



Module 2: Why do I weigh (insert current weight)?

What reaction does your BODY have as you read or hear that question? I'll admit that even after all the work I've done personally, I still feel judgment and a desperate need to hide. HOW did I get to this body? WHY do I weigh (insert current weight)?

This is an excellent opportunity to observe your inner mean girl. What advice does she offer you? She is a master at measuring your level of safety and her highest calling is to protect you from pain. Is she encouraging you to RUN? Is she offering you shame and begging you to hide from this work? Do you feel backed into a corner? Is defensiveness building in your body? Do you feel like you need to come out punching?

Get still for a minute and feel all of that energy in your body generated by reading a FIVE word sentence? Look how powerful your thoughts are. You didn't move from your seat. You did not take any action. You just read that sentence and your mind went wild.

Let's look a minute at those emotions. The ones my body generates are

1. Judgment
2. Shame
3. Guilt
4. Hiding.

Before we dissect them, what if the question is neutral instead of negative? Why do I weigh (insert current weight)? Because of the automatic thoughts your mind chooses, you assume there must be something WRONG with your current weight. The negative connotation comes from the emotions connected to all the stories you have about previous weight loss attempts.

How would your answer be different IF you assumed the question were neutral? Well, it might look like:

I weigh (insert current weight) today because I never learned how to feel my emotions or make myself a priority. I assumed my body was broken and it was a terminal condition I needed to learn to accept. I saw my body as a container for my smart brain and as long as I was intelligent, who cared what the packaging looked like. I gave this body up as a lost cause and saw it as the albatross I was doomed to drag behind me and apologize for when I couldn't manage to make it invisible.

No emotion, just facts of how I got here. We will practice this skill more in next week's Module. On some level, it provides clarity. Consider any other machine from your car to your refrigerator. Neglect it for 20 years. What happens? It breaks down over time. It loses functionality. It rusts. It needs parts replaced. It requires a lot of focused attention.

So you start with a mechanical problem. A machine that has been neglected. Not an easy problem to fix but doable. Then you pour all those emotions over the top and your inner mean girl chants to you how hard (and painful) this is going to be.



She offers you judgment!

Judgment implies you had motive. As if you sat down with yourself and said, “Life not complicated enough, how about you gain 100 lbs?” That’s not how weight happens. Someone asked me once how I gained so much weight. My answer was ONE pound at a time.

Judgment implies you somehow failed or are character deficient. It sounds like “You didn’t try hard enough.” “You’re just weak and can’t stay focused.” But you know, deep in your body, how much sincere effort you’ve exerted. You know that losing weight occupies your every waking moment.

She offers you shame!

Shame says “I am bad.” “I am broken.” “I am deficient.” Shame encourages you to hide and deflect attention. Shame loves isolation and makes it difficult to build relationships. Shame partners with judgment to convince you that you are not worthy of being loved **BECAUSE** of all the extra flesh on your body.

Shame is the equivalent of cancer in your body. It metastasizes and spreads to every part of your life. It steals your voice and makes you believe that over giving is the only real path to being of any value.

She offers you guilt!

Guilt says “I did something bad.” It is less hazardous than shame but it still leaves you looking over your shoulder measuring your self-worth by standards set by the outside world. Like judgment, guilt implies motive. Your mind believes you when your mean girl says “You know how to lose weight. Why can’t you just do it?” As if intellectual knowledge is the only tool you need to release the pounds.

Guilt is contagious. If your mean girl is not generating enough, you can get it from others. Like when your mother or your sister ask if you’ve gained weight. Or when the lady in the checkout line at the grocery store gives you that look for what’s in your basket. You can even catch guilt from your clothes when something that used to fit is not too tight. You believe it’s true and you carry it around day after day reminding yourself that you are somehow inadequate, not up to the challenge, just not good enough

She offers to help you hide!

Hiding a body with all those extra pounds is not an easy task. But your inner mean girl is skilled at helping you stay invisible. She discourages you from standing out or drawing attention to yourself. She believes it is valuable to blend in and go along. When she feels emotion in your body, she panics and offers you a bag of chips (or a donut if sweet is your thing) to keep you safe.



