

Ep #277: What Self-Coaching Actually Is (And What It's Not)



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This is episode 277, and today, I am finally going to talk about what self-coaching actually is because I don't think I've ever actually covered what it is. And unless you're a member inside Powerful, how would you ever know

But whether you are new to the idea of self-coaching or you're very experienced with it, I am going to address some of the most common misconceptions that I see with it, even with people who are very experienced with using it.

If you want to do things differently but need some help making it happen, then tune in for your weekly dose of coaching from me, Maisie Hill, Master Life Coach and author of *Period Power*. Welcome to *The Maisie Hill Experience*.

All right, folks, welcome back to the podcast. Today is all about what self-coaching actually is and, probably more usefully, what it isn't, because self-coaching is the most incredible tool, but there are definitely some misconceptions around what it is or the purpose of it.

So my version of self-coaching encompasses mindset. There is a strong emphasis on how your thinking influences you, but it also includes working with your feelings and your stress responses, as well as appreciating what's going on with your hormones. So all of that is your internal environment, as well as the impact of your external environment.

Now, the most common assumption that I see is that self-coaching is just journaling. And I get why, because both of those things involve turning your attention inward and writing things down, at least to begin with. They both start that way. But journaling is generally an open-ended, expressive process, right? You write to process things, to vent, to explore. And self-coaching starts with that, but it also goes way beyond it because the way that I teach it, it has a very specific structure to it.

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And self-coaching starts with that, but it goes way beyond it because the way that I teach it has a very specific structure to it. So you're not just getting things out of your system. That is important, but you're also working through it with a particular method.

So in practice, it starts with writing because getting your thoughts out of your head and onto paper is always useful because it gives you distance from them. And then distance is what allows you to look at what's actually going on rather than just being completely inside your own experience. And then once things are out of your head, you can start to tease them apart.

So you're looking at what you believe about yourself, about other people involved, about the situation as a whole, and how those beliefs that you have are then creating the feelings you're experiencing, which are then driving your behaviour, because feelings drive your behaviour, which is all leading you to create a particular set of outcome or results in your life.

So that's the very brief version of the foundation of the framework that I teach. So it's not just endless reflection. There's a specific structure to it. And once you learn to use it, you can move through it very quickly and see exactly what's going on in the situations in your life. And inside my membership, Powerful, there's an entire course called The Inner Odyssey where I teach you how to do this step-by-step. It's actually how to coach yourself. And the module where you learn this framework is called Seeing Clearly. So it's where you learn to separate the facts of a situation from the story that you're adding to those facts, and how to choose your thinking on purpose.

When you're learning this, you will be writing it out. That is always my recommendation in terms of a starting point because it allows you to see what you're doing and why you are doing it. It gives you that all-important perspective. That's what having a little bit of distance gives you. But very quickly, it starts to influence you as you're going about your day. So you'll notice that you're catching things earlier, right? Instead of realising what was really going on days or years later, you'll find yourself in

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mid-conversation having that level of awareness. So you'll just be checking in with your response to things, your reactions, and understanding them, rather than just reacting. And the skill really, at this point, moves from being something that you do in your lovely notebook into something that you do in your head and in your body in the moment.

And that transition happens through repetition, getting your reps in, through doing it yourself, through being coached on all sorts of situations from your life, as well as watching other people get coached on the things in their life, and you applying that coaching. That's the great thing about watching other people get coached or share their self-coaching, is it's not your situation. So you have even more distance and perspective than if you were getting coached or coaching yourself. And that gives you the ability to pick up additional skills quicker than if you were just doing it on your own.

So you then apply that coaching to your own life. You do the journaling, you get it out of your head, you get feedback on your self-coaching. At least that's how we do it inside the membership. And you gradually build your capacity to interrupt the pattern in the moment instead of just understanding it afterwards.

