

# Whole-Brain Living

## Session 5: Return to Joy

### 1. Review: Act Like Myself

- When our 'Relational Circuits' (RC's) are off, we can fail to be the Gentle Protector we are designed to be, and instead become a possum or a predator.

### 2. Habit 3: Return to Joy

- **Unpleasant (aka 'Negative') emotions** tell us important information. They let us know something is wrong, but don't inform us of how to solve the problem.
- **Returning to joy** ("I am glad to be with you") from negative emotions before addressing the problem is a skill that keeps our relationships bigger than the problems that surface. We must learn to quiet our negative emotions while staying relational with others.

### 3. 'Return to Joy' in Scripture

- **Psalm 30:5** "For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."
- **Psalm 126:5** "Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy."
- **John 16:22** (Jesus said) "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."

### 4. The Joy Bucket

- The first year of life is about beginning to form a joyful Identity. This happens through lots of joyful, peaceful relational interactions where baby's needs are met.
- The more joyful relational interactions we have with people, the more we grow our joyful identity, (aka 'Joy Bucket' which = Identity Center (Level 4)).
- The size of our Joy Bucket directly relates to our ability to handle upsetting emotions.
- The second year of life, especially from 12-18 months, is the time we're scheduled to learn how to return to joy from unpleasant emotions.
- Emotions are a big deal in the Bible!
  - Psalms are prayer journals and songs that cover the entire gamut of human emotion (positive and negative). God put these in the Bible for a reason!
  - An entire book of the Bible is about grief and despair (Lamentations).
  - Jesus' emotions are described frequently in the Gospels.
- One thing that prevents us from living out of our true identity is when our negative emotions exceed our capacity to remain relational.

### 5. The 'Big 6' Negative Emotions

- Our Joy Bucket/ID Center is at the top/front of our brain; negative emotions come from the bottom/back brain (limbic system; survival circuits).
- God gave us the ability to feel these negative (unpleasant) emotions for a reason!
- During the 2nd year of life, a baby is now at the place where he/she will experience each of these emotions in 'big' ways. God's design is that baby would have people 'with' him/her to help them process these overwhelming emotions in a relational way, helping them to return to a state of joy and peace.

- **Sadness** - I have lost something that brought me joy
- **Afraid** - I want to get away.
- **Despair** - I feel like joy is impossible; I don't have the time or resources to fix a problem.
- **Shame** - You are not glad to be with me. I am not bringing you joy
  - Healthy shame – conveyed through 'gentle shame messages': "that is not how 'we' do it; *this* is how we do it."
  - Toxic shame – *you* are bad; *you* are fundamentally and fatally flawed
- **Anger** - I need to protect myself or others & make it stop
- **Disgust** - This is not life-giving!
- Part of the maturity process involves identifying which of these emotions I handle well, and which ones I don't.
- The goal isn't to never feel these feelings, but rather to remain relational and stay the same person even in the midst of upset.
- E.g. Jesus
  - Mark 3 - Jesus was angry and grieved (deeply sad) at the Pharisees' hardness of heart; so he healed a man.
  - John 19 - On the cross, Jesus cared for Mary, the thieves, even his murderers!

## 6. VCR to Help Others Return to Joy

- **Validate**
  - Listen for emotion
  - Name the emotion(s)
  - Reflect how big it is
  - Note: Validation does not require you to agree they 'should' feel this way
- **Comfort**
  - Convey presence: "I am glad to be with you"
  - Express empathy
  - Offer help: "What do you need from me right now?" "Can I pray for you?"
- **Repattern**
  - [Use sparingly]
  - "What do you think you'll do?"
  - Offer perspective
  - "Would you like to talk about some ideas that might help?"
- VCR conveys that a person is not alone in their pain and distress, but someone is glad to be with them who can tune into their emotions without getting stuck there themselves.

## 7. 4+ Stories to Learn How I Can Return to Joy

- We learn relational skills in relationship.
- It is wisdom, not weakness, that admits to others where I struggle and asks for help.
- Our brains learn from stories and examples (models). Find people who have relational skills you are missing and ask them to tell you stories.

## 8. Immanuel Journaling - Jesus helps me Return to Joy

- Jesus is always glad to be with us, and is tender toward our weakness, even when we are stuck in negative emotions.
- See 'Immanuel Journaling Process' handout from week 4.

## Homework

- Ask someone to tell you how they handle an emotion you struggle returning to joy from.
- Take 1-3 minute pause daily this week (e.g., "One Minute Pause" app)
- Use the Immanuel Journaling method this week (schedule 15 minutes one morning this week!).