations.

My amazing colleague and friend Maisie Hill, if you don't know who that is, you should look her up, she has books on this. She's a genius, but just thinking about how those things really affect us, right? And then maybe as you're getting older, there's perimenopause, menopause, things that just affect your day, affect the way you feel.

The feelings that aren't necessarily, the sensations in your body that aren't necessarily coming from your thoughts that come, I call them the ones that are like coming from inside the house. You know, like the scary movies. It's like the calls coming from inside the house, as in there's nothing externally that is causing it.

Something in your body is changing or is happening, whether it's hormones or lack of sleep, right? Like that's also a huge one, which can also be connected to hormones. Or lack of activity, maybe you haven't had enough activity. Whatever it is, all of those things can create changes of the actual chemistry in your body that can cause us to feel certain ways, right? It can cause more anxiety. It can cause feeling tired. It can create brain fog or just that confusion.

Sometimes to me, it just feels like I describe it like I have days where I'm just so on, right? I feel like I'm on all the levels. I'm just like, go, go, go, like

work through my list, get extra things done. Amazing. And then some days it feels like, you know when you look through a window and it's totally clear, that's like the day where I feel great, right? And then when there's a window and you can put that film on it, the film that makes people like on the outside, not be able to really see in.

In our old house, we had a window in our shower. Like a regular sized window, it was very strange. And we didn't want to cover it cause we liked the light coming in, so we put the film over it, right? So no one could see it. And so it's like, but you can still kind of see shapes and whatever.

Okay, maybe in this case this isn't a great example. We used the very filtered kind, so you really couldn't even see shapes, but you can get different degrees of that, right? So sometimes you can still make out what's on the other side of it, but you can't make out the details. And some days that is what my brain feels like.

And of course there are things that you can do to manage some of these things, right? Especially when it is something like hormone related or neurodiversity, something along those lines where it's like you can – Possibly there's medicine you could take for it. There's ways you can change your hormones. There are ways that you can handle it from a medical perspective.

I'm kind of stumbling over my words because I'm like, how do I say this? I guess I would say it's more like the medical approach, right? Or you go to a doctor, you go to a naturopath, you go to an acupuncturist, you go to like whoever. You go to experts that are going to help you manage it the best you can. And also we are all human and these are things that will happen to all of us, no matter what.

And sometimes it is in the case of an actual, you know, like we're sick, we have a health thing going on. It's not your normal, just everyday hormones, hormone changes, you know, whatever.

What I want to share with you in this episode is ways that I manage these things that are not the medical ways, right? So for those things, I'm not

going to say that I'm an expert by any means, I'm certainly working through some of these things myself. So I'm going to let you figure out that one. There are plenty of experts that speak to all of that, but I want to talk about like, what does it actually look like when it starts affecting the day-to-day of running a coaching practice?

And when I say it starts affecting, I mean, maybe it's something that comes on that surprises you, right? Like maybe if it's like a health thing, or if it's something outside of you that you're like, I need to put more of my attention over here or something that feels really important to you that is just taking up a lot of brain space, brain power, right? You're just thinking about it a lot.

Someone you love is sick. Someone, you know, your best friend is having a crappy situation, right? Like something like that, that's taking up a lot of your brain space and just kind of distracting you from getting things done. Any of those things, here are some strategies that I have used over the years to deal with these, to handle these things and help myself show up the way I want to show up in my business.

And what I mean by that isn't to force myself to get the checklist done anyway. You're going to notice, I mean, it is like the strategy to eventually get it done. But I think you'll see, I tend to introduce a lot of leniency and something I used to be really bad at was planning ahead and just being prepared for things.

But I actually think planning ahead for some of this and just having some backup plans, some contingency plans for the days that you just feel less clear can be a really useful thing, right? Because then when it does happen, you aren't caught off guard, even if you weren't expecting it, but you're not caught off guard. And it can just be a little like, oh, of course I already have a plan for that.

So here's just a list of strategies and I'll dig in a little bit to each of them. So one of them, and this is something that I started doing towards the beginning of my practice. I don't tend to love a strict schedule. I've talked

about that on here before, but when I was a brand new coach, which this is something that I'm definitely recording a podcast about.

When I was a brand new coach, I was learning all these new things and just learning that if I could just coach my brain into having new thoughts, then I could just show up perfectly, right? I could manage my schedule perfectly. I could manage what I ate perfectly, like all of those things. It was a very short time period. Don't worry, I quickly realized that is not for me. And it's not for most of us, right? We're all human. The goal of coaching is never to be perfect.

