

6: Highlights from Coach-Curious Prep School: The 3 Traits That Make Someone a Great Coach



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

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Hello, my friends. If you have ever wondered if you are meant to be a coach, if you are well-suited to being a coach, if you have what it takes to be a coach, today's episode is really for you. A couple of weeks ago, I ran our live in-depth challenge called Coach Curious Prep School, and that is a five-day paid experience where we take people through a process of using evidence-backed assessments to determine if coaching is a good career for them. So we obviously cannot recap an entire week program in one podcast episode, but I am really excited to share with you just a little snippet of what we learned.

So for this episode, what we're doing is sharing the teaching I did and the concepts I went through around the three traits that make someone, I believe, well, well, not just I believe, the evidence suggests, the research suggests, well-suited to being a coach. So these are traits, they're sort of personality characteristics, ways of being in the world, and they're things that seem really obvious and unremarkable to those of us who have them. We may not even really notice them as traits, but in fact, they are what predispose us to being good at coaching. So, we are sharing today on the podcast just a little excerpt of that teaching so that you all can go through it yourself.

And I want you to know that we're actually teaching a free masterclass called, Are You Meant to Be a Coach? that you can join totally for free on July 8th. So it will build on these three traits and we'll also be talking through at a high level the skills and beliefs that you need in order to be a good coach and in order to know if coaching is the right career for you.

So you can join us for that free masterclass by going to socraticcoaching.com/masterclass or you can text your email to +1 347-997-1784 and the codeword is masterclass. So again, that is a free masterclass July 8th called, Are You Meant to Be a Coach? and we are going to take you through a process to answer that question. And of course, if you can't attend live, we will have a replay, but I do encourage

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you to attend live because we have some fun surprises for the call. Go to socraticcoaching.com/masterclass or text your email to +1 347-997-1784. Now that you know that, you've hopefully signed up. You've come back. Let's get into the three traits that make someone a good coach.

Welcome to *The Future Coach*, the podcast for independent coaches, in-house coaches, and the coach curious. I'm your host Kara Loewentheil, founder of The Socratic Coaching Academy. If you want to chart a new path, uplevel your skills, and build a successful career around coaching, you're in the right place. Let's go.

Welcome to the first day of Coach Curious Prep School. I am so excited to be here with all of you, and I'm actually really so impressed that you're here, and I genuinely mean that, because there are so many people who dream of changing their lives, of starting a new career, creating an unorthodox life, or just finding a better way to live their lives, but don't do anything about it. And sometimes, especially if you get really into self-development, you kind of forget that because you're like hanging out with people who also are always trying to improve their lives and uplevel and grow, and you can sort of forget that most of the world doesn't do that.

So if you're here, you're already being brave and courageous more than most people because you are even admitting to yourself that you're interested in making a change or learning something new or doing something different. So it might seem to you like, oh, I'm just sitting at my computer. That's not that brave. But you are actually daring to consider something new and contemplate change, and you're listening to that voice inside of you that tells you that there's more out there for you, and most people ignore that voice. So in my book, that is really brave. And I think being committed to your own growth is the most courageous way to live. It really takes honesty with yourself. It takes optimism, it takes grit, and drive.

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And that's where I started, too. So for those of you who don't know me that well, I just want to do a 30-second life story, so you understand I did not come out of the womb a life coach. I've been where you are. I grew up in a Jewish family to ex-pat New Yorkers, and the joke in my family was that you could do whatever you wanted as long as what you wanted was to be a lawyer or a doctor. And then like, professor was also an acceptable kind of compromise profession.

And so I followed that blueprint I was given. I went to Yale for my undergraduate degree. I majored in English literature, extremely useful. Graduated with distinction, and then two years after that, I started law school at Harvard Law School, where I also graduated with honors. I clerked for a federal appellate court judge, and I had three legal fellowships, litigation, and then two academic. And I was working on women's rights and reproductive rights throughout this whole time. So, on the one hand, I was doing work that felt really meaningful to me. I wasn't like, I don't know, working on mergers at Haliburton or something. I was doing work that felt meaningful.

But even though I was already doing that, so I was already like one step along the path of purpose and meaning and mission in a way that a lot of people weren't interested in or didn't feel brave enough to do, I still didn't feel really truly connected to my work. I kept following the path. I kept excelling at the path. From the outside, it looked like I should feel very successful and accomplished. I was, you know, ascending this legal hierarchy, but I like deep down always knew that I wasn't really fulfilling my potential or doing everything I was meant to do.

