



Transcript: EM 0503 Breaking Patterns

In this video we're going to look at what it takes to break these patterns that repeat throughout our life. We repeat patterns for a number of reasons and it comes down to at some point a conflict between what we're consciously wanting and what our subconscious is trying to accomplish. Let's have a look in a little bit more detail about how this plays out.

The subconscious wants to heal and grow. By that I mean that we are as an organism, as a system, looking for the lowest energy state that we can be in balance. Because we're warm-blooded, because we're mammals, we need a certain amount of energy to maintain our system on a daily basis. The more that our system is in a state of agitation, tension, or stress, the more we need to get from the environment around us. Because sometimes food has been in short supply in our evolutionary history, our system is wired to try to be in the most relaxed state possible. However if we can't retain our balance in a state of relaxation, your subconscious will just pick the lowest energy state that's accessible to it, while remaining in balance.

Let's have a look at how that plays out.

Any emotion that we haven't been able to process in the moment that it occurs will be stored in our system in some way, until the time comes when there is the space and the resources to process it. So these suppressed emotions have a constant pressure, they want to release because to store an emotion takes tension and resources so that's a higher energy state.

Releasing the emotion will allow us to relax and be in a lower energy state. Any stored emotion is putting pressure on the system until we allow it to release. However, if we're in an environment that's stressful, i.e. we're running from a tiger, we don't have the space to release an unpleasant emotion from a couple of years ago. So adrenaline and stress will keep those emotions suppressed, but they're constantly looking for an opportunity, they're looking for a moment when they can actually, be processed and released.

So what they're looking for... they're looking for some kind of reminder, something similar happening in the environment that they can attach to... so if you have a current situation that causes you a particular emotion, then the past versions of that emotion will try to come out at the same time as you're processing the current emotion. However, you might not really be in a position right now to process that much past emotion. It might be too much for you, you might still be in a situation of stress. So your system will go from the release opportunity towards something that will enable you to retain your balance. Some kind of response that will keep the emotion suppressed.

We refer to this as an unsupportive response, because it's not supportive to release, healing, and growth, but it is supportive to survival. When we say unsupportive response, we mean in the bigger picture, in the longer term when it comes to healing, for this it's an unsupportive response. If the environment is not a supportive environment, to allow that emotion to release, then you will do some kind of strategy, some kind of way of keeping the emotions suppressed. In fact the situation, the current situation that produced this emotion that was reminding you of all these past emotions, actually adds its own bit of emotion to the emotional pressure. You end up with the emotions suppressed with that little bit of today's extra emotion added in, so the emotional pressure is actually higher.

At this point, you can see how this becomes a repeating pattern. You have the underlying emotional pressure of emotions that want to be released. And then you have the moments when you're feeling an emotion in response to a current event and all this past emotion wants to rush out and be

processed at the same time, but that means there's too much emotion for you to be able to process in the present moment and the environment is not supportive... so you end up going back and suppressing all of the past emotion plus the new bit of emotion and that increases the emotional pressure and makes it more likely that the next time you're reminded of that emotion that all this past emotion will surge up again and try to be processed.

You can see that you could go around this loop forever unless you get yourself into a position where you can actually have a supportive response, a response that allows for the release, the healing, and growth.

How does that come about?

When we have an opportunity for release, that's the moment when we have the option to take another path. If we're mindful and we can create a supportive environment for that emotional pressure to release, then we can have a supportive response. A response that allows for that release and that healing and that growth. If we don't take the opportunity when a moment of release comes, then we will keep going around our repeating pattern indefinitely.

If we make the supportive response, then we get healing. Then our system can access a more relaxed level of balance and we can overall be less tense, less stressed, have less agitation in our system, and have more opportunities to have a more fulfilling life and responding in more constructive ways to what's happening in the present moment.

Again just a quick overview of the places where we might have emotional pressure.

The way to think through this, as we go through it this time, is when you have triggers in your current situation that produce a twinge of one of these emotions... Which one's for you seem to be excessive? Because if you're having an excessive emotional response to a current situation, that indicates that you've got a backlog of unprocessed emotions from the past in that emotional arena.

