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**The Marathon Mind Psychologist**

**Louize Carroll**

**EPISODE THREE – PSYCHOLOGY SESSION PLAN**

**Dear Marathon Mind Listener,**

Welcome back to the ‘Mind’ section of Marathon Mind!

**Monthly Letter to all Runners:**

**So… how are the motivation levels? How is the enthusiasm? On a scale of 1 to 10, how delighted/regretful/excited/pissed off are you that you took on this challenge?!? And how much does that change on a day-to-day basis? If you’re swinging like a pendulum about what you feel about this programme and your part in it, you’re not alone. Read on.**

**We are in Month 3 of this ambitious project. Month 3 of 9. It’s the Tuesday of the training stage. A bit of a non-entity. Still close enough to the start to recall your original enthusiasm to begin, and still far enough from the finish line to continually hear the voice of self-doubt lash its tongue against your self-belief. This and the next couple of months will be tough. It’s a little bit of a no-man’s land, and because of that it can be hard to feel anchored and hard to feel the solidity in your commitment to training.**

**This month your tasks will be to complete the following:**

1. **Avoidance Diary**
2. **Willingness Statement**
3. **Basic Needs**

**F E A R**

**I’ve spoken to some of you over the course of the last month whether that was through the live Instagram talks or through DMs and a lot of what I see coming up time and time again is a certain emotion, and that emotion is FEAR.**

**So let’s talk about it.**

**Fear shows up in many MANY different ways. It adores to dress up in different disguises, lest you realise who it really is. It manages to coerce you far more if it pretends to be irritation, “the only problem I have is everyone else ok??”. It can often pretend to be apathy , “whatever I don’t care”. It might even pretend to be angry or in fact it could show up as resistance. Fear, through the vehicle of resistance shows up as constant procrastination, ‘Ah I’ll get to that part later”, or “I can just never seem to get around to the mindful or psychology part of this plan…I’m just too busy”. Hmm. Maybe it’s actually just a big large:**

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**SO WHY ALL THE FEAR MASQUERADING AS RESISTANCE?**

**Well what might you find out if you look deep enough? Might you find out that the niggle you’ve had in your lower back for the last few months might be pain from upset you never expressed and therefore released? If you look in these places into your mind, is there fear that you can’t unsee what you find, and you might have to make a change? A change in your living situation, in your career, in your family, friends or in your relationship? Sometimes we opt to stay the same, and pull the shutters down on the niggles, because it’s easier not to rock the boat, “I was doing FINE before I started thinking about this!” But were you?**

**The problem is, the niggles don’t go away. They get worse and over time you might find yourself throwing medication into you to treat the niggle which is now a full blown pain, when in actual fact, trusting yourself and listening to your emotions was the first step. Noticing your fear of rocking the boat in the first instance, but perhaps doing it regardless, because it’s the right thing to do for you – would have prevented the chronic pain in the long run.**

**OUR REACTIONS TO FEAR**

**We don’t know what to do with fear other than punch someone in the face, run a million miles away or freeze like a deer in the headlights. We don’t know how to manage it, or how to listen to it with our higher brain. The moment we feel fear, our brains still obstruct clear access to our thinking brain where we can inject some rationality into proceedings. Or at best, we manifest other reasons for our fear and pin it on a bad day or how annoying your neighbours or the public in general actually are. The downside of not acknowledging our fear response properly and avoiding its discomfort by pretending otherwise, is that our bodies feel wracked with the impact of a perceived threat and we find it difficult to regulate ourselves, until the threat passes.**

**But because we get so caught up in our minds, even when the threat passes, we remain primed and hyper-vigilant for the next one, our line of sight not on what is important to us in the present moment, but welded to memories of the painful past, and anxiously anticipating what might emerge in the future.**

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**It’s a pity we’re not a little more like antelope. The lion chases the antelope who manages to escape his claws at the last minute and bounds off into the next sheltered plain. Does the antelope cower by a boulder, peeking over the top for the next few weeks, shaking and shivering with fear and anticipation of what’s to come? Does he lie in the long grasses having flashbacks about those claws that nearly sliced his rump? Nope. He goes back to eating grass. Happily and blissfully wagging his little furry tail. Present moment stuff. It doesn’t mean he won’t absolutely leg it again at the sight of a lion, but his own heart won’t last very long if he spends his life worrying about the emergence of the king of the jungle.**

