



INTEGRATE TO LIVE

Restore Resilience. Cultivate Community. Impact your World

Week 9 Transcript: New Emotion

Today, we focus on the change in attitude or emotion segment of practicing the pivot in the Pause & Pivot method, and take a more expanded look at how to shift our emotions.

In high stakes poker, or even a friendly game around the card table at Thanksgiving, knowing the patterns of behavior and the physical responses of your opponent will give you valuable information about what's in their hand. These are their "tells".

The same is true in our process of change. By now, we've become much more aware of what our "tells" are and this awareness helps us slow down, create options and make a different choice.

New conditioning creates new neural pathways which lead to more resilient responses to stressors. These become automatic overtime as we develop new patterns alongside of, and in place of, the old patterns.

In the metaphor of the super highway of this pattern we've been cruising on for years, think of the pivot as the exit ramp onto a new and different pathway. As we create change, we will still experience the old response for a while. But, it becomes our cue, our "tell" if you will, that gives us valuable information to initiate the pivot.

In the Emotions video, we talked about how the word emotion is rooted in the concept of preparing for action: e-motion or energy in motion. Emotions are designed to move.

When we allow an emotion to move through us, it will last about 3 minutes (or less). If we brace against it and repress it, it could last a lifetime.

It's really fascinating when I begin to help a client allow an emotion that's surfacing to move all the way through. Often, I see them begin to brace, which is the braking mechanism of the parasympathetic nervous system.



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Oftentimes it's a sensation coming up from the gut and the chest tightens around it. Or it could be a feeling coming from the face, and there's a grimace that appears. Other times, it's like a fire that begins to ignite and then, poof, it's snuffed out and a blank heaviness takes its place.

I totally get it and it's often unconscious, but we repress the sensation of the emotion that's surfacing because it's uncomfortable. It could be painful or embarrassing or even fearful to experience what we're feeling.

If they don't begin to brace, the other most common response is flooding or overwhelm, which is the accelerator mechanism of the sympathetic nervous system.

The emotion begins to emerge and expands too quickly. Panic may ensue, racing thoughts, inability to catch their breath, a strong impulse to leave quickly or a floaty, lightheadedness, to name a few.

Most people experience a braking/accelerating combo. But, regardless of how your nervous system responds to the stressor of unwanted emotion, the process remains the same.

We can't change an attitude or emotion without first pausing to become aware of what we're feeling. I help clients become aware of what's happening and slow things down by finding their feet and noticing their breath.

Then, name it and track it. What I mean by that is to follow it like you would a wild animal, 'cause that's kind of how emotions are.

You don't know where it's going to go, what it's going to do, but you are curiously following it's trail. Over and over again, I see the feeling surface, move up and then move on. And, you guessed it, typically in less than 3 minutes.



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We often get stuck because we feel angry and we try to choose a different attitude by telling ourselves, “don’t feel angry, feel something else”. Or, we feel really disappointed and we tell ourselves, “there’s something wrong with me because I’m so disappointed”.

You feel how you feel. If you keep dismissing it, it likely won’t change. Notice, acknowledge, label (without judgment), and allow emotions to move through and become something different. This is where the choice point is.

After we acknowledge and label the emotion. This is the moment we pivot. Not before we pause, but after.

As I mentioned before, there is a surefire short cut. The quickest shift in emotion we can create is through expressing gratitude after acknowledging and labeling how we feel. Even the process of beginning to think about what I could possibly be grateful for initiates regulation of emotion in our brains.

Gratitude is the most powerful and effective practice to help create positive emotion. It also has many health benefits. Gratitude improves the immune system and lowers blood pressure and improves sleep.

It increases activity in the hypothalamus, which regulates stress and metabolism. And, it increases dopamine – the neurochemical that makes us feel good and encourages us to repeat the action of choosing gratitude.

Expressing gratitude increases compassion and kindness, in addition to paving the way to experience other positive emotions like joy, hope, love and awe. So, developing a gratitude practice is kind of a no-brainer in this process of restoring resilience.



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But, in the Integrate to Live process, we take it one step further. Not only will we practice gratitude by thinking about what we appreciate in our lives, but we will integrate it with our whole selves: our thoughts, as well as our emotions, sensations, behaviors, memory, and our life narrative.

Stay connected as we all put these new concepts into practice and download the action guide to support your process this week. And, share what you're noticing on our group page.