



Transcript: EM 0501 Repeating Patterns

Repeating patterns, otherwise known as ‘why does this keep happening to me?’. We all have patterns that repeat in our lives and we know we have them, but the question is ‘where they come from?’ and ‘how do we change them?’ Some of them seem to be really stubborn, so before we get into the detail of all of this I'd like to give you a moment to just reflect for yourself on the repeating patterns that you know you have. You might want to pause this video for a few minutes and just take some notes with pen and paper on the kinds of patterns that you know repeat in your life. Whether those are patterns in types of relationships, whether they're patterns in your daily activities, habits you'd like to break, or whether they're long-term patterns like not knowing what you want to do with your career or things like that. So pause if you'd like to, make some notes if you'd like to, and then we'll carry on looking at what happens with these patterns: what are they and where do they come from.

We'll now get into some examples of repeating patterns so that you can get a sense of the scope of how much this affects us. So let's have a look at some of our self-inflicted patterns. There are a lot of self-help books around that are helping us to deal with the things we do to ourselves, clearly recognizing that if you're always and forever busy and overworked, there's something you're doing to keep yourself in that state. It's a pattern of yours and in fact I have seen this with people who retire from work and fill their days with so many other activities that you can't imagine how they ever had time to have a job. You might read a book like this, in fact you might have a habit of reading books like this, and after you've read a book like this finding yourself back in the situation that the book was supposed to teach you how to avoid. These are repeating patterns at a subconscious level and when we make conscious attempts to change the pattern, we still find somehow that the pattern sneaks up, manifests itself again.

We also have repeating patterns in relationships. I had a client who said to me ‘you know, I could walk into a football stadium full of thousands of men and I would be magnetically attracted to the one that's going to cheat on me’. Somehow some people just have this amazing ability to pick exactly the wrong person not just once but several relationships in a row.

I have a repeating pattern that happens on a daily basis. In the morning I wake up and I think ‘I'm tired, we didn't have enough hours of sleep last night, tonight I'm going to go to bed earlier’, but when evening rolls around there's no sign of morning me who had this rational thought. Instead I'm dealing with evening me. Evening me is a completely different character and so comes ten, eleven, twelve o'clock at night and there I am... NOT asleep.

We also have patterns in our responses to things that happen around us. For example some people find that any kind of conflict or argument between other people produces a very intense reaction in them, even if the argument is not about them or affecting their life in any way. Simply observing conflict puts them into a very difficult state. So you can also have patterns of reaction to things and you may not understand why you react like that, or why their reaction is so strong.

Now that we've looked at a few examples I'm going to give you another chance to pause the video and just make notes on the types of repeating patterns that you see in your life now that we've covered some of these examples.

Summing up repeating patterns come in many different kinds. We've got the patterns that last for years, patterns involving jobs, and relationships. We've got daily patterns, where our willpower is different at different times of the day, so our willpower wins sometimes and our emotional

subconscious processes win at other times. And we also have addictive patterns where something we know is bad for us, but we do it anyway: we can't seem to stop ourselves. All of these types of patterns are different branches from the same tree and they come from the same root.

Why do we have these patterns that repeat?

Fundamentally this comes down to what is at its base a healthy impulse. Our subconscious wants to be at the most relaxed and the least disturbed level that it can balance itself at. If all goes well in our childhood, we don't have any traumatic experiences, we get all the support that we need from the people around us, and our day to day life is relatively simple and calm: then our subconscious will settle us into a comfortable calm smooth state where we don't have any specific big reactions. But that's quite rare. In this world we usually have difficulties in our childhood because of the culture we grow up in. We often have traumatic events, because life is unpredictable, and we lose people, or we are exposed to violence (at least in the media if not in person). So there's many reasons why what our subconscious might not be able to get itself to the ultimate state of balance and deep relaxation.

That means it looks for a state of balance at a higher level of agitation. It's trying its best it can to get to a state of balance and the circumstances around us and our internal states are pushing us out of balance. In some cases we've got our willpower actively working in opposition to our emotional self which produces a lot of tension and the subconscious is always trying to reduce that tension.

If your analytical mind comes up with a brilliant genius idea that it's going to do some particular thing you've never done before, and your subconscious is quite convinced that doing anything new could kill you and you shouldn't, then you're going to set up a tension between these two impulses. The conscious desire to do something new and the subconscious desire to avoid death. Ultimately the two have a tug-of-war. When your willpower is strong, when you're well resourced, you can usually use your willpower to overcome the subconscious resistance, but if you start to get tired or stressed or in any way not at the top of your game, you'll reach a point where the subconscious is able to take over and you start procrastinating or you get distracted. Other things seem more important, suddenly there's a crisis in your relationship, and you put off doing this new and dangerous thing, because there's something else going on in your life. This can become a repeating pattern. If you really do want the thing that your analytical mind has settled on, and you keep recreating that affirmation, that desire, that plan to do the new thing, but without dealing with the subconscious resistance, then again and again the subconscious will undermine that noble desire that the analytical mind has to do: something better, different, or healthier with your life. This is why it's really important that we get these two different independent intelligences working in coordination. If we can do that then we can begin to break these repeating patterns.

Stages of Resistance

One of the places where we find the emotional resistances is in the deeper layers of the psyche that form earlier in our life. So just as a quick reminder of those stages and the kinds of resistances that can arise.

0-9 months: Trust (Feeling Safe)

If you fundamentally don't feel safe at the base level of your psyche then your resistance to doing things new and different will be much stronger than somebody who has a nice firm foundation of safety at their base.

