Emotional Patterns and How To Change Them

Nancy Gunzberg's Presentation
Sherman's Consciousness Class  2/20/15
Center For Lifelong Learning

“All Knowledge Is Experience”
Albert Einstein

Neuroscience is now telling us understanding, insight and compassion are not enough, that we need to experience our feelings to make the changes we are wanting.

Louis CK  hates cell phones Utube clip

Because people don’t experience their feelings, they repeat old emotional patterns. They aren’t able to use the wisdom of their bodies and the wealth of information they provide.

The inability to experience feelings creates a separation from the body. The mind attacks itself with self destructive thoughts that aren’t true.

How the Disconnection Happens–Ed Tronick Utube clip

This separation or disconnection creates loneliness and painful distance between people, causing anxiety, depression, addictions and all kinds of other problems.

Children experience feelings before they know how to think. This causes them to develop unconscious emotional patterns. Children do not choose these patterns.

The patterns are implicitly installed as the brain and nervous system develop.

The unconscious emotional patterns make the child’s feelings invisible, especially if he has not had someone mirroring him, being responsive and tuned into him, labeling his feelings and helping him make sense of what’s going on.

“A genetic trait will be expressed or not, depending on the environment in which the child grows up, and that the actual gene can be turned on or off depending on the experiences we have.”
Richard J. Davidson, Phd

If the child has unavailable caretakers, she comes to believe she is not worthy and lovable; she doesn’t have value.

The child perceives her caretakers preoccupation, unavailability and critical treatment as her fault; shame becomes internalized. Children learn they are bad.

UTube Single Lady Shame

The child learns to cut off or split from his deepest, truest feeling self in order to survive the pain and feelings of rejection.
This split is an instinctive, protective strategy that allows the child to survive the early environment.

The child is not responsible for acquiring the emotional template and the defenses he needs to adapt to the painful, nonresponsive surroundings.

The child learns unconsciously to be afraid of feelings. He learns feelings are threatening because of the unwelcome environment. He unintentionally carries this fear of feelings into adulthood.

The child learns how to dismiss, ignore, deny, avoid and shut down their internal experience by seeing these defenses modeled at home. This keeps the disconnection going and creates distance in relationships.

Children grow up, leave home and take their patterns with them. The old template becomes part of their current lives.

Adults now become responsible for maintaining the template. They continue to practice the defenses, keeping the negative self-talk and unwanted behavior going.

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The person grows older and has a hard time feeling. The feelings may make him anxious and/or depressed or turn into addictions, eating problems, relational problems, somatic, etc.

The adult get anxious when uncomfortable feelings start to arise. This anxiety is in response to the unconsciously feared feelings.

We need to learn to manage our anxiety and take the time to experience our internal world.

Once people see the high cost of the template, the shame that has crippled their sense of themselves, compassion and mourning for the self can begin.

Now people can see they weren't bad or at fault and develop an empathy for the rage, pain and longing they feel.

Self-compassion helps people re-connect to themselves and better understand their needs and wants.

Compassion for the self helps people choose constructive action, providing them with a feeling of freedom, joy and new possibilities.
Only we can change our patterns. Only we can change our template of thoughts and behaviors. Only we can disregard the critical self talk, the blame and shame.

Although we cannot choose our feelings, we can choose how we respond to them. We can learn to attend to and digest them.

10 month old showing emotions Utube

Learning to treat ourselves kindly will translate to treating others in the same way.

Being mindful, moment to moment, of what you are thinking, feeling and doing.

The very qualities people want from others; responsiveness, being seen and heard, appreciation and support are things people can learn to give themselves.

Mostly we fly by moments and they don't get noticed, therefore not registering in our brains.

The missed moments cause us not be in the present, the only place our lives can be lived. The only place we can experience, learn, love and grow.

How quickly people pass by pleasurable moments and do not harness them for change. These moments cannot imprint the brain if they are not digested. Transformation cannot occur.

It's important to find the glimpses of the positive and amplify them. These moments are invisibly embedded in the person from the very first session.

"Scientific evidence suggest that we can change our brains by cultivating habits of mind that will improve well-being, including happiness, resilience, compassion and emotional balance."

Well–Being is a skill that takes practice.