And this is what Powerful is built around, the idea of you learning these skills and becoming really adept at using them. So, as well as the Inner Odyssey course, we have monthly self-coaching workshops where you can bring your written self-coaching and the coaching team gives you really great feedback and helps you to develop what you're learning. You can also submit your self-coaching via our written coaching service at any point. The coaching team give you direct feedback as well as coaching you on the situation.

So there's really all sorts of ways inside the membership that you can build this skill because this is a skill that I want you to have. The mental fortitude it gives you is like nothing else. I don't know where I would be without this. I mean, I consider myself a pretty resourceful person, someone who's quite psychologically minded, but being able to do this, it's just so instilled in my

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day-to-day life and such a part of who I am and how I approach things at this point that I feel like I would be lost without it. It has made that much of a difference to me. And I know it's made a difference to so many of you as well. And it really is a skill that you'll have for life. Once you learn it, you've got it.

And of course, Powerful is a coaching membership, but ultimately, my ulterior motive is I want you to be able to coach yourself. And the great thing about that is then when you can coach yourself first, we get to go even deeper on the calls because you've already got that level of awareness, already started to take action on things.

So that's the first assumption. The second one I have is that the purpose of self-coaching is to make yourself feel better. This is the one that comes up quite a lot with people who are pretty experienced with self-coaching. I see it sometimes in the coaching submissions we get inside the membership, where someone has self-coached themselves. They've done a really great job of that, but then they're saying, but I think I've done something wrong because I still feel like shit. So I want to clear this up. Please hear me when I say that the purpose of self-coaching is not to feel better.

Now, I know that sounds weird, and those of you who self-coach will be thinking, yeah, but Maisie, it does make me feel better. So just bear with me for a moment. Whilst you are likely to feel better as a result of self-coaching, it's not the primary reason for doing it. If your objective is to somehow escape from your feelings and get to a place of comfort faster, you are missing out on the insights that your challenging emotions bring. And you're also perpetuating the belief that you can't handle the discomfort of your emotions.

So what happens is that, sure, you self-coach yourself, but you end up bypassing how you feel, and you also deepen a limiting belief about yourself. And it really is a limiting one. I want all of you to have the confidence to say that you have the inner strength to experience any emotion and not let it take over and hold you back from doing the things

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that you want and need to do. Because everything you're holding back from, everything you're scared of, is because you don't want to risk feeling an emotion if it doesn't work out. You don't want to feel humiliation. You don't want to feel shame or disappointment. That's what the fear of failure is about.

So I want you to think about what it would be like for you to know that you have a process for meeting your emotions when they show up, either in the moment or even in advance of a situation. So think about something you want to do or know that you need to do. Why haven't you done it? What's the feeling that starts to emerge when you consider doing it? So when you think about experiencing failure or being rejected, what do you start to feel? Because that's what you're scared of experiencing.

But if you know you have a process to notice what's coming up, to get the information each emotion brings with it, and to treat yourself with kindness whilst also having boundaries and the mental fortitude to say to yourself, well, those things your inner critic is coming up with, they're not true, or actually, there's no evidence of that. Does it even matter? To have these kind of responses to that internal voice. Because whilst your feelings and the information that they bring are valid, they are not factual.

So sometimes it's about saying to yourself, "Oh, darling, I get it. I know you're really worried about this," and then giving yourself an internal hug of some kind. But you also want to be able to say, and there's no evidence of that, or, okay, I know you're worried about that. But if it does happen, you're going to be able to handle it. And that's what these skills give you. So your feelings are information. Giving them enough space to actually hear what they're telling you is part of this work. It's not something to bypass or rush through quickly. But it also doesn't take long to do this, okay? Getting in touch with your emotions doesn't mean locking yourself in the bathroom for half an hour. It can be done in 15 seconds.