Like, I didn't know what I was meant to do, but I just felt like there was something more. And I'm really curious to hear from you all in the chat if any of you feel that way. Your career might look prestigious on the outside, or maybe it doesn't either way, but you just feel like there's something more, right? Like there's something more I want to do, there's something

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more I want to be. Like I just don't know that if I get to the end of my life and I've just stayed on this path, I'm going to kind of look back and be glad that's what I did. Somebody said, "there better be more."

So I was like doing what I was supposed to be doing and advancing in my career, but I just felt like I was going through the motions on some level. It was really wild, and some of you may identify with this is that even though I didn't feel totally bought in, I still was having like crippling procrastination and imposter syndrome and all of that. So it's not like feeling like this wasn't my destiny, like got me out of that human experience, but I just always felt like there was something more.

And so I know some of you here feel that way, we're hearing in the chat. Some of you might absolutely love your current career, but you just wonder if there's like a new adventure out there for you, or if there's something that would deepen your current career, or if there's a way to bring your interest in psychology or self-development into your current career. So anywhere you are on this spectrum, or if you're not working at all right now and you're looking for something to do part-time while you're child rearing or you're retired and you're looking for like a new project or passion for the next phase of your life. Like wherever you are, you are in the right place.

The reason I'm sharing my story and reading my resume to you is that I want you all to know that I didn't become a life coach with like nothing to lose and no drama. I didn't set out planning to become a coach, so I understand what it feels like to feel drawn to this, but also have a lot of buts, what-ifs, all of that in your head. And when I was a lawyer for about a decade, I tried all the usual forms of self-help for a well-educated woman in New York City in her 20s, right? Like yoga, meditation, affirmations, whatever, all of that stuff. None of them did much for me. It really wasn't until I found cognitive coaching tools and was able to start actually changing my thoughts that I started to see how much more was possible for me than my brain was like letting me believe.

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And after a year of using the tools on myself, I wanted to do more with them, and I saw so much potential to help other women with this work. And you're here for the same reason. May not be to help women, it might be to help people of any gender, but you've changed your life with coaching, right? Coaching has impacted you in some way. Otherwise, why would you be here? And now you feel that pull, that desire to help other people do the same.

So I'm going to make a promise to you, and then I want you to make a promise to me. My promise to you is that I'm going to share what I truly think are the skills, traits, and beliefs that people need in order to be well-suited to working as a coach. Now, that's whether it's your own business, for someone else in their coaching business, inside a corporate role, an educational role, or a therapeutic role. Like we have therapists come through this. I'm going to share what I think are the most important traits, skills, and beliefs. Now, obviously, I am biased. I think coaching is the best job ever. It's obviously completely changed my life, my experience, my financial situation, all of that, right? I can make whatever money I want working the way that I want from where I want for someone like me who really cares about autonomy and freedom, that is the whole ball game. Like that is the most important thing.

So I'm not going to pretend I'm not biased towards coaching, but if you've ever worked with me or even heard my podcast or anything, you know that autonomy is one of my core values. So this prep school, not about talking anyone into becoming a coach. I'm going to be really truthful and honest about what I think makes someone suitable for this career. And what I want you to promise is that you're going to take your own potential seriously. That's the promise I want you to make to me because it's very easy for us to take our what we believe are limitations and our drawbacks are seriously. We take our fears and concerns very seriously, and our brains are evolutionarily biased to do that.

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So in order to make a balanced decision or to see things clearly, we actually have to proactively encourage positive thinking in ourselves. It's like if you have a physical, like I have hypermobility and my left side's always weak. So to be balanced physically, I actually have to like lean more on that side. I have to like make sure that I don't just default to the right side. So I have to actually try harder with that side. We have to proactively look at the positive sides of things, right? Because our brain naturally has a thumb on the negative side. So just to actually be neutral, we have to consciously focus on the positive side just to balance out that unconscious tendency towards the negative.

So your brain might easily imagine things like, what if I post on social media that I want to be a coach and I don't get any likes? What kind of face is my mother going to make if I tell her, right? What if I don't make any money and I end up living under a bridge? For some reason, like this fantasy always ends up under a bridge, like we're a troll in a children's story. Your brain is not naturally inclined to imagine the positive things that can happen and are actually more likely to happen than the negative ones, right? Sharing your work and having people be interested. Telling people about what you're doing and having them respond that that's so brave and they admire that. Like that blew my mind. That started happening to me all the time when I told people I was becoming a coach, and I was so shocked because of course my brain had just told me everyone would judge me.

