

BRAIN FART...

EP #23

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 23, with Rhiannon Bush

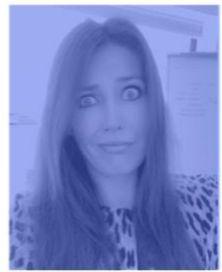
Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins-and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.

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I had this really interesting experience recently where I was super, rushed. As a mum of two young kids, I feel very rushed all the time. From the minute I wake up, it feels like a rush to get everything done, to make sure I have that really precious time and am present with my kids, while also getting everything done that I not only need to get done, but also want to get done. It’s a case of the cliché – never enough hours in the day. I love to work and professional development, but I need to get the laundry done and cleaning done and other random housework that the kids create last minute and all of those sorts of things. And it just builds up and builds up and builds up. And if I leave it, it becomes a much harder job to do. Have you ever cut up a fresh mango and thought “I’ll clean that up later?” what happens? It sticks like glue. If you’d just cleaned it at the time, it wouldn’t have stuck and it would’ve been a simple wipe instead of a scrub and required a lot less energy. So every day I feel like I’m really rushed.

But what happened... the other day was that I knew I was being picked up from work by Damien at a certain time and I had to get a last-minute thing done for a client. I sent what was needed straight to this client to get pre-approved before finalising it and upon my own review, well after I’d sent it off, I realise just how shotty the work was. And I mean even the numbers were incorrect. That’s what alerted me in the first place. I know my maths can be a little “how’s your father?”... but even I knew that 5 plus 5 plus 12 plus 4 didn’t equal 35 and even though I put them in an excel spreadsheet, and I had summed it, and if you’re an excel lover like me, you’ll get that when you sum a bunch of numbers you just trust it – it’s accurate, Excel is much more accurate than I am, so yep it should’ve been good to go, sent off and then when I reviewed it thought, oh my goodness, it is completely wrong. And consequently, I felt a bit silly. And probably looked a bit silly to the client. But, that was the only real issue with it. Luckily, there was no lost money, the risks weren’t that high, but I didn’t feel very professional, or as though it reflected very well on me... that my work had been so shotty, because in that moment, I felt very rushed and emotionally heightened. If I had just been able to remain calm, and just go steadily, the outcome would’ve been very different.





Have you ever experienced that? You're running around like a chook with your head chopped, you're barely breathing and on reflection, you do some crazy things. Things you think to yourself "what was I thinking?!" And that's the key here... you actually kind of weren't. But I'll continue on that in a moment.

What's even more interesting, was that with this great team I'm currently working for slash with, we were discussing workshops on how to help employees overcome procrastination for better business outcomes.

Anyway after this discussion I was reflecting on a conversation I overheard between somebody I would, on the balance of probability, classify as a more dominant, assertive character, and his subordinate. The person who reports into the more dominant person, who just happens to be male, is very much an introvert, very analytical, very quiet, she's also a younger female of a different nationality, which means she doesn't typically speak up, she also doesn't get a lot of cultural references, so she's really trying to learn how to speak socially. Her English is excellent and as somebody who doesn't speak a second language, my hats go off to anybody trying to learn English as a second language, but she's understandably lost on a few colloquialisms and things. And after hearing the way that her boss spoke to her this day (and to clarify, this isn't all the time it was just in this instance) I could almost feel her shrinking on the other end of the line.

At one time, he asked her to reference something and I heard him say "I'll bring it up on the screen" because she wasn't able to do it. I could feel how she felt in that moment. I've been there. Her amygdala had been triggered, she was in fight or flight mode and consequently, she couldn't respond the same way as if she were relaxed or focused, and give him what he wanted in that moment.

Because I couldn't see her or hear her, I don't know how she was actually feeling. But I went straight back to a time when I'd had a boss speak to me like that and I felt all the feelings and if she was anything like me, and I suspect she was, she was feeling overwhelmed after being spoken to that way, from the way he was speaking to her. It wasn't a pleasant experience for me, let alone her, and I feel it's fairly common in workplaces where fear and intimidation rule, even if the person managing doesn't intentionally want that to be the instigator of action.

