



# INTEGRATE TO LIVE

Restore Resilience. Cultivate Community. Impact your World

## Week 7 Transcript: Memory

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Today, we focus on the Memory portion of practicing pause in the Pause & Pivot method, and take a more expanded look at how past experiences influence our current assessment of reality.

We often think of memory as the process of recalling past events and interactions with others. But, I like the way Dr. Dan Siegel says, “Memory is the way past events affect future function”.

There are two kinds of memory: Implicit and Explicit You guys are familiar with these terms in the way we’ve described the higher and lower brain. The lower brain is implicit, meaning outside our awareness, and the higher brain is explicit, meaning inside our awareness.

We begin to encode and store memory even before we are born. This is called implicit memory. Implicit memory involves the parts of the brain that don’t require conscious processing to form mental models through experience.

These are all the pieces of the practice of pause, except the Narrative portion, including sensation, behavior and emotion.

Explicit memory is based in facts and specific episodes. Encoding and storing explicit memory helps me understand where I am, and where I’ve been, in time and space.

It’s how I create an autobiographical recollection of my lived experience. This is the Narrative piece of the practice of pause, the story we make up about our lives. The stories that we make up about events are based more in meanings the brain attributes to the event, than the event itself.

Memory storage and retrieval is very helpful in allowing us to anticipate the future and how to respond to it. This is essential while gathering information to support future decisions, like, don’t touch the stove while it’s hot.



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It's not as helpful when we transfer old mental models and states of mind to the present, along with the reactions and repetitive behaviors that accompany it.

Have you ever experienced someone reacting to what they were anticipating you were about to do or say? Have you ever done that to someone else?

What's happening in that moment may not warrant such a response, yet when we have an emotion, behavior, sensation or a confirmation of a limiting life narrative that reminds us of that time, it can cause the neural network around this pattern to fire leading to the reaction.

Our brains become anticipation machines and work really hard to remember the future.

When you experience something that recalls a stressor from the past, it brings with it all the information from that previous experience. This is because the brain has a negativity bias. It is hard-wired for your survival so in the hierarchy of stored and encoded information, how to stay away from the "bad stuff" is a much higher priority.

When the lower brain perceives a threat, the amygdala basically asks the memory network if this is familiar: "Have we experienced this before?" It runs through the catalogue of memory and answers, "We're OK" or "We're in danger".

What's fascinating is every time I recall an event, I change the memory of it. And, as we talked about at the very beginning of our course, experience shapes the structure of the brain. The brain's development is experience-dependent. Neurons that fire together, wire together, to quote Dr. Siegel again.

So, to break the pattern, it needs to experience something new and different. With new awareness, and an increased window of tolerance, you intentionally answer the amygdala's question. "Yes, something like this has happened before, but I am safe." OR "Yes, this feels familiar, but it's different this time because..."



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A couple of examples are thinking, “It’s uncomfortable to take risks, but it’s worth it to me” or “It’s scary to share my thoughts, but no one rejected me this time”.

This week, see if you can notice the events that feel similar, yet different. And, be sure to download the action guide to support your process. Let’s stay connected as we all put these new concepts into practice and share what you’re noticing on our group page.