But what I tried to do is follow a couple, I tried a few different ones, very strict ways of scheduling your time in your business. And what I noticed over the time of doing it and then kind of beating myself up for not nailing it and then trying again and then picking a different one and trying again is that I started to notice, oh, I have certain tendencies.

So throughout the day, for example, there are ways that I like to work and there are certain times of day that are better for me to do certain activities. So for example, I like to have larger chunks of time to do things. Like I can't do my schedule hour to hour, right? If I have today as a content writing day, I like to have large chunks of that instead of like an hour this day, an hour the next day, an hour the next day.

I'm more of a time block person, right? So maybe I would have large time blocks of coaching sessions with my clients and I would maybe schedule those on certain days so that I could have bigger chunks of time on other days to work on things. That way, if it took me a little longer to get into what I was doing, it was no problem because I still had, let's say it took an hour to really get into the zone and be focused, I still have three more hours to work on the thing.

For those of you that have quite a few one-on-one clients, you know what I'm talking about, right? Because there comes a time when, like at one point I had over 20 clients, I don't know, like 22 or something. It was too many, I do know that. And I was trying to figure out how do I coach all of

these clients and run my business, do my marketing, think about the selling, like all of those things, right? I was balancing all the things and I really did have to figure out how to schedule the activities in a way that worked for me.

So that's what I started doing. And then I started noticing, oh, I'm actually better at certain activities, certain times of day. So for example, and this has actually changed over time, but when I had a bunch of one-on-one clients, one thing I would notice is that I'm really good at focusing in the middle of the day. So maybe from 10 or 11 until three or four, or even until two or whatever.

But outside of those hours, it was a little trickier. Sometimes I would, if it was like the afternoon, the later afternoon hours, sometimes I would feel very tired, especially if I was working on something that felt hard, right? If I was writing content, writing emails, like something that at the time felt really hard and took a lot of brain power, I would just start noticing like, oh, that late afternoon time slot is not the time for me to do that. I just can't do it then.

But what I can do in those hours, because it didn't take as much brain power because I'd done so many reps and it just felt a lot easier, is I can coach my clients. So I would try to schedule coaching sessions, not because I was giving my clients less of my energy, but because literally the coaching didn't take as much of my energy and it felt easy even in those moments, right?

And then I would plan the things that felt fuzzier, that felt more difficult, that felt like, okay, I really need to focus my brain. I would plan those things in the hours where I just felt more clear and had the most energy.

Okay, the next thing is I would use – Actually this method that I just heard Mel Robbins talk about one time. I mean, I enjoy Mel Robbins, but I'm not like the biggest Mel Robbins fan or anything, but I saw this video. I may have said it on here one time before. I saw this video, don't even know where it was, maybe on social media somewhere. This was years ago.

And I've used it ever since, it changed the way I do things. And one of the things that she said, she was talking to these people about, they were all like artists or creatives of some sort. And they were talking about this kind of creative block and how some days it felt so easy and some days it just really felt hard to get their work out.

And so her recommendation was to set a timer for 20 minutes. So if you say on Tuesday from 10 to 2 I'm going to work on my painting. And that's the schedule, that's the time you have to do it. And then that day comes and you're, like you're sitting there and you're like, I just do not feel creative today. I do not feel like painting. I don't feel, maybe you're writing a book, I don't feel like writing today. This is just not the day.

Her advice was to set a timer for 20 minutes and start doing the thing. Make yourself do it. Try to do it for 20 minutes. Do the activity, whatever it is, even if it's like C minus work, like bad work. Maybe you're not going to use it, but you just start going. And then after 20 minutes, if it still feels just as hard and it still feels like this is not the day for this, nothing good is coming out of this, then you just don't do it. You do something else.

Now, of course, sometimes this isn't always possible. If you have a deadline or something has to be done right now, like maybe you still have to work through it anyway. But let's just assume you don't. Then you just look at your schedule, put it on there somewhere else, right? Find a different time for it.

But a lot of times what will happen in that 20 minutes, it's like the getting started that's hard. And in that 20 minutes of working, a lot of times you will find your groove. I usually find this to be true. I use this very often when I need to do things like write emails or just do tasks that aren't always my favorite thing.

I love interacting with other humans, and so when I'm just sitting by myself and writing copy for a sales page or writing emails, like sometimes it just, my brain throws the biggest temper tantrum. You can ask my business

manager, she knows. And they always take me so much longer than everything else.

