

Why You Sabotage

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January 12, 2020

When I consider how I recovered from trauma, I think of the kids' classic *Going on a Bear Hunt*. "Can't go over it, can't go under it, Gotta go through it!" If anything can get you to face your feelings, it is relationships with other human beings! Our primal tendency is to sabotage when we get hurt so that we don't have to be hurt again.



In conflict, at first, you might blame the other person. *If only they would do AB or C I wouldn't feel this way!* Eventually, you come to the understanding that based on your trauma history, you may not be seeing the situation clearly. Therefore, you may be responding at a level 10 in anger, when the situation only calls for a level 2. With education, therapy and a more balanced perspective, you learn to dance in the gray area. You will draw boundaries when necessary and open vulnerably to those who are capable of holding your beautiful heart safely.

It's complicated!

Most people would rather contend with physical maladies than brave the process of therapy that helps people to feel and live more vitally. Because they don't know there is a better way of relating, many choose to stay in the cycles of drama, detachment and pain that they know.

Ironically, it's not always the difficult people who threaten us, but the ones who love us most.

Mind vs. Body

We may *know* in our minds someone is safe, but our bodies don't always believe it. And, the body (deep brain) will win because it is programmed to help us to survive – sometimes at the expense of relationships. Understanding this subconscious tendency to sabotage is the first step to addressing it and receiving the healthy and nurturing love that you desire.



Can't Go Over It...

Another trait of a traumatized individual is that they tend to beat themselves up. They might wait too long to draw a boundary and, as a result, snap at someone. But, then they feel tremendous shame. Self-criticism perpetuates the childhood abuse from caregivers. And it's exhausting to have an inner nasty continually reminding you how short you fall. Feeling

shame prevents people from being vulnerable and communicating their feelings clearly. Shame feels like the lesser of perceived evils, when – actually – ***vulnerability (with safe individuals) is the way to connection and love.***

Gotta Go Through It!

As I said, shame is a great way to prevent going “through” vulnerable emotions. Addictions and distractions also prevent you from facing them. But, eventually the body breaks down and gets you to face difficult emotions that you’ve likely repressed since childhood. You might experience stomach and intestinal issues or back pain or a myriad of other “physical” issues that can have a psychological source. ***Or you may have totally isolated yourself. You feel forgotten and alone.***



But it doesn’t take forever to get to the source in counseling, and most people who experience the benefits of therapy are deeply grateful that they went *through* the process.

Why is the Body Resistant?

Initially, if you’ve shut down, learning to feel emotion can hurt and be terrifying. Body-centered therapy requires that an individual tune in to their painful emotions, which means tuning into bodily sensations. In the article, *Clinical Implications of Neuroscience Research in PTSD*, Dr. Bessel van der Kolk explains, “Trauma victims tend to have a negative body image – as far as they are concerned, the less attention they pay to their bodies, and thereby, their internal sensations, the better. Yet, one cannot learn to take care of oneself without being in touch with the demands and requirements of one’s physical self.”

Riding the Waves and Taking Action

Emotion is raw – it is different than feelings. Emotion lives in the deep brain and body. Feelings are the way the mind interprets emotion. Because the waves of emotions are fluid and many can coexist at once, the experience of tracking and processing them can overwhelm. But as you learn to track emotion early – before it becomes a problem – you can take action for yourself sooner. Taking action prevents a domino effect of anxiety in the body.



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Out of the Safe Zone

The known may be safe, but old survival program prevents you from living the life you hope to lead. Your mind may have positive intentions. But, if your body is busy protecting you, it may be running counter to the intentions you set for yourself. Body-centered therapy is a great way to access the subconscious, to release what is held there and to integrate a new way of being.

It goes without saying that physical and sexual abuse teach that your body is not a safe place to be. Even verbal criticism, rejection and cruelty cause a child to dissociate – to leave the body and day dream so that the experience feels less dangerous. It causes tremendous shut down that comes back later in life as depression, anxiety, physical maladies and compulsions.

From Sabotage to Vulnerability

The key to relief is healing trauma via body-centered therapy and meditation in order to see a situation clearly.

Meditation grows the parts of the brain that help us to get some distance and to observe. If we can get perspective sooner, we can take action to help our body.

In an fMRI imaging study at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Sarah Lazar and colleagues recently “found that brain regions associated with attention, interoception [or noticing internal workings of the body], and sensory processing were thicker in meditation participants than matched controls.”



Dr. Van der Kolk explains, “Attention to inner experience can help [individuals] to reorient themselves to the present.... This can open them up to attending to new, nontraumatic experiences and learning from them, rather than reliving the past over and over again.”

Via the process of Brainspotting, or focused mindfulness, you learn when you can be vulnerable and when you need to draw better boundaries. Rather than sabotaging, you can learn to dance in the gray area.