Your brain is not inclined to naturally like imagine making more money than you make now in a way that you enjoy more. So you need to think about positive outcomes on purpose as well. When it comes to the negative ones, we are not going to ignore them, right? We're going to talk about them, we're going to think through them logically.

Here's what I want you all to promise me. I want you to promise me that you're going to give yourself the respect of taking your potential seriously. Okay, of letting your desires and your calling and your sense of something,

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I want to move towards this, letting that matter. If you get through this training and you truly feel like this is not for me, I'm not meant to be a coach, then that's great. That is one of the outcomes we want is for people who don't resonate with this week to have like more certainty, more clarity that like, oh, no, I think I like coaching, but I don't want to be a coach. But if you get through it and you feel called to continue on the journey, I want you to promise to take that seriously.

I do not think everyone should be a coach, but I do think some people are meant to be coaches, are called to be coaches, and that's what this week is going to help you determine. Some of you may genuinely not have the info to know, and this week is going to help you know. Some of you secretly already know this is what you want, but you're scared, and that's okay. And this week is going to help you gain the confidence you need to go after that dream. All right?

Okay, so before we start the assessments, one thing I got to tell all my little A students here who want to ace the assessments, these assessments are not things to ace, okay? They're not tests at school. We worked with a behavioral change Ph.D. to design these assessments to kind of translate like what I know from coaching into how things have been studied in the literature with the technical names. So these assessments are a mix of pre-existing tendencies or interests you have and some skills that are useful for coaching.

Yeah, somebody said, "I feel called out as a grade grubber A student." It is unusual to score at the high end of all these assessments before you're certified as a coach. I'm not saying it never happens, but it is more unusual, okay? Many people who become coaches and are really well-suited for it score right in the middle range. The middle range just means you've got potential and you need to be in an educational setting with appropriate training and what are called mastery experiences. That means practice and feedback essentially, to bring yourself up to that high zone, okay? So that

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middle, natural place to be if you have potential and desire to be a coach, but you aren't trained or certified yet. So, we are not trying to ace these. It's not about that. I know some of you may be perfectionists, right? Only like 99.9% of people who follow me.

So here's what I want you to put in the chat. I want you to think of and share an area of your life where you started out not knowing how to do something or not knowing how to do it well, and then you got better. So this could be a skill set in your career, learning a language, a hobby you have, a daily life maintenance task like cooking, cleaning, whatever, a workout, like whatever it is. Put something in the chat where you started out and you didn't know jack shit and you got better. Yeah, so somebody said, "dance and now I teach." Didn't speak English. Now I live and work in the US. Yes, so good. Teaching medicine, terrible start says, "time management, decluttering, and parenting." I mean, right? Is there any job where you have less practice than parenting before you start unless I guess you're a child educational expert?

Somebody said I thought I was going to be a horrible massage therapist, and I became a sought-after therapist. That is such a good example because we're going to be talking about this when we get into the assessments. Your brain will tell you that you're going to be bad at things that is just totally untrue. Like your brain just confidently tells you that you're going to be bad at things that you actually turn out to be awesome at.

Okay, so good. I'm glad you guys all picked something. It's important to remind your brain, I've learned shit before. Right? Your brain acts like you've never learned anything and you'll die if you try. That is not true. You have all done harder things honestly than learning to become a coach probably.

Okay, so I'm going to be sharing more mindset hacks this week as well, just like these in the Facebook group. So Elena is going to drop that link right

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now. If you're not in the Facebook group, I want you to go join it. I'm doing bonus teaching in there. Every day, I'm doing a Facebook live where I'm teaching stuff I couldn't fit into the rest of the week because there's so much I want to teach you all. So this morning, it was all about bravery and courage and how to accept your nerves and move forward with them. But I also taught a hack, a thought hack for making you feel less nervous about making big decisions. Okay? So make sure you join the Facebook group. Going in there live every day, including Thursday when we don't have a group call.

Second thing, subscribe to our podcast. So we have a new podcast called The Future Coach that's all about coaching, becoming a coach, and Elena is going to drop the link to that as well. We're going to give you Apple and Spotify. If you use something else, just search for The Future Coach in your podcast player. So that is a great way to stay connected. If you haven't been listening, great thing to binge this week to really immerse yourself in this work we're doing.

Okay. All right, let me share my slides. We are going to get into it. Let's go. I'm so excited. This is my favorite thing I do all year. Okay.