I remember a really great guy I knew at uni, it was purely a friendship we had and his name was George and he was a great guy, super fond of him and I was living on campus at the time... I remember on one occasion, we'd been out boating and right before we'd left, he'd invited a few of us girls in to use the loo. I raced in and said "just use the one upstairs" and off I ran to do what we were there to do and leave. When I returned, the girls were lined up in the foyer which I thought was odd, and his mum turned to me, looked me up and down as if I was a fly on her shoe, and told me I was not to have free run of her house. As a 19-year-old girl, I've never wanted the ground to open up





and swallow me as much as I did in that moment. She also said this in front of George's male friends so she had an audience. Unbeknownst to her, he had invited me to spend the previous weekend at his house while she was away. So naturally, I'd been taken on a tour of the multiple-story-with-water-front-views-and-even-have-a-private-elevator-mega-home-on-Sydney-harbour... and felt like I was pretty at home there (who wouldn't be?!). So when she spoke to me like this, I was mortified. My older self, wishes I'd been channeled into my younger self in that very moment because now, I wish I'd said something along the lines of "well when my parents have people over, they're able to use whatever toilet they like" or something witty and with an air of superiority right... I mean the bridges were burned anyway, there was no coming back from this but in the moment, I just felt worthless and so well.. common.

So, if you've felt that way, or know you've created that in somebody by speaking to them a certain way, know how it doesn't fare well for anybody. And by the way, this is NOT a case of one size fits all. You can have a very seemingly timid person who can self-regulate and detach enough to not be affected, and you can have a very energetic, strong person breakdown with assertive management. Your soft skills / people skills / the way you read people, matters. It matters to them as a person, the way they perform, the way you engage with one another and the working relationship you share, and ultimately the outcomes you're looking to them, in a work context, to achieve.

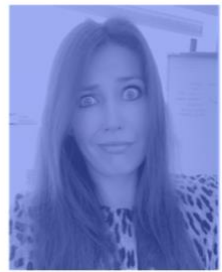
Over the next few episodes I'm going to discuss DISC profiling and break it down, because it will make a tonne of sense to everybody who lives in.. nope, just lives. It's amazing and I love it so much so I'll share that with you.

In the meantime, no matter what your behavioral profile is, I'm sure you can think of a time when something has genuinely shocked you. Maybe you were abused by somebody randomly (that was me with a homeless person on the streets of Sydney once upon a time. Horrible story), maybe it was your mum saying a rude word, maybe it was some really attractive person walking past you... and at that time, your train of thought has evaded you and you've melted into a puddle of emotions.

Now, brain farts as it were, can be caused by various things – both good or bad, and the emotional response we feel is usually an amplification of that – kind of like a mirror. I remember I was talking to a barman in England many lifetimes ago. And he lifted his shirt to dry something and he had like an 8 pack. Well I was stumped mid-sentence. Totally couldn't remember what it was I was talking about. And it no longer mattered. The emotions that followed, well you can guess.

Similarly, when I was screamed at by 3 huge creative directors of the Russian National Ballet touring to The Concourse Theatre in Chatswood... no unfortunately I'm not joking, it was the first time in my life I'd almost walked out. I was that terrified and emotionally traumatised. I'll never





forget it. While that's an extreme example, we've all experienced a brain fart. I hope you've experienced it in a good way as well as a bad way.

Brain farts don't fare well for productivity because your big-pants brain, as in your pre-frontal cortex, literally escapes out the window. It disappears when you need it most. Instead, your amygdala is triggered and in that moment your brain is just doing everything I can to protect you. Your amygdala being triggered gives you this release of adrenaline and your pre-frontal cortex literally shuts down. This means you can't access your logical thinking, you literally can't think, really at all.

