

NEW YOU IN THE NEW YEAR

2014



Heal Your Heart, Lose the Weight

Understanding the Role of Stress & Emotions in Weight Loss



with Jon Gabriel & Paul North

Relationship b/w Emotional Pain & Weight Gain

- If a person doesn't feel safe, the body will take steps to protect itself
- Polyvagal theory shows that eating is one of the ways that the body regulates stress – starts when we are a baby, suckling our mother's breast
- What can we do to heal emotional pain?



Self-Hatred & Shame

- Dalai Lama's great surprise
- Self Hatred/Shame/Guilt
- In the Western world, we carry so much shame, guilt and self-criticism
- We don't have any mechanism for having compassion for ourselves



Understanding Emotions

- Guilt: “I made a mistake”
Shame: “I am a mistake.”
- People can get frozen in shame
- We need to move through shame, to guilt
- What are the thoughts that come before your emotions?
- Thoughts always come first, then emotion follows—don’t identify with them



What Causes Shame?

- Shame comes from negative evaluations – someone significant calling you names, showing disapproval
- For women, self-esteem is often based on how you look—it can begin as early as age 7
- Men often start in adolescence, with feelings of concern about how they look



Physical Effect of Self-Hatred

When you carry excess weight...

- There is usually a story in there about negative evaluation
- Some level of hatred or betrayal by their body
- We are our worst critic, we call ourselves the worst names—if we gain 10 pounds, or can't do up our jeans, or miss an appointment



Self-Hatred & Cortisol – Vicious Cycle

If you have feelings of self-hatred....

- Cortisol levels go up through the roof
- It's not your body being attacked, it's your concept of your personal self that's being attacked
- The problem is: you are both the attacker & victim
- Can only hold these high cortisol levels for so long before the body starts to give up, and then depression can set in
- Remember, thoughts come first: "You're not good enough" then comes the emotion



Mindfulness

- Mindfulness: bring your attention to the present moment in a non-judgmental & curious fashion
- A process in which we get to observe our thoughts
- Change relationship with your thoughts & you can change your emotional experience
- The mind is designed to flip back and forth between past and future to protect you, as the mind is a fear-based organ



Mindfulness (cont'd)

- It's 2 in the morning. You suddenly remember an argument you had, and see yourself back in that argument
- Your body doesn't know a difference between times, it believes you are back in that argument
- Your cortisol is rising, breathing's changing, body feels like it's being attacked



Mindfulness & Self-Compassion

- Next your mind is in the future worrying about how you'll be tired in the morning, and feeling angry at that person—and yet the only time you are going to get to sleep is in the present moment
- The mind functions this way so we're aware of threats—but it creates a lot of stress in the body
- The body can't tell the difference between the past and the future... it thinks that every stress is happening now



The Self-Compassion Wave

- There are 756 published journal articles on mindfulness in the last 12 months alone!
- There are 70+ research papers on self compassion—double over past years
- Self-compassion is the focus because its been found to make practicing mindfulness more effective at healing emotional pain
- So, what is Self-Compassion?



Step 1: Kindness

- Show yourself the same level of kindness you would show to another when a mistake happens or something goes wrong
- If you see a person in pain, you feel an identification and want to lessen their pain
- Try giving this to yourself!
- Most of us were raised with self-criticism and remember scenes of shame with parents
- The parent is speaking from their own shame and fear that the child will be unsuccessful, and because they believe criticism is motivating



Step 2: Acknowledge Our Humanity

- We all have a shared humanity
- We all have imperfections, we're all imperfect people and mistakes happen to us
- We tend to isolate and withdraw when we make mistakes
- When you make a mistake, instead of self-criticizing, try a bigger picture perspective & offer yourself compassion—right in the very moment when the mistake or misunderstanding occurs
- Self Compassion vs. Self-Esteem



Common Misconceptions About Self-Esteem

- We sometimes believe that to have good self-esteem we have to be doing better than someone else
- Do we really have to be better, stronger, smarter than someone else to have high self-esteem?
- Can we find a way to evaluate our worth that is independent of other people's achievements?



