



Internal Bullying

Bullying episodes, from the personal to the masses, are drawing a lot of attention. Many of us have personal stories and recall the negative and sometimes long-lasting impact. The impact of any bullying situation affects not only the person being bullied but extends outwards to include many. You may be coaching a client going through a situation. This is external bullying.

Let's now look at **internal bullying**. I will begin with a story about my client named Naomi. We were working on her reticence and feeling insecure about leading a group coaching series...thoughts like... was she good enough, did she have enough to offer, would people sign up, but I've never done this before...**basically she was talking about her fear of humiliation**...if it didn't work out for whatever reason...all things that everyone can relate to experiencing. As she was sharing her concerns about possible humiliation, I invited Naomi tell me what she was experiencing in her body – she felt tension, sick feelings in her gut, shallow breath, rapid heart beat. Her emotions were fear, distrust, and fear of humiliation. Her thoughts were "I will never be able to do this. I will fail. I can't handle this."

When I asked her if she had experienced something like this before, if it was familiar in any way, she immediately told me a story about being bullied when she was 7 years old. She had pedaled her bike to a grocery store, locked it up, gone into the store and when she came out the town bully was there with a few other guys. Every time she unlocked her bike to leave, the bully would lock it up again. He took groceries out of her bag and put them on the sidewalk.

She felt scared, trapped, shame. When she finally went home, she told no one about her experience. The adults in her world thought of bullying as normal actions for boys that age and she knew they would not support her feelings of humiliation.

I had to ask myself, what did fear of leading a group coaching series (and the fear of humiliation) have to do with bullying?

The basic answer to the connection between the fear of humiliation and bullying is this. **Our bodies store our story**; our body remembers our experiences. **Our body is an access point for discovering more information about our limiting beliefs, fusions and fears** – often based on the experience we have when we are young. Naomi was embarrassed by the bully and his actions, she felt humiliated, she made herself wrong (vs. knowing the bully was wrong) and she was carrying it with her unconsciously. It got triggered essentially through her body when she thought about her group coaching series.

We all have an internal bully voice...you know the one who is a nay-sayer, the one who lets you know how lacking you are in some way, the one who suggests you can't handle things, the one who..... The bully may say things like: Who do you think you are? Don't get too big for your britches. Don't be so stupid, so lazy, so hateful.

Think about how the fear of humiliation, what other people will think of you...what will they say when I go into coaching, when I charge coaching fees, when I want to lead classes, when I write a newsletter or a promo piece about my work.

I led a call on this subject recently that included a powerful visualization in which people created a circle of three different parts – the personality, the fearful bully voice and the impartial witness. We sent compassion to the bully who is afraid and want to keep us safe, wants us not to be humiliated. As people compassionately watched the interplay, simply being with the truth of what was happening internally, many insights occurred.

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