

Day 9 Healing Trauma and Relationships



Connecting with ourselves is the prerequisite to connecting with others. Without it, we are almost untouched by someone's love and affection. The barrier could be our false core deficiency beliefs of being unlovable. *I'm not worthy of their attention.*

Our relationship with and connection with ourselves is the most important one. Each day of the course has been nurturing connection with ourselves. We understand what caused the disconnection and how the inner critic developed. As we heal and release trauma, our inner experience changes.

We become willing and more comfortable with feelings in our body. Let your body relax for a moment. Soften your forehead and eyebrows, neck and shoulders. Take a few deep breaths and let yourself settle in. What is your response now to these sentences? [Listen here.](#)

I like who I am becoming. I like myself. I am worth getting to know.

Feel the response in your whole body.

I still get triggered and seem to need other people's approval. I sense it is possible to be free from that and be on my own side so firmly that it doesn't matter as much what other people think.

It is safe for me to know who I am. I am a good human being. I am not perfect. I'm okay. I am good enough.

What is your felt sense of your experience right now emotionally? What thoughts came up in response to those sentences? Scan the back of your body. Are you settled and soft through the back? See if you

could settle more completely.

Is there any unkindness or frustration towards yourself? Any resistance or tightening? As children we were taught to ignore how we feel and told to “get over it”. We might have picked that up and say it to ourselves. It doesn’t help calm anxiety or fear.

Notice your neck, shoulders and the muscles of your upper back. Let your muscles soften in your belly, and let your breath become smoother and more even.

Does your mind wander off? Are you bored? Perhaps there is something you are avoiding feeling. Maybe you notice your heart center and there is a sadness.

From the perspective of mindfulness inquiry, it is not as important what we see, as that we’re noticing and are interested in a relationship with ourselves.

Bring your attention to the back of your head as though you are watching thoughts move across the screen. Notice there is some space between thoughts. Neutral thoughts arrive and leave on their own. With other thoughts, our body might tighten up. Focus on the breath in your belly to stay grounded.

In this short practice did you stay focused? We can see the habits of the mind. Notice without judging yourself if there were any particular times when you tightened up. Notice the level of kindness, acceptance and interest no matter what your experience is.

Once we have a solid connection with ourselves, and we’re not waiting until we’re somehow perfect, we notice it changes our relationships with other people. Are you someone who enjoys other people and looks forward to getting together? Or maybe you’ve had enough experiences of being hurt that it creates a fear response in your mind. Long before you actually meet up with someone, you’re strategizing on how you’re going to handle it. You might be catastrophic thinking - *If I say something stupid, I’ll feel like a fool.* We might imagine the worst-case scenario so vividly it feels real.

One effect of trauma is that our neuroception is skewed. Dr Stephen Porges coined the term. We don’t assess threat accurately. Sometimes we’re numbed out and other times we are hypervigilant. Other people’s opinions and judgments mean more than they will once we are healed of trauma.

Everyone likes to be approved of and feel part of the group. What’s your tolerance when someone gives you that look, or is jealous, or doesn’t want you to be included? Not everyone is kind and welcoming. We ruminate about that one comment, and how we should have said something else or just been quiet. It feels like there is so much at stake.

Now we have simple tools to calm the nervous system and relax enough to accurately assess threat or invitation, inclusion or exclusion.

Work with your breath. Extended exhaling of at least six seconds is a great practice to calm your system and get out of freeze. Breathe in to a count of three and out to six. This gives the nervous system time to activate the Relaxation Response. You could hum or say vooo on the exhale. Singing helps us down-regulate. When you're at the event, speak in longer sentences or don't take a breath between shorter ones.

Look for someone who looks shy or uncomfortable and talk with them. Have a couple of conversation starters handy. *What type of work do you do? How do you know the host? What are your hobbies?* Use these new positive experiences to calm social anxiety.

Now we come to the big one: authentic, true, vulnerable relationships. As we become more connected with ourselves, we soften our defenses, and we begin to take risks. We say the truth. This isn't always met with wholehearted appreciation.

Sometimes we need to make big changes to bring ourselves into alignment and be around people who are supportive of our healing. We set new boundaries. We become steadier and more grounded in ourselves. We stop shaming ourselves and we are less willing to tolerate someone else shaming us.

We make these changes at a pace that is comfortable, yet there is a hunger and longing to know ourselves and to have a deep connection with other people. To matter to ourselves and to others, and to have people matter to us. This is the foundation for a fulfilling, satisfying life.

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