**Reacting and calming down.**

Sometimes when we are coming up against a new learning experience it can actually trigger us and by that I mean, not that there is anything necessarily wrong about the actual situation, but rather there is something in our brains that is letting us to know that this could be a threat.

Now our brain is basically looking back on everything that has happened in our past, or things that we have learned about from others, and it is comparing this current situation with that past interpretation. It is trying to say “is this going to be something good or is going to be something bad for us?”

Our brain tends to be hardwired for a negative response, because that’s how we survived through having sabre-toothed tigers and everything else throughout history. It doesn't necessarily help us right now in how our current culture and civilization support us. What we need to be aware is it (our brain) could be reacting negatively when it actually isn't a negative situation.

And what can happen in that type of environment, particularly a learning setting is that we just switch off, we just go “oh, this is going to be bad. I’m just going to sit back, I’m not going to engage with it.” And that is my way of protecting myself.

And do you know, you can’t see me because I haven’t got my camera on, but as I am saying that I am leaning back and physically pulling myself out of the situation even when I am saying that!

If instead we were leaning into the situation and we were interested and curious and we wanted to learn more before we made a judgement about it, then we would actually find that we are much more engaged with the learning process and the learning itself becomes easier, because we're not fighting ourselves to stay in the space. By that I mean we are not trying to keep saying to ourselves “we have to learn this regardless, we just need to memorise it, we just have to get through this” – this is not a positive learning state. Whereas if we genuinely curious then we go “I wonder how this fits in with…” “ I wonder where they are going next with this…” “ This is kind of interesting and it reminds me of….” As all those things start creating a positive mind and a positive learning environment.

It can start to take away from that negative response. Now keep in mind that as you will see in the following video, our (amygdala) response is extremely fast at 1/32 of a second to make that initial decision. Which we can train ourselves to change over time, but what we can do to help us with that is to notice when we are going into that triggered state. So that if we know that a new learning environment can trigger us, then we are set up to notice things better. We can ask ourselves:

* What am I noticing about myself?
* How am I sitting, how am I standing?
* What are the words coming into my head, what is that narrative?
* What am I telling myself about this?
* How am I feeling in my body as well as my mind?

Once we notice that we are in this state we can remind ourselves to calm down, and bring ourselves back if I am going to manage this well.

One of the good ways of doing this, and we’ll cover some others in the video as well, is simply to take long deep breaths through our nose. Breathing slow and deep through our nose activates what is known as our Para Sympathetic state. And that is when we are calm and relaxed. As opposed to our Sympathetic state which is when we are stressed and on edge. And each of those two different states have different chemical reactions that happen for us.

To come into this calmer, Para Sympathetic state, taking a deep breath in through our nose *<sound of slow deep breath in>* and then releasing it *<sound of big relaxed breath out>* is a really good way of doing that. And again a slow full deep breath taking in as much air as you can *<sound of slow deep breath in>* and then just releasing it at its own pace, not forcing it, just letting it go *<sound of breath out>*.

And sometimes if we are in a real heightened, on edge state and really holding in tightly, letting that air go audibly can help *<sound of big deep breath in and loud “haaaaaa” breath out>*. Now obviously this may not be something you want to do in a really public space with everyone staring at you… although you can, there is no reason why you can’t… but depending on where you and what you feel comfortable with, that can really help to quickly let go of a lot of tension.

So have a go, see what you feel comfortable with, and I’d love to hear how you go in the comments.