Hiding comes in two main flavors. One is your wardrobe. No bright colors. No flair. No style. Three colors are allowed. Black, blue and gray. Makes you look thinner! And absolutely no patterns, flowers, stripes or any of that nonsense. Ask yourself: How much of your closet is black? Mine too. The other flavor is engaging your MUTE button. The reason you feeling emotion is so dangerous is that you might say what you think. And then people are going to look at you and they are going to see that you have all those extra pounds. Her strategy is to distract you with food or to just stuff all that emotion down. Let it simmer inside you until it comes to a slow boil and makes you hate yourself just a little more. {Interesting, that a food analogy explains your behavior!}

(End of first recording)

What are your weight stories? How many times have you lost weight? What is the most weight you've ever lost? How long did you keep it off? What "diets" worked best for you. That's the kind of conversation you are used to hearing when the subject of weight comes up.

If you don't have paper and pen handy, stop this recording and grab them as you listen to this next section. We are going to use the stories you identify today in next week's Module so it is helpful if you make yourself some notes to refer back to.

I invite you to think back to the first time you thought of yourself as "fat". How old were you? Did the awareness come from you or did another person "clue you in"? What if you could have that body back - the one you thought was fat? I'd trade in a heartbeat. I was 15 years old, 118 lbs. Genetics gave me hips and thighs that didn't fit my picture of thin. When I look at those pictures today, I always think I wish I could tell that version of myself to quit worrying so much.

Whatever the source of that first message, why did you believe it was true? For most, it comes down to immaturity and insecurity. It happens when you are still finding your feet in the world and assign someone else as the authority of what is right and wrong. That's how your mean girl was born - from self-protection, measuring the outside world and showing you how to fit in.

From that starting point, where did weight loss take you? What is the craziest diet you ever tried? I watched my mother do a fasting diet to lose weight for my wedding. For NINE months, she did not eat ANY solid food. Shakes three times a day for NINE months. She lost 75 lbs and looked amazing in my wedding photos. When I think about the level of focus and energy that took, I am in awe. But as you might expect, the loss was not permanent.

The stories you have collected trying to lose weight are a huge factor in the weight you are currently carrying. Your inner mean girl uses them as evidence that no matter how hard you try, this weight is not going anywhere. Your mind loves patterns. If your pattern has been lose - gain - lose - gain, guess what your mind knows how to do well. It is the root cause of sabotaging yourself.



Your inner mean girl knows ALL of your weight loss stories. She lived them all with you. She is the keeper of the details and the disappointment. She is hyper talented at two things:

1. She takes every emotion you do not know how to process and she shoves it in the basement of your mind, locks the door and invites you to eat so you will feel better. That door STAYS SHUT! Here's a clue as to why you "don't do" anger or conflict.
2. She talks really loud. She is the loudest voice in your head. Imagine a loudspeaker outside your living room window that played a looping message all day every day.
 - a. "You're such a loser."
 - b. "You always fail."
 - c. "You're never going to lose that weight."
 - d. "Here you go starting over again."
 - e. "Why bother, you're going to gain it all back anyway."

Did you know that constant noise is actually a torture technique used by the military? Quoting Sergeant Mark Hadsell from the US Psychological Operations Company in an interview he did for Newsweek:

"These people haven't heard heavy metal. They can't take it. If you play it for 24 hours, your brain and body functions start to slide. Your train of thought slows down and your will is broken. That's when we come in and talk to them."

Your will is broken after 24 hours. Your mean girl talks to you nonstop ALL DAY - EVERY DAY! That's how much influence she has over the way you think.

You are beginning the work of inviting her to retire as you learn the skill of feeling your emotions so she no longer needs to stuff them. In the next segment, we'll talk about those emotions you are used to eating.

(End of recording)

Your end goal is to learn to feel your feelings so that you no longer need to eat them. One of the perks of retiring your inner mean girl is that she gives you back the key to the basement of your mind. My job as your coach is to help you gather the courage to unlock it and look inside.

In the beginning, this will probably feel overwhelming. There are YEARS worth of emotions stored there and every one of them has a story attached to it. Our task is to sort thru them. The first sort is to separate the facts (the things that can be proven) from the emotion. The second sorting is to decide what is useful and what no longer serves you. Here are some of the emotions I would expect to find as we dig in.

Anger

If you have excess weight on your body, my guess is that you don't often allow yourself to express anger. If you get angry, how is the other person going to react? Will they still be your friend? Will they still love you? Will you embarrass yourself? Better just to avoid it. Aaaaand EAT!



Fear

Fear is driven by uncertainty. A constant state of “What if...” What if I fail? What if I succeed? What if I don’t know the answer? What if my body never loses weight? What if . . . You would rather have a bad answer than no answer at all so you sabotage to make the fear recede Aaaaand EAT!