If anyone's ever been attacked by someone verbally it's a similar thing. You just feel super blindsided and because you are shocked with what's going on, you can't process logically, and that is when your pre-frontal cortex actually goes off-line. It's in those instances where 5 minutes later, when it's too late, you're pre-frontal cortex will reappear and you'll think "oh I wish I'd said..." or "oh I should've said..." and then you give yourself a hard time for not being smarter wittier, quicker-tongued, and the list goes on. It's why Mahammad Ali was so amazing. He could punch you twice in the face before you even had time to react because he was so fast. Any wonder he was such a champion?

So my point is that you being able to manage your emotional state throughout the day, and through each moment is incredibly important. Sometimes it's about reacting. Other times it's about not reacting. But the consequences of your actions either way, make a difference.

I've also had – hand-on-heart confession, moments where I've absolutely taken something that's completely unrelated and going on in my day, out on the wrong person. Even on occasion, my son. Because he's my older child I've known him longer, I can usually predict his behaviour and his reactions and also he's able to communicate. We have a really beautiful relationship and while I'm too learning how to be a mum, I've definitely had moments I've had to stop myself, sometimes mid-sentence, and say "hang-on, back it up" and I've apologised because I don't want to be using anyone, especially him, as my emotional outlet. Nobody deserves that energy from me, especially my children, and also I'm an adult and coach. I should know better. Yes, clearly, I'm also human too.

I remember signing up for my coaching course. At that point in my life, I'd been back in Australia about 8 months after moving back from London. I'd moved back prematurely, I fell in love with London and England and my workplace, it was an incredible season of my life and when I moved back, I was almost depressed. I don't want to say I was, I feel that's a little extreme, but I know I had friends who were worried about me, I put on a tonne of weight, I was miserable. I remember it quite clearly. I have no recollection of the person I was at that time, other than crying a lot. And I had two wonderful friends – Cate Parsons and Serrin Bertino who literally carried me through that transition. They were the kindest, most caring people and





my saviours because they wrapped me up into their social circles, took me on coffee dates, just embraced me and expressed sincere and beautiful kindness. I can't thank them enough. But it was that time when I discovered coaching and it showed me a pathway out of my overwhelm. After signing up and receiving training and coaching, I can honestly say it was the exact thing I needed at that moment in my life to stop me being driven by my emotions, and to instead take control of how I wanted to live my life, of the person I wanted to become and the pathway to actually getting there.

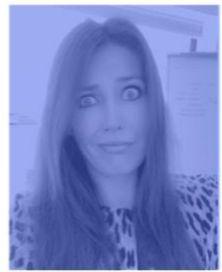
Being able to manage your emotional state in a heightened or intense moments requires your pre-frontal cortex to firstly, be engaged and switched on and secondly, to be aware enough of what's going on, in context, to remember you're safe enough to then create that emotional regulation. Otherwise, you'll sit in fight or flight where your animal brain will react however it feels necessary to save you. For some, this means just blowing up, for others, it means shutting down. You'll know which one you tend to be and what causes you to behave in those ways. If you don't know this, ask yourself the question and keep digging until you understand it within yourself. If you can't understand it within yourself, you can't see it when it happens and therefore have any control over it if you want to.

Now I'm not a neuroscientist, but I know our emotions are stored in our mid-brain or our Limbic System. If you've noticed you tend to be triggered a lot more easily when you're tired, stressed or mentally fatigued, you're absolutely correct. When we sleep, our dopamine (a hormone in our brain) is replenished. There are ways of replenishing dopamine throughout the day but this has a minute impact when comparing to deep sleep (specifically REM sleep).