But I do use this method where I'm like, no, I said I was going to get these done today, or I said I was going to work on these today. Here we go. I'm going to sit down for 20 minutes. I don't put on a timer at this point, but I used to, and force myself to just get to work and see what happens, right?

Because sometimes it's like, if the thing just feels hard or you think you're not good at it or whatever, it might always feel hard. Which is, I think, the point of forcing yourself to do it for 20 minutes, right? Maybe it's not because actually your brain is foggier today than other days. And it's not actually because you're more distracted today than you are on other days. It could just be because this thing feels really hard and you just don't want to focus your attention on it.

Our brains love, love simplicity and efficiency, and sometimes that is like fighting against every kind of natural human urge that we have, right? So I think that's the point. It helps you figure out like, is today really not the day or do you just need to get past that hump of getting started?

So then if you, you know, 20 minutes later, you're feeling great, pumping out the emails, you just keep going, right? However long you were going to do it. If 20 minutes later, you're like this, nope, this is actually still really terrible, then you move on to something else.

But you make that conscious decision, right? Which is very different than sitting there and like getting distracted. Although of course, I mean, I do this literally all the time and I have to find ways also to manage this part. But you know, maybe I get distracted, like I end up on a different website when I'm supposed to be not even on the internet, right? Like I'm just supposed to be writing emails.

But making that conscious choice, forcing yourself to focus on the thing for however long, even through the distractions, right? Keep redirecting yourself. And then, if and when you decide this isn't for today, making that conscious choice of, okay, it's not for today, so when am I going to do it,

right? Am I doing it tomorrow? Am I doing it later today when I have, you know, after lunch? Do I just need a healthy lunch? Do I just need some food? Sometimes, for me, that's what it is.

Okay, my next solution, and this is especially for if there's something that you do, so maybe for me it would be writing emails. If there's something that you do that habitually feels not great, right? Every time you do it, you're like, this isn't my favorite. And you've kind of gotten to the point where you're like, I do it.

I still do it anyway, because it's part of running a business, at least the way I want to run a business. So I do want to do it. It just isn't my favorite and it feels hard every time. Can you find an alternative method of doing the thing, right? Like still accomplishing the results and getting the thing done.

So what I have found sometimes is that instead of forcing myself to sit at my desk, I rarely sit at my desk and write emails. Sometimes that just is like, I don't know, there's something about the structure of it. It's just too much, my brain just really wants to fight that. So I'll take my laptop and I'll sit on the couch or I'll sit in the sun room if it's like a bright day and that really helps my attention.

So that's a small example. Or I might take my phone and go for a walk and just capture ideas or emails or whatever, kind of dictate it into my notes through voice dictation as I'm walking.

So this kind of combines another strategy as well, which sometimes it's like moving my body gets me in a different space, right? So if I can do things while I'm walking, while I'm – I don't have a treadmill inside. I have thought of getting one. But I do have a bike, sometimes I'll sit on that. That doesn't seem to quite be the same for me.

But if I can go outside and walk while doing something else, while getting something done, sometimes that can be a super effective strategy for things like this or for creative ideas. There's something about just like the juices flowing through my body, right, my blood pumping that just really gets

my brain firing on a different level and having ideas and having creative ways to do things.

So that is something that I use often, but like I kind of already mentioned, it could be as simple as just going to a different room, right? Laying in your bed and working, sometimes I do that. Now, I'm not a napper, so I can totally do that. I wish that I was better at napping, but I'm not. So if I do that, I'm not going to fall asleep or get distracted, whatever. It's like, I just like to lay in my bed and be comfortable.

But I'll have my laptop on my lap and I'll occasionally work that way. Especially if my neck or back has been, like if I've been in some pain I might lay on a heating pad and write some emails. So just finding an alternative method, right? Thinking like, what are these rules that I'm sticking to that are totally made up? You're an entrepreneur for a reason. You get to decide how you do things. Just mix it up. Try different things.

I might have more fun. So this is like an overall method, right? And this might not be as useful if you have something very heavy in your life going on, or, I mean, it still is something you could use if it feels available for you, but sometimes it might not. So that's okay. In that case, it's more just like honoring your feelings, feeling what you need to feel, processing some things, right? Like that's different.

But when you just have more fun in general, even in your life, not even just in your coaching practice, but in your life. Then when you're sitting down to get to work, it's like you haven't been constantly stressing and thinking about the things, so it allows you to focus a little bit easier.

Or just like I said, finding an alternative method, like thinking to yourself, how could I make this more fun? Is there a different way to do this thing that I have to do that feels like it would be a lot more fun?