Loneliness

Excess weight is often connected to perfectionism, people pleasing and approval seeking. All three habits link your self-esteem to someone else's approval. It leaves you on your knees in a begging posture swimming in loneliness waiting to be noticed. With so many factors beyond your control, Aaaaand EAT!

Resentment

Resentment is the nasty infection that grows when blame someone outside of yourself for not meeting your needs, even though you have never given voice to those needs. It festers and grows exponentially over time. It keeps tally of all the grievances. (Your mean girl can do the math) Eventually it causes you to overreact and create drama. Food lets you come back to center Aaaaand EAT! Resentment is driven by feeling:

Ignored

Because you do not want to appear selfish or self-centered, you do not ask for what you truly need. You mute yourself in favor of “peace”. The result is a growing internal scream that you have no way to release. You want to open your mouth to let that scream out, but instead you put food in it. But, but, but... Aaaaand EAT!

Invisible

You avoid drawing attention to yourself because of the excess weight on your body rendering yourself invisible. You mute yourself when your opinion differs from what is popular. The result is you become a doormat that everyone walks on but no one sees anymore. The situation YOU created becomes your largest source of pain. You sit quietly, in the corner of a room full of people, or a community full of friends, Aaaaand EAT!

Shame

You see yourself as flawed beyond repair. You think you ARE your weight and that it is a life sentence. Change seems impossible and you have resigned yourself to hoping to be tolerated. You see yourself as a victim of circumstance - hopelessly stuck hoping nobody notices how much of a mess you are.

Processing the backlog of emotion allows you discover your answers to your WHY. WHY do you eat when you know you are not hungry? Why do I weigh (insert current weight)? Because you are an expert level feelings avoider.



The GOOD News is that when you learn how to feel rather than avoid, your body no longer needs all that excess weight. It has your attention. That awareness is the beginning of creating an intimate relationship with yourself.

Every one of those emotions is driven by something you think. Here's where you begin to create magic for yourself. No matter how messy your brain is today, you can learn the skill of mind maintenance. Knowing WHAT you think and WHY you think it is the most powerful feeling. You begin to see that you have always had a choice about what you think.

This heightened awareness allows you to first name your emotions as they appear and second feel them so that they no longer need to be assuaged, buried, covered, overcome with food. Over time, the basement of your mind begins to have order. There is less and less detritus crap stuffed in the corners. Mind maintenance is an ongoing process. Your mind gets dirty over time the same as your house or car. If you procrastinate too long, your body will find a way to remind you.

One beautiful side effect is more energy. Because you are no longer guarding a locked door to keep the unfelt emotions inside and because you no longer eat your emotions, you have a surplus of energy. More energy means more self-care. More self-care leads to more self-esteem. More self-esteem leads to better food choices. Better food choices allows your body to move toward its natural weight. All because you were willing to face yourself and look inside your brain.

(End of recording)

I remember wondering why I was so scared to feel all those emotions. In reality I was willing to carry around 150 extra pounds all day every day in order NOT to feel them. If you're experiencing some anxiety thinking about looking into your brain basement, notice how that feels in your body and let it pass thru. You've got this. Emotions came factory installed so learning to feel them is not as difficult as your mind wants you to believe.

You might be wondering how this process of avoiding emotion got started and why no one ever told you about the skills I am sharing with you. The answer takes us back to your weight stories. Your brain loves two things: patterns and efficiency. Stories are fuel for both. Your brain takes the facts it knows, extrapolates the story details it does not know and fills in the blanks. Accuracy is not important. A story that it can compare to other stories it knows to find patterns is what counts.

Find the patterns! Replay those weight stories you identified earlier. You got pen and paper to jot notes to use in the next Module. Look and see if there are similar themes. Do you always lose focus on day 3? Does your favorite food always trip you up? Do you reward yourself with food for weight loss and punish yourself with food for a weight gain? Every time you speak the story, the groove in your brain gets deeper.

Now comes efficiency. You contemplate trying to lose weight AGAIN, your brain tells you about all the times you've failed and how you will fail this time. It uses efficiency (it loves saving energy) to find the old stories (patterns) and uses your past failures against you.

This is how practiced thought works. Think about the stories you tell over and over. Some of them are 20-30 years in the past. For example the pain and sharp emotion of my first divorce happened 25 years ago. But when I tell the story to you, my brain experiences the pain as if it were



happening now! All the drama that went with those emotions is instantly back and I've allowed a person I haven't seen in over 20 years "ruin my day". Then BONUS, I eat to calm myself back down.