9-18 months: Separation/Merging

If you have not had a good experience of learning how to separate from your main caregiver and feel safe and supported, then whenever something is happening in the present moment that involves any kind of separation or merging with another person... so for example somebody that you have been dating, and enjoy being with suddenly pops out and says 'so where is

this relationship going anyway' and suddenly you're confronted with all of the emotional backlog that you have around merging and losing yourself and losing your independence and losing your freedom. There'll be a big emotional reaction if this wasn't managed well for you at this early stage of life, but if it was managed well for you then you might have a little twinge of fear or concern because this is something different, but it won't be such a big emotional resistance that it tries to undermine your desire to spend the rest of your life with this person.

18 months – 3 years: Autonomy (Self)

If you have been supported in knowing who you are and knowing what you want and negotiating fairly with other people in the early years of your life, then you won't have so many repeating patterns that revolve around either not having your needs met or having other people take advantage of you or struggling to get other people to do what you want them to do. All of those kinds of patterns driven by some problem that you might have had in these early years of life when you were trying to find yourself, find your boundaries, figure out how to cooperate effectively with other people.

3-5 years Co-Operation

One of the biggest challenges that we have psychologically as we're growing up, happens in the three to five years age range. So at that point you become capable of recognizing that other people are the same as you. They have the same inner world, they have thoughts and feelings. Everybody's equally important and not everything revolves around you and there's a objective reality that exists outside of you and it's completely resistant to your desires. It has its own rhythm and its own routine and if you want to get along in the world, you have to learn how to adapt to the routines of day and night and all of the things that happen in the material world that you hope don't have the power to change. We can find repeating patterns that are grounded in this area. Those are things like you want something to happen in your life and you spend large amounts of time imagining the thing happening but you don't actually go out and do the material steps that are necessary to make the thing happen. That can indicate that on an emotional level you haven't integrated fully the idea of the being an independent reality that you need to come to terms with and you need to learn to influence in order to make things happen. You may have learned as a child that the best thing to do was just to retreat to your imagination and enjoy imagining things rather than trying to make them happen in the outside world. There are many different versions of issues that can happen in this particular stage of life and they're often quite subtle. We may not pinpoint them, but if you've got somebody who is continuously frustrated because the people around them don't seem to be playing along then that can actually come back to something that's happened in this 3 to 5 years age range. Or if you've got somebody who is basically a martyr and a doormat and doing everything for everybody else and never being able to make progress on the things that are really important to them, or maybe not even knowing what's really important to them, that can also come back to this age range here.

5-12 years: Results (Conditional Approval)

If we don't get the right kind of experiences and emotional support in our school years from five to twelve years of age, then we're going to have trouble with dealing with failure, with being persistent and trying until we actually get something, with having approval from other people... we might give up on the idea of being able to get approval from other people altogether, and that will then expel out into various areas of life. Or we might turn ourselves inside out, really trying to get the approval of the people around us all the time, with the things that we do, with the results that we produce and that may have a cost in other areas of our life.

Puberty

Finally of course once we reach puberty all of these patterns become sexualized. So you can see people who have repeating patterns in their romantic and sexual relationships that may be linked to one of these earlier stages. Or they may actually be the result of having a bad experience when trying to begin having an adult sexual life. Know that the teenage years and early twenties are very difficult times for people and most people have their first sexual experience with somebody else

who's not very experienced. So they can be all kinds of trauma that happened in those early years of sexual experience and they can produce repeating patterns. For example men can have erectile problems and not even realize that it's because they had an emotionally distressing sexual experience during their teenage years. At the time they may not have registered how emotionally distressing it was, because being teenagers full of hormones and often also full of alcohol and other substances when they're having their sexual experiences, may not have been consciously aware that something had happened, but it shows up years later in their sexual relationships as an adult.

So there are many places where a repeating pattern can come from an emotional driver that's causing a repeating pattern.

How do we break these patterns?

Don't Do The Thing

Number one is don't do them and I mean I know this sounds ridiculous, but in order to break the patterns at some point you're going to have to want to do the thing and then not do it. Now maybe you can't do that as a first step, maybe there's a bit of research and discovery and emotional work that you need to do beforehand. Ultimately it comes down to whatever the thing is, like pursuing that incredibly exciting sexy person at the bar who's probably really bad for you or eating that block of chocolate at nine o'clock at night, whatever it is, basically the answer is: don't do the thing.

Explore the Emotions Beneath

Instead of doing whatever it is that you're feeling the impulse to do, explore the emotions underneath. What emotion will you feel if you don't do the thing? What emotion is driving you to do the thing? What emotion are you basically treating with the band-aid of doing the thing?

Long Term – heal trauma, rebuild the foundations of the psyche

In the long term of course if you have traumas at the deeper levels of your psyche, if there are parts of your childhood that didn't go well, you're going to want to heal that you're going to want to rebuild those underneath layers of your psyche, so that they're all strong. That's going to reduce the amount of emotional energy that's driving all of your repeating patterns. A lot of your repeating patterns will simply fall away when you do that healing, but that's a long-term project. So in the short term when you have a specific pattern that you want to break, it comes down to when you want to do the thing, you pause. You check in with what emotions are happening, and you stay with those emotions and you process them in a different way.

In summary repeating patterns are basically driven by the subconscious. They're fundamentally an emotional process. They are way the subconscious is trying to manage the competing pressures and tensions at an emotional level. They are coping strategies, so if there are very intense emotions that are going right back to childhood, going right back to a trauma, then the pattern is a way of coping with that very strong emotion. The patterns will shift naturally when the underlying need is met. When we feel safe. When we understand how to cooperate with other people. Whatever it is that's driving the pattern: when we sort that out, the pattern will shift naturally.