**CLEAN & DIRTY EMOTIONS**

**We can learn a little bit from this. Fear is the clean emotion. The irritation, the resistance, and the anger, those are the dirty emotions, the emotions that emerge to disguise the clean one, to make it feel more palatable and to make us feel like we are in control. Listening to the clean emotions can make us feel vulnerable and less in control, which is why we try to avoid them. But if we can learn to be with them when they happen, to listen to them with an open heart and mind, and not run from them, then we are learning the first steps to healing and recovery and to creating better and more relationships with ourselves and with others throughout our lives.**

**In our mindfulness and psychology plans, we want to get you connected to your clean emotions, because they are ones that need to be listened to and need to be expressed. By doing do, you will get more comfortable in your own skin. It will help you to stop avoiding what needs to be looked at. It will help you to stop running so that you can begin to run TOWARDS yourself, instead of away.**

**One of the ways in which we cope with feelings of fear and other uncomfortable emotions, is that we AVOID them. We avoid through distraction, through thinking techniques where we reason with ourselves that there’s no point, we rationalize til the cows come home or we opt out completely, and let apathy take over.**

**YOUR AVOIDANCE DIARY**

**For the next few months, we will be moving more and more into looking at your relationship with your thoughts and feelings. To begin with, I want you to begin looking at the ways in which you avoid painful or tough thoughts, feelings, memories or situations. The reason we start to look at this, is that we begin to see all the ways in which we allow our thoughts and emotions to hijack us. This is the first step in understanding the impact of that. And if we understand the impact it has on our lives, we now have motivation to begin to do something different right? To not be hijacked by thoughts and feelings and to continue to do what matters to us.**

**See how you get on:**

**AVOIDANCE DIARY**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **PAINFUL OR UNCOMFORTABLE THOUGHTS / FEELINGS / MEMORIES /SITUATIONS THAT SHOWED UP TODAY** | **WHAT I DID NEXT TO AVOID OR DISTRACT MYSELF FROM THEM**  | **WHAT IMPACT DID THIS HAVE? WHAT DID THIS COST ME?** **(This can relate to your training, your communication in relationships, your job, or self-care, or anything else that you feel it cost you)** |
| **E.g. I thought about how I haven’t run in over a week.** | **I told myself there was no point in continuing so I didn’t go out for a run again and buried myself in Netflix instead** | **I felt even more hopeless and useless, I berated myself and I got irritated and I took this out on my partner.** |

**WILLINGNESS**

**In order to prevent emotions from hijacking you, counter to what you might think, it involves being willing to have the emotions in the first place.**

**As long as you are out there tackling the world and showing up to challenges, tough emotions will pop up and your mind will keep chattering. That’s ok, they’re supposed to! They’re trying to keep you safe. But can you be willing to let them show up without letting them define what you do next?**

**What I want you to begin practicing is ‘willingness’ to drop the fight with these tough thoughts and feelings. Fighting and battling with them, pushing them down, or squeezing them into the back of your mind, all of this takes effort and distracts you from the real focus in your life.**

**So I ask you to complete this, your WILLINGNESS STATEMENT:**

1. **These are the thoughts, feelings, sensations, urges I’m willing to have/tolerate (in order to achieve this goal):**
* **Thoughts:**
* **Feelings:**
* **Sensations:**
* **Urges:**
1. **It would be useful to remind myself that…. (insert anything you think would be useful!)**

**BASIC NEEDS**

**And finally – a quick one, but one that I have failed at for an embarrassing amount of my life until I realized just how imperative it was for me to achieve absolutely ANYTHING in my day with a semblance of good form…**

**ARE YOU BASIC NEEDS BEING MET?**

**You cannot attain higher needs, if your basic needs are not met, it’s as simple as that.**

1. **Are you eating properly and regularly?**
2. **Are you drinking at least 2 Litres of water a day?**
3. **How many hours sleep are you getting? Hopefully it’s at least 7, and if you lie awake blinking at the ceiling, what thoughts have you avoided during the day? See Avoidance Diary!!**
4. **How much social interaction and affection are you getting? Either from people or pets!**
5. **How much down-time are you getting? Are you getting to freeplay, or treat yourself, or spend quiet time reading, or watching your favourite programmes? If not – can you bring a little of it into your life? Your training depends on it!**

GOOD LUCK, UNTIL NEXT TIME.

Louize