This was both infuriating and empowering information the first time I heard it. The infuriating part was the realization that it wasn't the ex-husband that was causing me such pain, I was doing it to myself every time I retold the story...and I told it ALOT! The empowering thing was finally understanding my otherwise irrational behavior with food. There was a reason I ate the way I did. My body was not broken. I was not weak. I was just continually overdosing myself with old stories that were packed with emotion I had no idea how to feel.

Your brain takes all those stories and loads them into a loop that plays continuously in your head. Picture a hamster on a spinning wheel exerting a ton of effort and going nowhere. That's your brain with stories. Your mean girl is comforted by the sound of that wheel spinning. It is her secret weapon for keeping you safe.

You start dreaming too big or try using your voice to express your needs, she points to the wheel of stories to remind you how dangerous the world is and how you've failed every time you try.

She has one more ace up her sleeve if you somehow are determined to try and lose weight again. She normally lets that loop of stories run on its own like leaving the TV on when you go to sleep...white noise in the background. However, she does have the ability to increase the intensity of practiced thoughts. She is not afraid to take you out at the knees - hit you when you are most vulnerable - if she thinks she can keep you safe.

The way this shows up is when you are feeling doubt or fear. Anytime you are growing, you experience these two emotions. You are probably feeling them as you move thru this program. "Could this really work?" "I don't want to get my hopes up." "What if I fail again?" Your mean girl goes into overdrive to gather ALL the other stories that support that doubt and fear. She encourages you to quit before you get hurt and come back to safety, which is code for EAT to deal with the disappointment and frustration you do not want to feel.

Starting to see how powerful she is and why you haven't lost the weight yet? Why do you allow her to keep going when what she wants for you and what you want for you are so clearly not aligned? Why would she ever accept your invitation to retire when she is so good at what she does? The short answer is she is exhausted. She is burned out. She needs to hand over the reins to you which can only happen once she trusts you.

Trust is built when she is sure you understand how the system that is your brain works. Your mind is resilient and will follow you wherever you lead it. It is a machine that relies on your input. You've heard it said whatever you focus on grows. Wherever you direct your thoughts, your emotions and actions will follow.

(End of recording)

You probably never considered that you choose your thoughts. You assume you are at the mercy of what appears. You go thru your days reacting to events that show up, flying by the seat of your pants hoping not to crash. Your mean girl set herself up as the authority years ago and makes it



appear as if she cannot be questioned. Her voice is constantly in your head. You hate it but you can't seem to ignore it.

There is actually a name for this process and you've heard it before: Stockholm Syndrome. It is usually used in reference to prisoners of war or victims of kidnapping. When your brain is exposed to the level of control exerted by your inner mean girl, it forms an emotional bond with the controlling voice as a defense mechanism. That emotional bond is strengthened by the history you have shared and the stories you have in common.

When you suffer from Stockholm Syndrome, you perceive a threat from the person holding you captive and believe you are in danger. At the same time, you experience some level of kindness from the abuser. Has this happened with your mean girl? Are there "stories" you can point to of times when she really did save you from being hurt? Your brain does not know how to process this conflicting input.

To complete the formula for staying with your abuser, you cease to see a way to separate from her. You've tried killing her, she just keeps coming back. Every time she worms her way back in, her voice gets louder until she is the only opinion that matters. You acquiesce and learn to LOVE your tormentor. She is dysfunctional but she is the devil you know.

But you are not stuck with this reality. Until now it was the only reality you were aware of. Your brain is NOT attached to the information you give it. It will happily go left instead of right. It is built to process input. Change the input, change the outcome.

Consider instead the theory of the Stockdale Paradox. It is named after Admiral Jim Stockdale who was a prisoner of war for 8 years during the Vietnam War. He was tortured repeatedly and had no reason to believe he would ever return to the US. He faced the reality of his situation. But the story doesn't end there because he DID survive and return home. He is quoted as saying he never lost faith that he would prevail in the end.

The magic in the Stockdale Paradox is combining the optimism of growth with brutal honesty about what is and a willingness to change. You may not be too excited about admitting how you got to this weight or the cluttered state of your brain basement. But awareness is absolutely necessary to grow and improve. It may feel like you are regressing - losing ground - in the beginning when in reality you are setting yourself up for a lifetime of success.

Knowing how to feel your emotions and Knowing why you think what you think are the golden tickets to reaching your natural weight and living there effortlessly. You can truly take Weight Loss OFF your "TO DO" List - FOREVER!

