



INTEGRATE TO LIVE

Restore Resilience. Cultivate Community. Impact your World

Week 5 Transcript: Behaviors

Today, we focus on the Behaviors portion of practicing pause in the Pause & Pivot method, and take a more expanded look at the impulses and habits we develop to cope with the uncomfortable emotions and sensations we experience or, would rather not experience.

Here's a quick review:

We talked about the lower brain, and how it is 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 perceived as dangerous, gets us ready to defend.

Most of the unhealthy impulse behaviors that we would like to change come from this self-defensive posture. We experience an uncomfortable emotion like fear or shame, or an environment that feels threatening, and we try to create safety through protecting ourselves' or controlling the situation. These behaviors are all biologically hard-wired for our survival.

Because the initiation of this response happens in the lower brain, we don't often have the awareness to make a different choice before we've already acted out. This is why we are spending so much time as a community practicing pause in the early stage of this program.

Practicing Pause is the essential first step in reconditioning old stuck patterns of behaving. The good news is that we can rewire our patterns by changing the neural circuitry that underlies them. That's exactly what you've been doing the past few weeks, and what will soon become your new normal.

Pausing creates what neuroscientists call response flexibility by increasing your window of tolerance. Through awareness and practice, you increase the space between what's happening to you and your reaction to it. But, it takes time and intentional focus.



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We are purposefully spiraling our learning throughout this program and this week we are deepening our understanding of the different ways that we behave, and the impulses that lead to that behavior, so we can have enough awareness to make a different choice.

So, let's look at the different ways we behave to cope with the uncomfortable emotions and sensations we experience:

Dumping is uncontrollable reactive purging of emotion onto others. It's often irrational, surprising and raging. It creates eggshell environments for those on the receiving end.

Bracing or Stuffing is when we won't acknowledge our emotions and repress them deep within ourselves. We shut down our capacity to feel our emotions to the point where our bodies begin to shut down. We become hypersensitive and it can lead to chronic tension, forms of depression and anxiety, insomnia or illness.

Deflecting is when we are defensive and blame, name call, shame others or seek revenge. We present as fine, saying "it doesn't matter" and "I don't want to talk about it." But, what we can't be with in our lives will rule our choices.

A nuanced version of Deflecting is Avoiding. Avoiding or Denial is when we believe we are there to meet the need of everyone else, therefore, we deny the fact that we have needs. This leads to a lack of boundaries and always being a "yes".

We develop an inauthentic, accommodating voice of niceness, but harbor resentment that comes out sideways. We deny how we feel and what we need in an effort to people please that can lead to passive-aggression.



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Next is what I call a “fear of flash flooding”. It’s being afraid that if I “go there”, the surge of emotion will flood the village and everything I’ve worked so hard to maintain will be lost. On some level, we’re able to acknowledge what we’re feeling but we’re stuck, bracing out of fear, hoping the levee doesn’t break.

Numbing is taking the edge off of emotional pain through a laundry list of behaviors: busyness, internet, food, alcohol, prescription and recreational drugs, overworking, perfectionism and chaos, just to name a few.

Instead of employing a healthy down regulation of the nervous system, like we’ve talked about, we hot wire a shift in our brain chemistry through these temporary numbing behaviors that are pervasive in our culture.

But, here’s the important piece of this. We can’t selectively numb. We can’t choose to numb feelings of shame, fear, uncertainty and grief without also numbing our experience of joy, love and fulfillment.

All of these patterns can be expressed internally as well as externally. So, you may be thinking, “I don’t rage on others, I would never do that.” But, when asked if you feel rage, and rage against yourself, that’s a different answer.

Gaining awareness and making connections between uncomfortable emotions and sensations we don’t want to feel, and impulsive behaviors that keep us from feeling them, helps us gain ground to make a different choice. It’s important to understand that most of us do most of these. As you identify your primary patterns this week, know that you’re not alone.

Be sure to download the action guide to support your process. I’m certain you’ll have some new discoveries and I look forward to connecting with you around it all