So the goal isn't to feel better. The goal is to lead yourself better. This is also important because some of you coach yourselves, and because you

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don't feel better, you think you're doing it wrong, but you're not. You've just got some feelings to feel. That's all that's going on. And this is exactly what the Feeling Deeply module in The Inner Odyssey is all about: learning to work with your emotions so that they become valuable sources of information instead of something that you have to manage, suppress, or escape, because that relationship with your own emotional experience is foundational to everything else.

So I want to give you an example of what this looks like in practice. So when I get defensive, and I do, like everyone, instead of just reacting and letting that defensiveness fire on all cylinders, I've built the ability to notice that defensiveness rising up, and it does rise up very quickly. I can feel my heart rate increase, my chest get tight, and rather than acting from that, I can check in with it.

And what I find more often than not is that the defensive response has quite a teenage energy to it. It's got this, "How dare you? How dare you say that to me? You don't know me." It's got that kind of quality to it, but it's actually covering up shame. Someone might be saying something completely neutral to me, but I am somehow perceiving that as an attack because something in what they've said has touched something I already feel bad about.

And knowing that is great because then I can coach myself on that very tender part, and I can bring it to my coach to get coached on. If I don't have that skill, what happens is just the defensiveness takes over, and it shows up in a way like it knows the truth and it's telling the truth and letting me know, listen, you're under attack. You've got to defend yourself. The other person is wrong. They're the problem. You got to make this right.

But in actual fact, the other person could very well be entirely on my side and trying to help me. Again, that's what's going on in the vast majority of these situations. But now I'm on the attack. So they're more likely to get defensive, and all of a sudden, you've got two nervous systems firing at each other. I mean, honestly, this just explains so much of my 20s.

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But self-coaching is what gives you the ability to have a conversation with yourself in that moment and not to dismiss what you're feeling, but also not to just believe everything that your system is telling you. There are times when I consciously choose to use that defensiveness because that is also useful. But when I do that, I'm doing it in a very intentional way. It is on purpose, and I know that I like my reasons for using that defensiveness, that it's appropriate. That is the distinction. And because of that, I don't question myself in the moment.

So in the past, there were times when I could have really done with accessing my defensiveness and using it. I have a whole back catalogue of times in my 20s and into my early 30s where I wish I had been able to access my defensiveness and to use it. But because I hadn't done this work, and I didn't have a process to follow, and I didn't have a coach, instead, what would happen was I would question that defensiveness, but not in a useful way. I would make myself feel bad for being defensive, so I would then hold back and revert to people-pleasing.

But because now I know that I am skilled at working with that defensiveness, I know that my use of it is appropriate and that I can recruit it and wield it in a purposeful, contained way where I'm not attacking someone, but I am for sure asserting my boundaries.

So learning to self-coach yourself and the skills involved in that isn't going to eliminate your responses, but it will give you a relationship with them so that you are in charge of your behaviour and how you want to do things. What I'm describing in terms of noticing the physical sensation of the response, the heart rate, my chest tightening is important to be able to work with that rather than be hijacked by it. And that's the nervous system piece in all of that, the stress response.

There's also a whole module on this in *The Inner Odyssey* called *Responding Wisely*, which is about learning how to work with your nervous system so that those stress responses and overwhelm just stop running the show, and you have some say in how you respond instead.

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So if the goal isn't to talk yourself out of how you feel, what is it? It's to see things clearly and to have a say in things because once you can see what's actually driving your responses, you have a choice about it. And you're no longer just reacting or handing over your power to someone else or a situation. You are giving yourself agency. And that agency built over time, rep by rep, situation by situation, is what self-leadership actually looks like in practice.

So it's not a weird, permanent state of calm where you never react to anything. And it's also not created through escaping challenging emotions. It's created through being able to meet what comes up inside you and outside of you and direct yourself through it rather than being at the mercy of it. And this is what I teach. This is what Powerful is all about.

So if any part of today's episode has made you curious about what that practice could look like in your own life, the doors open very soon, May 1st. And next week, I'm going to be revealing something really big. So make sure you catch next week's episode. I'll see you then.

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