When we have large amounts of dopamine we can make decisions using our pre-frontal-cortex. While Mark Zuckerberg looks great in jeans and a T-shirt, by having only that to work with it removes a decision he has to make about his dress code, leaving his decision making for more important matters. It's the same as minimalism. When we moved out of our house for it to be renovated, we kept the bare minimum of what we needed and moved everything else. I can't even describe what that did to our family's energy levels. It removed choice, which removed the need to make decisions, spaces were clean and tidy, void of clutter and this created more energy. When we run low on dopamine, our brain calls upon hormones generated from our mid-brain.... Where our emotions are stored. Hence, we emotionally react instead of logically or intellectually. We're programmed like this.

So... I just want to give you some strategies that I've taught my clients, and that coaches have taught me, that will help you emotionally regulate in an intense moment where you feel agitated, frustrated, angry, or some other way like a spike in your stress levels, that cause you to respond to what's going on around you in a way you don't fully, consciously choose.





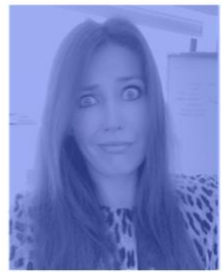
I was talking to a really good friend of mine about an outburst I'd had. My parents have a really steep driveway, they live on a hill and they were away so I'd taken the kids and Damien to check the house. We'd been there too long and the kids became ancy – meaning they were upset and crying so we decided to go home.

I needed to do a few things and felt rushed to leave because the kids were upset and next thing, we're driving down the hill and I can see that the lights have been left on. And I really just wanted to get home. I had to back up, unlock again, turn the lights off... it really wasn't that big of a deal, but I was highly irritated and in a bit of a maître-mode. Feeling like I had to do everything, and that my babies wouldn't settle, I was really stress. I'm not sure if you've ever felt like that but I can sometimes be quite obviously irritated and stressed. My friend was saying that in that moment, she would hold her hand to her heart and breathe into it, and she starts her sentence with "what I need right now is"... and that prevents her ripping somebody's head off 😊

Strategies:

- 1. Notice when you're not breathing – often when I'm getting tense my breathing gets quite intermittent and shallower – my chest tightens and that's what feels like is about to "boil over"- it's just oxygen. So take a deep breath until you feel your lowest rib of your rib cage, move out as far as it can. Hold it and release it slowly. Count if you need to.**
- 2. Don't speak. Just hold your tongue one second longer.**
- 3. Have a sip of water. It buys you time. It's an interview technique which I recommend to everybody. It gives your Mumma-brain, that voice of reason, the split second it needs to come back online and rationalize your answer.**
- 4. Hand on your heart – thanks Matilda Wand. Place your hand on your heart close your eyes (if the context is appropriate) and breathe.**
- 5. Ask for what you need. Instead of letting loose and firing off, calmly say "what I need right now is.."**
- 6. Ask them to stop. Just place your hands up like a stop sign or say 'stop'. Even if it's abrupt, it will stop them and you. Then you get that moment of pause you need to rationalize and not say something stupid, or nothing at all (because let's be honest, both are as bad as each other).**
- 7. Revisit it later. Similar to asking for what you need, ask to take time, or don't give an answer straight away. Say, I'm going to come back to you (x) and give a time by which you will have an answer for them. What's the rush?**
- 8. Channel your inner calm person. When I need to rationalize my emotions and calm the f down... I channel Kate Middleton. I consider how she would respond. It would always be classy, always kind and polite, but also strong and stating boundaries and what she needs. Perfection 😊**





Remember, your brain just needs a split second longer. Pause, take a breath and respond in a way you'll be proud to reflect on later while also being satisfied with the outcome.

See you next week!

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Hey! Before you go, I always find reviews really helpful when looking for new information or insights...

I you've found this podcast valuable, please take a minute to write a quick review about what you've found most beneficial for you, so other people can benefit from your insights, and listen in too. I would LOVE that! Also, if there are any topics you'd like me to cover specifically about life coaching or the life coaching industry, visit rhiannonbush.com to contact me. Thanks for joining and I'll see you in the next episode of Do I Need A Life Coach?!

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