0-9 months: Trust (Feeling Safe)

In the zero to nine months range... the emotions that might be stuck here are fear, the feeling of safety, and also shame. If you're not taking care of properly in the first nine months you can actually develop a feeling of unworthiness or shame like if you're constantly doing something wrong or you're never good enough.

9-18 months: Separation/Merging

This is where you get the anxiety and fear about being alone, but also the anxiety and fear about losing your freedom, about being controlled by other people.

18 months – 3 years: Autonomy (Self)

This is where we're learning about boundaries. Where are my boundaries? Where are other people's boundaries? What can I say no to? What can I control? What can I not control? What's me, what's not me? Any kind of emotions that have to do with asserting yourself, standing up for yourself, having boundaries, people invading your boundaries... all of those areas. If you have very strong emotional reactions there, then that's an indication that you have some suppressed emotion in this area from your past.

3-5 years: Co-Operation

Three to five years of age is about cooperation with others. It's about sharing, it's about win-win arrangements, and also it's about coming to terms with the lack of flexibility of objective reality. The fact that it does its own thing regardless of what you want. If you find yourself having a very strong reaction if someone for example takes one of your French fries without asking, you may have some suppressed emotions from this stage of your development. Or if you find yourself getting incredibly angry and frustrated if the world isn't going the way you want it to, that can also be an indication that you have some suppressed emotion from this stage of your development.

5-12 years: Results (Conditional Approval)

The five to twelve year age range is about actually producing results in the world. If you have perfectionism, if you have fear of failure, if you procrastinate and you don't start because you might make a mistake or you might not get it right... all of those emotions, all of those situations... if you have a strong emotional reaction to any of those situations, then there may be something that happened in your five to twelve years age range.

Puberty

Then you've got puberty and becoming an independent adult. Any kind of emotional reactions that you have around your sexuality, around intimate relationships, around being an independent adult and having your own life and making your own decisions... Those may come from things that happened around puberty and in your teens, but of course, they may also be these deeper earlier things that just get reframed at puberty and thus reframed in the area of adult sexuality. So it's always worth taking a deeper look when you have some kind of emotional reaction in the area of sexuality or adult independence to see whether it really is something from that stage of your development. Whether it is actually an adult issue or whether you're looking at one of these younger issues just being reframed into intimate relationships or adult independence.

The Addictive Cycle

The other way that we can get a repeating pattern, which is slightly different, is the addictive cycle. This is where we have something that we do which we know is bad for us, but we keep doing it anyway. It's a similar process, but not exactly the same process as with the suppressed emotions.

So let's have a look at how this one works.

Addictions always revolve around bad emotions. When I say a bad emotion, it's an emotion that at some stage in your life you've decided is too much for you to handle, or you shouldn't feel or you shouldn't express. For some people, those are things like anger, shame, and fear, but for some people, they've actually learned through their childhood experiences that if they're too happy bad things happen. So even happiness and relaxation can be bad emotions in an addictive cycle if you had bad experiences with those emotions as a child.

So you have a bad emotion happening and the whole of your system is focused on the fact that somehow you need to do something about this bad emotion because you should not be having it. You're looking for an out and what we turn to is a coping strategy. So as a child if you have the right support around you, you learn to process your emotions (good and bad) in a healthy way, but if you don't get the right support and you don't learn how to process your emotions in a healthy way, then you do have to develop coping strategies because the emotions still come and you can't process them in a healthy way, but you also can't live with them. You can't live with being consciously aware of them, so you develop some kind of strategy, a way of coping in some way of suppressing the emotion, distracting yourself from the emotion, overlaying it with something else... whether that's something else is adrenaline or dopamine or something like that... so some kind of strategy, but the problem with the strategy is that it has consequences.

If your strategy for bad emotions is for example to drink alcohol so that you are numbed and you don't feel them anymore, then you may have dealt with a bad emotion, but if you're drinking a lot of alcohol, there's a whole lot of unwanted consequences to that. You might be uninhibited and doing and saying things that cause problems in your relationships. You might have health issues, you might have poor judgment, you might spend too much money... there are all kinds of unwanted consequences of using alcohol as a coping strategy.

Maybe you use sex as a coping strategy or falling in love as a coping strategy, and of course, there's a whole bunch of unwanted consequences to those too, even if your coping strategy is a relatively benign addiction like scrolling through your phone for hours... there are still consequences to that like not getting enough sleep, which still produce more bad emotions.

