



INTEGRATE TO LIVE

Restore Resilience. Cultivate Community. Impact your World

Week 6 Transcript: Sensations

Today, we focus on the Sensations portion of practicing pause in the Pause & Pivot method, and take a more expanded look at the feelings we experience in our bodies.

Generally speaking, as a culture, we focus on thinking and doing, and minimize or ignore feeling and being. The negative impact of this includes chronic tension, disease and a lost sense of who we are. We're much more encouraged, and comfortable, thinking about ourselves' – having a conceptual self-awareness.

Itemizing a list of facts about myself, learning new skills to implement in work and relationships, amassing information about my specific personality type or temperament can remain head knowledge without creative embodied self-awareness.

Many of the people I coach find themselves in this category. They know what to do, just aren't doing it. Or they've learned skills of interpersonal engagement, but continue to feel stressed or experience surprising explosions of emotion in their interactions with others.

When we disconnect from our body sensations, we aren't aware of basic things like when to shift our bodies out of a place of discomfort while working long hours at a desk, for instance.

We ignore basic bodily messages about when to eat, drink, rest and go to the bathroom. And, we are perplexed when we wake up one day and our body is in rigor mortis, having dismissed chronic bracing and tension patterns until our body finally seized up.

I worked as a massage therapist for over a decade, and I saw this all the time. People would come to me, wanting me to undo the tension pattern they'd been holding for weeks or months, sometimes even years, in a 60-minute massage, so they could get on with their thinking lives.

But, it often wouldn't have a long-lasting effect because the tension patterns in their nervous system didn't change. They continued to live with one foot on the gas and one on the brake.



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Embodied self-awareness is paying attention to what we are experiencing in our bodies. Sensations are what we experience in the body as our nervous system takes in information and works to regulate itself.

And, when the lower brain initiates a stress response, there is a flood of information in our bodies. Most of our disempowering behavior patterns are a result of trying to override or manage these uncomfortable feelings.

Part of the process of change is increasing our window of tolerance. We do this by increasing our capacity to be with the emotions and sensations that have previously felt intolerable. This is how we restore resilience.

Our window of tolerance is a baseline place of steady calm where we are neither over or under reacting nor over or under functioning. Our goal in this process of restoring resilience isn't to always stay in that window, but to increase the size of the window and develop our capacity to return to it when we get pushed out of it.

Expanding our window of tolerance allows us to remain calm and relaxed as well as engaged and alert, all at the same time.

On the other hand, we want to maintain a healthy response to stressors. Our aim in this process is to keep it healthy and intact. We want our survival strategies of fight, flight and freeze to be available, as needed.

They are what keep us alive in dangerous situations and help us respond quickly to potential harm or disaster. It's essential for me to be able to respond in a millisecond if a child darts in front of my car while driving down the road.

I need my rational brain to get high jacked in that situation. I literally don't have time to process what I perceive the moving object to be and what I think I should do about it.



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It takes 3-5 seconds for that information to reach my higher brain. In most situations, that's too late. After I've reacted, then I want to be able to return to my window of tolerance.

One of the biggest shifts my clients typically experience in our first session is permission to just notice the reaction, become aware of the sensations that accompany it, and name the sensations.

They are so used to judging themselves and feeling like a failure for having the reaction, and trying really hard to make it stop, that they never experience the natural down regulation in the nervous system that's possible and wonder why it just keeps recycling.

It's amazing how just using the tool of labeling, that we learned in the Emotions video, works for sensation, as well. Labeling the emotion, and the sensation, without judgment begins to return us to that place of calm. The body naturally begins to move toward the window of tolerance.

We're not experienced in talking about our sensations. When we begin this process we might say, "I feel good or I feel tense." This is a fine place to start. But, sensations have texture and depth, just like our emotions.

The more aware we can become of the nuanced nature of these sensations, the more versed we become in our lived experience. And, this is what makes us feel fully alive.

All of this work starts with curiosity: noticing what you notice and getting curious about it. Awareness is our biggest ally. We are learning how to pay attention and practicing Pause allows us to learn to not react to our reactions.

Through embodied self-awareness, we will deepen, and widen, our capacity to notice, be with, label and choose our responses in new and different ways.

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.