



INTEGRATE TO LIVE

Restore Resilience. Cultivate Community. Impact your World

Week 3 Transcript: Regulation

As we get this process started, we are laying some key foundations of learning that are essential in setting you up for success. The Pause & Pivot method practice of slowing down, becoming mindful, creating options and making new choices will be fundamental in all we do.

This week, we are talking about regulation of the nervous system. This is the neuroscience of resilience. Without practicing, and thereby teaching our nervous system to efficiently regulate itself, much of what we talk about will just be in theory. I desire you to embody the change that you are hoping for.

So, let's take a quick peak at the brain. Spoiler alert: We get a little nerdy this week. But, for practical purposes, I'm going to keep our discussion very general. Understanding the main concepts is most important in this process. For those of you who'd like to deepen your understanding, there are plenty of resources I'm happy to share with you over on the community page.

So, let's dive in.

The brain consists of two basic areas: the Lower Brain and the Higher Brain.

The Lower Brain consists of the Limbic, or emotional engine of the brain, and the Brain Stem. It is fast-track, unconscious, and implicit, meaning outside our awareness, and controls our hard-wired response to stressors - our survival strategies.

It helps us discern if a situation is safe or dangerous. And, if dangerous, gets ready to defend us through initiating a fight, flight or freeze response. Neuro-chemicals shoot through our bodies to mobilize us to push or punch, run or "play dead" which for us is going numb.

The Higher Brain consists of the Pre-Frontal Cortex. It is slow-track, conscious, explicit, meaning within our awareness, and controls reasoning, reflection, language, empathy, attunement and self-awareness. It's where we are in choice, create options and develop new ways of being.



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One of these is not more important than the other. They each have their unique function and purpose. The goal is for the brain to work in concert with itself – to experience whole brain integration. It's important to note, though, that when stress happens in the Lower Brain, the Higher Brain comes offline. We react, instead of being able to choose our response, and this is where most of us feel stuck.

Referring back to the Pause & Pivot Method, this is why we learn to PAUSE. Learning how to pause here creates opportunity to get our Higher Brain back online, so we can break our pattern and pivot toward something new and different.

This is one of the reasons why developing our capacity to regulate our nervous system when we experience stress is so important. It increases our capacity to withstand life's hardships.

There are a few ways the nervous system is regulated:

Auto-regulation

Self-regulation

Co-regulation

Auto-regulation is when it does it on its own. Thankfully, I don't have to be conscious for my brain to regulate my heart rate, breath rate and digest my food.

Self-regulation is when, well, I regulate myself. One of the easiest ways we can do this is through our breath. Remember practicing pause where breath is our greatest resource? Find your feet, find your breath.

And, Co-regulation is when I experience calm through social engagement with another person.



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Here's a word picture that may help you hold this idea:

When I experience a stressor, my nervous system is activated. The sympathetic branch of my autonomic nervous system automatically, so outside awareness and within my limbic system, initiates a fight or flight response. This is like the gas pedal on the car. I get revved up and ready for action.

Now, if the stressor is WAY too much, chronically repeats, or fighting or running will make the situation worse, then the nervous system employs a freeze response. And in extreme cases, a faint response.

This is too much down regulation of the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system. This is like putting on the brakes in the car. Things shut down and we go numb.

What happens for most of us in our chronic high stress environments is we are stuck in this revved up place while having to override it to get on with our work day or care for our children.

Our bodies are like a car with the gas pedal to the metal while putting on the brakes at the same time. We simultaneously feel anxious and on the edge while also feeling disconnected, disengaged or nothing at all.

Does this sound familiar?

What a healthy, regulated nervous system looks like is this: I experience a stressor, like someone cutting me off in traffic, and I want to have a sympathetic response.

My heart rate spikes, and I get ready to swerve so I can protect myself from danger. Then, I want to begin to down regulate into a more comfortable place of calm breathing, rest and relaxation.



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But, what often happens is I drive straight to where I'm going while still in a place of high alert, now I'm late, and once I arrive I notice my boss is in a bad mood and I realize I forgot there was a mandatory 8am meeting. And, such is the state of my nervous system, going from one sustained stressor to another.

Let's do something about that, shall we?

Stay connected as we all put these new concepts into practice and be sure to download the action guide to support your process this week.