Another way is listening to music. Because music is such a good way to alter the state of your body, right? To change the way you feel, to honor whatever it is that you're feeling, to shift things inside your body.

And whether you're listening to music while you're walking or just turning on music. Like if I feel like I am really in a funk and I've tried all the things, I'm like moving around the house, trying to get stuff done, bringing my laptop with me, trying to write those emails, right? And I am just in a funk, but I have to get it done, sometimes one of the best things I can do is just turn on music and just let that distract me a little bit, right?

Like let it shift my mood, let it shift the way I'm focusing, whether it's listening momentarily to music that's going to pick me up, maybe music that I love, or putting on like a background type of music that might help you focus.

Now, I think the type of music that does this is different for everyone. So my husband loves to listen to music while he works if he's doing certain things. And what we have discovered is that he cannot do that in like all of the house if I'm trying to work because the type of music he listens to when he's doing that is so different that I cannot listen to anything with words.

Mostly because I know the words to pretty much every single song that ever was, and so my brain just starts like singing the words, even if it's just to myself, and I cannot focus. So I have to listen to music without words. And I have several playlists for that in my collection.

Another one is to avoid activities that make the situation worse, right? So sometimes when things feel really hard, it's easy to check out and buffer and think like, I'm just going to do this for a short period of time, and then I'm going to try to get back to work. That might look like pulling out your phone, scrolling social media, playing a game on your phone, listening to a podcast, which is interesting as I record this podcast. But maybe listening to one that isn't teaching you anything, but it's more for entertainment, right?

Or an audio book. I have been really diving into a lot of fiction lately. I go through phases and right now I'm in a fiction phase. I like to listen to them on audio books, and I can get really lost in them, especially if I have

headphones in and just if I have my AirPods in and I can't hear anything but the book, I can really get lost. Next thing I know it's an hour later.

So just not doing things that give you that like dopamine hit, dopamine hit, dopamine hit and kind of take you out of being able to focus 20 minutes from now, right? Knowing what those things are for you.

So for example, if I get on my phone and start scrolling social media, and get deep in the comments and reading all the things and whatever, I have a lot harder time getting my brain back online. That's very different than turning on music for 20 minutes or finding something that does help me shift the way I'm feeling, but doesn't deplete my dopamine, right? Which is a very different thing.

And the next thing is, don't fight it, right? Like don't spend too much time, I think this is part of the genius of the 20 minute rule, like don't spend so much time where you're beating yourself up thinking I should be better at this. I should have this done by now. Why can't I focus?

That's just going to make it worse, right? Worse and worse and worse. Now you're just like piling it on instead of like, oh, today's just not the day for this. Or right now I'm having a really hard time with this. How do I solve it?

And then only scheduling, this is something I do that you can use if it works for you, only scheduling one big thing per day. So what that might look like is if I have something that's out of the ordinary, right? That takes more time and energy than normal. If I'm hosting a masterclass or especially as I'm kind of learning them, they feel sometimes kind of hard. Or if it's like a new one, I've never done it before, sometimes it feels kind of hard. It just takes more brain power than other activities.

So just trying my best to really schedule only one of those per day or even per couple days, right? So maybe the day before I don't have anything big. Like if there's something that feels big and important that's happening in my business that I just want to be sure I am as focused as possible, I won't schedule anything that also takes a lot of energy the day before.

Although, you will find this too, the more and more and more you do something, the less energy it takes, right? So it used to take me more energy when I was coaching my clients. Now I could probably be on five coaching calls back to back and I wouldn't really notice a significant drop in energy outside of what would just be normal, right? But in the beginning, I would do maybe sometimes two coaching sessions and think, oh, that was a lot.

Okay, hopefully this felt super helpful for you. So basically all of the things that I just taught you are just be aware, right? What are the things that take less energy, less of your time that you can do really anytime? What are the things that take more energy, more brain power, more focus?

And how can you plan all of it in a way that you don't feel like you're a victim to it, right? That you get to be as in charge as you can be to how you're planning your days and your weeks, and always having that backup plan so that when you have a day and maybe it surprises you where you're like, oh, I mean, I got enough sleep. I've eaten healthy this week.

Like you go through your checklist. You don't find anything off here, and I still just feel super foggy. You know, maybe it's hormones, maybe it's whatever. Just having a list of like, okay, that's not a problem because I know that I can get these things done today.

I have this list of things that I know don't take as much brain power. These are the things that are on my list for today. And then hopefully using some or all of the strategies that I just told you that I use, that I teach my clients. Hope this was helpful, and I will talk to you next week. All right? Goodbye.

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