Physical Benefits of Self-Compassion

- Self compassion heals the heart
- Say loving things to yourself, with your hand on your heart, and you begin to experience oxytocin (women produce it when they have a child)
- If you have a pet, and start petting it, both the pet & you start to produce oxytocin
- That's part of the way we heal our heart, including shame and grief
- Grief gets healed through self compassion
- Practicing self compassion leads to higher levels of self-esteem, and their cortisol levels drop.



Bring Mindfulness & Self Compassion into Your Life

- If you catch yourself worrying about the past or future—stop and recognize it
- Come back to the present moment, to your present life
- It's common to eat while thinking about work, watching TV or fiddling on the computer
- Instead, bring mindfulness to your eating



Increasing Mindfulness

- Mindfulness brings you back to the present moment, turns off stress
- It improves your sleep & immunity
- Not an “Eastern” practice—this is universal and can blend with any beliefs you may or may not have
- Bring yourself into the present moment, practice self-compassion, whenever you make a mistake or are feeling emotional pain



Healing Power of Smiles & Laughter

- A smile can save someone's life
- Be grateful for a smile, for kindness
- Watch funny videos



Add Gratitude

- Create a gratitude diary
- Write a few things you are grateful for down each morning
- Can write anywhere, even your smart phone
- Gratitude changes your perception of the world
- As you become more grateful, the universe gives you more things to be thankful for



A Simple Technique

Try these 4 healing phrases first used with huge success by a psychologist in Hawaii with prison inmates.

- I'm so sorry
- Please forgive me
- I love you
- Thank you



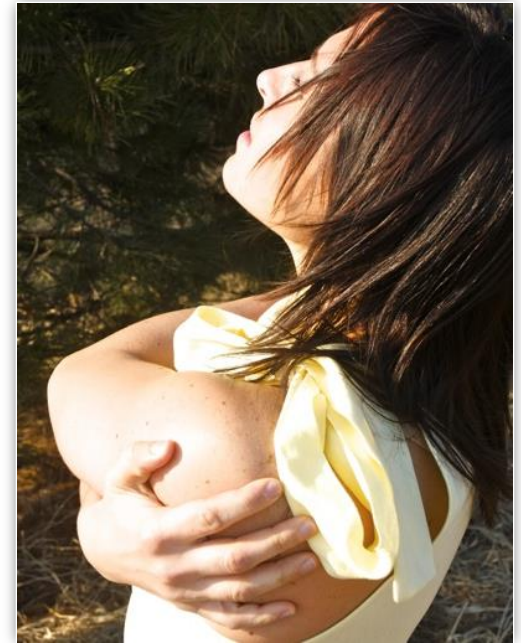
A Simple Technique (cont'd)

- Say these healing phrases to the person (in your mind) and then to yourself
- Say these while walking in meditation and when you're depressed
- Try it when you've had a "bad food day"
- This Hawaiian technique is called Ho'oponopono



A Loving Kindness Meditation

- Start by bringing your awareness back to present moment
- Mindfulness begins by focusing on the breath
- Gratitude: put hand on heart & reflect on the things you are grateful for in life (have a computer, a house, warmth, a car...) and say, “Thank you!”
- Thanks to the universe, thanks to yourself



A Loving Kindness Meditation (cont'd)

- Find 1 or 2 people in your life, who you are not in conflict with, who have done something kind for you
- Think of that person and send that person compassion: “May you be happy. May you find some freedom from present difficulties. May you find peace.”
- Now imagine that you are that person, and you’ve fallen on tough times. Imagine that they are looking at you. “May you find some happiness, relief from suffering, may you find peace.”
- For yourself, say: “May I be happy, may I have relief from suffering, may I be at peace.”

In Conclusion

- Self-compassion & mindfulness are incredibly beneficial tools for good emotional and physical health
- Starting today, focus on practical steps you can take to move from feelings of self-hatred to feelings of self-love



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