So today, first of all, get a pen and paper or have like a little note doc open on your laptop, whatever, because you're going to need to write down some numbers, okay? I'm we're going to talk about the three traits that are necessary to be a good coach and to succeed. I'm going to teach something about each one. We're going to go through an assessment together in real time. You're going to share your results in the chat. Really important, save your scores. Save your scores. At the end of the three days together, we're going to add them all up for an overall assessment, okay? So don't throw away that scrap of paper. Keep it for all three days. All right, here are the three traits we're going to be talking about this week.

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The first one is curiosity. And curiosity means a deep interest in why people think, feel, and act the way that they do. People think that being a coach is about knowing what other people should do with their lives or telling other people what to do, what to believe, how to live their lives. I don't consider any of that to be coaching. That is like a spectrum from just being up in other people's business to like running a cult depending on how much you do it. Being a coach requires having a deep curiosity about what makes other people tick, being endlessly fascinated with why other people do what they do, feel what they feel, think what they think.

It requires being really interested in like the subtle distinctions, the complexities of each human mind. Now, again, because I know we have some perfectionist brains in the house, we are all human. Obviously, we are all sometimes shortsighted and judgmental with our loved ones. I am not going to sit here and tell you that I am like an enlightened being who's always 100% just curious about why my ADHD husband chooses to drink three coffees and not eat until 3 p.m. even though he knows that makes him feel crazy. But when it comes to your professional life as a coach, being curious is really the key.

Curiosity is a form of respect. It's a way of respecting another person's autonomy and agency, their right to have their own like internal world that might not match up to yours. As a coach, you can't be effective if you're bringing rigid ideas of how other people should think, feel, and behave into the coaching. Again, I'm not saying we don't all have some of those in our personal relationships sometimes, right? For instance, I think you shouldn't drink three cups of coffee and not eat if you don't want to feel nuts. But in general, you need to be able to see different sides of things. You need to be curious.

So coaching may not be a good fit for you if your response when you hear two sides of a story is to decide like, oh, obviously this one's objectively correct and this one is objectively wrong. If you have very rigid beliefs

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about how everyone should be, even when it doesn't have anything to do with you, which is the key, you'll find coaching a frustrating career. So that is really the difference, right? Of course, when any of us get triggered, something is really bothering us, something personally hits us, then we have very strong opinions about how everyone else should be. That's normal. But if you are someone who like can't stand when other people who you don't know and don't have anything to do with you think, feel differently than you, like something different than you, don't like something you like, whatever, that might make it challenging for you.

My husband always says to me that I never shy away from the messy stuff and that that's so unusual. I think that's because I'm really driven by curiosity. I just want to understand. I want to understand more than I want to judge big picture. That doesn't mean I don't sometimes judge instead of understanding. But even when, you know, as long when I am not activated in my own nervous system, I tend to be more curious than judgmental, and that is an important trait. It's also useful, although not absolutely required, if you like thinking about big picture questions, right? Like if you're interested in what I consider philosophy, and I don't mean like reading Aristotle for fun. I do not do that. But like thinking about life, how should we be living our lives? What matters in our lives? Why do we experience our lives a certain way, right? Why do other people experience it differently?

Like you can be a good coach without this, but I think it makes it even more fun to coach when you are interested in those questions because I really believe that coaching is practical philosophy. So we're going to take this first assessment together, and this assessment evaluates your interpersonal curiosity or the desire for information about others. So interpersonal curiosity is a core component of human connection, belonging, security, survival, and flourishing. And so this is obviously drawn from the literature, and I'm paired up with what I see as being the most, one of the most important traits in coaching.

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Here's how the scale is going to work. So I'm going to read a statement. You are going to rank the statement on a scale from one to five. Five is strongly agree. One is do not agree at all. Okay, five means I strongly agree with this statement. One means I don't agree at all with this statement. And write it down. You can share it in the chat, but don't just put it in the chat. Write it down because you're going to need to add them up at the end of the scale. Okay, statement one, when having conversations, I notice the other person's facial expressions or non-verbal communication.

So it's a five if you strongly agree and it's a one if you don't agree at all. And you can share your answers in the chat if you want, but again, make sure you write them down. Okay, when having conversations, I notice the other person's facial expressions or nonverbal communication. Five if you agree, strongly agree. One is do not agree at all. All right, everybody got their number. I'm seeing a bunch of five. All right, look at you overachievers. I give you that whole talk about how it was normal to be moderate. You guys are all at the top. I got some fours, very good also. All right. Y'all are observant.

