

To Share with your Clients

“Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are.” -- Brene Brown

When you encourage your brain to shift perspectives, you encourage it to rewire, which is critical in healing. For example, when you notice joy in tiny moments (i.e. the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, or a path of sunlight on the wall), you allow your brain to engage in shifting away from the trauma story of the past to focus on something pleasant in the present moment. This enlivens motivation because it interrupts habitual firing of old trauma neural pathways and initiates new wiring of joyful experiences that build in greater flexibility for your brain’s functioning.

When your brain experiences something pleasurable, naturally it will be compelled to feel good again; neurological motivation becomes activated. When this happens, you can sit back and relax (relatively speaking!) while your brain seeks to recreate that pleasant feeling in other moments. The repetitive (what scientists call “massed”) practice of this kind of motivated action strengthens new neural pathways around joy, feeling good, mindfulness and being in the present moment—all things that enhance trauma and PTSD recovery and can reduce symptoms. The outcome of these changes can lead to increased strength to face fear and commit to the process of healing.

Experience – feeling good for even just 10-20 seconds has been scientifically proven to create new neural pathways. When you allow yourself to be open to experiences that feel good you give yourself permission to engage in your brain’s powerful neuronal connection processes while at the same time forming new memories that offer you insight into what’s truly possible for you to feel. Often, trauma trains you to think your emotional capability has been deadened. Truthfully, it’s waiting for a reason to re-engage.

Connection – in group therapy or conversation with a close and trusted friend you can observe, be with and share your experience of a motivating moment. Doing this extends the feeling, reduces isolation, expands your experience, deepens the neural pathways it creates and connects you to a secure sense of your own humanness, which can profoundly activate courage, compassion and kindness.

Desire – a key motivator for any action you take is your desire for the outcome. The more you feel good the more you will want to feel good, the more you will naturally feel compelled to take even the tiniest action that will help you achieve that feeling again and again and again. The cycle takes on a life of its own, driven by what is most important to you.

When you become aware that your Motivation Factor could use a boost, start asking yourself how you can more often orient yourself to the present instead of the past. Naturally, your trauma brain will tend to look back. However, you can balance it out by tuning into the present moment, allowing yourself to notice the tiniest sliver of what feels good, and then giving your brain repeated similar experiences as a way to activate motivation. Then, hold on for the ride. Once your brain’s motivating pathways engage you’ll find yourself more and more capable of doing what you need to do in order to be free.

The above excerpt is from an article by Michele Rosenthal on Healthy Place website.