

Self-directed neuroplasticity.... the brain can change & YOU can change it...here's how.

But first...let's understand how the brain works.

The brain gets better at what it focuses on or **magnifies**.



We all have a "negativity bias" (to notice the threat, problem, breakdown, inadequacy)...it's how we evolved to avoid a "threat" (*if we are being chased by a bear and are blissfully unaware, we'd be done for*).

Our brain is still wired to look for "threats" or problems and magnify these. The problem is that the negativity bias can get...too strong...especially after an injury/ a trauma. When it gets overly strong, it's a bit like a "bully in the brain" (aka a neuro-associative cluster) such that it becomes quite sensitive and overresponsive to perceived threats/ problems/ sensations/ inadequacy.

When that happens, the "bully in the brain" magnifies the problem state (and minimizes the "resourceful state"). Because the brain gets better at what it focuses on, an overly magnified problem state gets even bigger. Imagine it like a magnification glass with the problem state being in the glass and the resources being on the sides.

Coaching the brain for success...is a technique toward self-directed neuroplasticity:

MAGNIFY that which you want (through your words and the images you create in the mind and the positive sensory state you cultivate in the body), build the "felt sense" of strength, belief and confidence.

MINIMIZE (not ignore) that which you don't want (pause the triggers/ negativity bias, redirect the body toward safety (through the body (e.g. intentional breathing), observe the trigger with some space between you and that (what thoughts, perceptions, sensations are there) and then shift to magnifying your safety/resourceful state, and the "next smallest step" toward and your goal).

Perhaps you've played a sport or watched a sport. If a team loses, a good coach knows better than to only focus on the problem-state (the loss, the breakdowns, the failure); rather a successful coach acknowledges the pitfalls (the loss) and then shifts to highlight and grow the strengths.

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Empowering intentional women, who feel out-of-sorts, to deeply collaborate between their mind and body so they can feel better, think clearer and move forward with more ease.

One technique is to practice the **STOP** technique:



<p><u>Stop:</u></p> <p>Take a pause. The brain tries to help us by magnifying it (“hey look at the problem here!”). When we pause, we can get in the body, better understand the trigger and shift to a more resourceful state of mind before we take action to our desired goal.</p>	<p><u>Take a breath</u> (to get in the body):</p> <p>Our mind can be in the past, future, everywhere or nowhere...the body is only in the present moment. Intentional breathing brings us to the present moment and can settle our autonomic nervous system (in the body).</p> <p><u><i>Menu of Intentional Breath techniques:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>*4 (inhale)-2 (pause)-6 (exhale)</i> <i>*Circular breathing: IN through the nose, OUT through the mouth (thinking “in” and “out” can help focus the mind on the breath</i> <i>*Box breathing</i> <i>4-inhale, 4-hold; 4 exhale; 4- hold</i> <i>*Alternative Nostril Breathing (plug one nostril, breath in the other (then switch and plug that side); out & then in that side (then switch); repeat</i> <i>*Heart centered breath: shift focus to your heart, imagine breath/ energy coming in and out the heart area, allow your heart to feel gratitude/ positive emotion)</i> 	<p><u>Observe</u> the trigger:</p> <p>Notice what the brain put the magnifying glass on. Offer yourself curiosity about the situation, the feelings (anger, fear, exhaustion), the thoughts. You may even imagine the situation like watching yourself on a movie screen. Rewind to the start of the trigger and then slow it down, zoom out. Creating distance can allow you to better understand the trigger, and then shift your focus/ perspective to feel into a more resourceful state (calm, strong, safe) before taking action.</p>	<p><u>Procced with action:</u></p> <p>After you are in a more resourceful state, proceed with action...either action toward increasing your resourceful state (doing something that “grows your energy”), and/or action toward your goal ...ask yourself what is the “next smallest step” toward my goal?</p>
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