Okay, statement number two, I find myself interested in what people are really thinking and feeling. This is a great example of that curiosity, right? Some people aren't that interested in this. I know that may sound crazy if you are a person who is, but some people are just kind of like, I don't care. What did they do or not do or like, who cares what they're thinking or feeling? Like, all I care about is what their actions are. So, if that's you, coaching may not be the best fit for you. It is much more interesting and enjoyable to coach if you find yourself interested in what people are really thinking and feeling.

Again, I'm not saying at the height of being triggered, right? Like, if my stepchildren have been like fighting all day and I just get activated and I lose it for a minute. Like in that moment, my prefrontal cortex like everyone is offline and I'm not being a curious person. But in general, I am very

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interested in what people are thinking and feeling. That's what I always want to talk about. I'm like, I don't want to talk about like the weather. I want to talk about like your deepest childhood trauma. Like I'm curious about what people are really thinking and feeling. So five means strongly agree you are interested in what people are really thinking and feeling and one means, no, not interested in that.

Okay. Statement three, people often open up to me about how they feel. Five means strongly agree. One means do not agree at all. I used to have this problem on dates all the time because like people would just tell me all this stuff and I'd be kind of like, that's actually too intimate for a first date. This is not flirtatious anymore. I know too much about how you feel about your dad now. Yeah, so she said, "I counseled my entire dorm." Yeah, so again, like none of these are like if you aren't high on this one thing, you can't be a good coach. This is just one question on the scale of interpersonal curiosity, but many people who become coaches are people who people have tended to talk to them, right, to tell them what's up or ask for advice or, right, confide in them.

All right, statement four, I enjoy getting to know people on a deeper level. So five means strongly agree, one is do not agree at all. So if you are someone who tends to prefer in-depth relationships, you really want to like talk about real things, then that's you. I enjoy getting to know people on a deeper level. And again, this might sound like, yeah, everybody likes that, but that's actually not true. And there's nothing wrong with that. We are never saying like, oh, we're better if we are this way. But some people really enjoy like loose acquaintanceships, having, you know, a hobby, like a golf together, they are in a gardening club, they chat about the plants. Like they don't want to get into the depths. Totally fine. There's nothing wrong with it.

Coaching, of course, is about getting into the depths. So, and this doesn't mean that like you're trying to check out at the grocery store and you insist

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that the cashier tell you about her relationship with her mother. There obviously are times and places this isn't appropriate. But in general, obviously coaching is like really getting into what's going on with somebody in their brain, and so enjoying that makes coaching a better fit as a career.

Okay. Five, I am good at getting people to open up. Right again, five is strongly agree, one is do not agree at all. So do you feel like when you talk to people, they open up to you, right? That's something you're good at. You're good at establishing that trust or that comfort. People say things like, oh, you're really easy to talk to, or like, oh, I'm I don't always tell everybody about this, or, right, those kinds of things.

All right. Somebody says, "I feel like I should pretend some of these are threes or fours, but I'm giving five." Don't hide your light under a bushel. You don't have to get all fives to be a great coach, and almost no one does. So, but it's okay if you're already a little superstar. Just embrace that. So he said, "three, or is that just my neurodivergent friends?" That's an interesting question. I don't know. I would think about that for you, but a lot of people who come to coaching are neurodivergent. I'll tell you that.

Okay. Number six, hearing about how another person experiences the world is interesting to me. Five is strongly agree, one is do not agree at all. I'm always like, do we see blue the same way? Like I'm like so fascinated by how do we see the world? Like how can we know that like when I say I love you and you say I love you, like are we talking about the same thing? That kind of fascination. Somebody said, "a bit different with my direct reports compared to friend, family, colleagues." That's obviously very normal. Not every relationship in your life is going to be the same. So that's fine. Of course, that makes sense. You can just sort of try to take it as a at a general level.

All right, my friends, so hopefully now you have a little bit of a better sense about whether you have the three traits that predispose someone to be a

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good coach and whether coaching feels like it might be a more of a possibility for you than you thought. If you're feeling that little twinkling of possibility, I want to remind you to come join our free masterclass on July 8th, Are You Meant to Be a Coach? You can sign up at socraticcoaching.com/masterclass, all one word, or text your email to +1 347-997-1784 and use codeword masterclass, all one word, and we will get you enrolled, and then you will show up live, hopefully. We will send a replay, but live is always better. and I am going to teach you not only going over these traits, but also the three skills and beliefs you need in order to be successful as a coach. I'll see you all there.