So when there's a something that you've decided that you shouldn't do, but it's a coping strategy for bad emotions, then you go around and around this cycle... if you have a bad emotion you use the

coping strategy even though it's something you'd rather not be doing, then it has its unwanted consequences. And those unwanted consequences produce more bad emotions: fear, shame, anger, whatever. And so you can see how this just goes around and around in a self-reinforcing cycle. Now the difference here between the addictive cycle and the regular healing process is the exit point. In the regular healing process you had an opportunity to release the emotion which presented itself to you and you had a moment of choice as to whether you created a supportive environment for that release or not. Now in the case of an addictive cycle you often don't see an opportunity to release the emotion, because you are so automatically going directly from the emotion to the coping strategy. So what you need to do to get out of an addictive cycle, is actually to go directly to the emotion itself and from the bad emotion take a different path. Instead of doing the coping strategy, whatever it is, then go find that bad emotion and while you're feeling that bad emotion, you go in a different direction and you process and release that emotion in a healthy way. Once you can do that, then you can have a recovery. You have freedom of choice. You're not compelled to use the coping strategy and you can do something else instead.

But it all comes down to being able to pinpoint the bad emotion which is underlying the addiction, the coping strategy, the thing that you are compulsively doing. So the mindfulness that needs to come in is a slightly different mindfulness. In the healing cycle you need to be mindful when something in your current environment is triggering an emotion and you're having an unusually strong or disproportionate emotional reaction to it. In the case of a cycle where you have an addiction, you're not necessarily going to be consciously aware that something has triggered the emotion. What you're usually consciously aware of, is the urge to do the thing, the coping strategy, the thing you've decided is not good for you. You may not be consciously aware directly of the bad emotion that is pushing you to do the thing, you may only consciously be aware of the impulse to do the thing. So there's a little bit of detective work to be done when you feel the impulse to do this whatever it is that you've decided is bad for you. To go deeper to go underneath that impulse and to locate the bad emotion so that you can process and release it. Then you have freedom of choice.

People will find that once they get in the habit of locating their unpleasant emotions and processing and releasing them, that a lot of their compulsive behaviors and addictions simply fall away. It was the pressure of the suppressed emotions that was driving those coping strategies. When the emotions are processed directly, suddenly those coping strategies no longer seem attractive or interesting.

So in breaking patterns, number one is: don't do the thing.

When you have the impulse to do something that you've decided it's not good for you, that you don't want to do... don't do it, dive deep and go underneath and find the underlying emotion. Or likewise if you have a current situation that triggers an emotion and you notice that you're having a very strong reaction to that, don't automatically do the characteristic unsupportive thing that you've always done in the past. Take a moment, exercise your freedom of choice and create a supportive environment for that emotion to process in the present moment.

Explore the emotions that are occurring. Whether you're consciously aware of them in the beginning, in the case of a healthy healing process, or maybe you're not conscious of them if it's a more addictive cycle that you're in, then you do an exploration so that you can become more consciously aware of what emotion is driving that particular behavior and explore the emotion directly.

In the long-term you want to heal the traumas and rebuild the foundations of your psyche so that you don't have constant retrigger of these childhood emotions, because they've all been moved through and processed and your psyche is strong in its foundation. That's a long-term process. In the short term you will have some things which do cause you to have a strong emotional reaction. It's in

those moments that you most need to be mindful to pause, to take a breath, to not react, to not do your standard impulsive coping strategy for that emotion, but to actually process that emotion directly.

Repeating patterns are driven by the subconscious mind. It's looking for balance and it's looking for balance at the lowest energy level it can reach. All we're looking to do in this whole process of undoing our repeating patterns is: we're looking to give our subconscious access to a balanced state at a lower level of tension. Repeating patterns can be coping strategies for emotions that we've decided that we can't consciously feel. When we actually meet the underlying emotional need when we process the suppressed emotions, the repeating pattern is simply shift naturally of their own accord. So the focus throughout the whole process of shifting repeating patterns is on finding that underlying emotion that's driving a pattern and directly allowing that emotion to process and release and when the emotion releases the pattern will release as well.

