



Episode 48: One Way to Create More Peace of Mind

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today, let's talk about how to create and have more peace of mind. Peace of mind is something we all want, something that we know would improve our life, our health, and our relationships – and, it's often elusive.

What would increased peace of mind feel like for you? What would you then be able to let go of? What would be possible?

Greater peace of mind would invite more peace into our body and spirit as well. Our bodies would feel more relaxed and our thoughts would be calmer. We'd feel clearer and make decisions more confidently and we'd be able to be present with others more easily.

Unfortunately, our brain often experiences the opposite of peace. The fast pace of life and work taxes our thinking. Our brains are overloaded with information from news and emails, and are pressured to make decisions and be productive, all the while balancing home, family, and work. Our poor brains are easily stressed.

Stressed out brains cannot think effectively. The increase of adrenaline and cortisol that happens with a stress reaction affects our prefrontal cortex, that part of our brain that does our most effective thinking.

Stressed out brains more often see the negative, think the worst, and see only a binary. They create fixed stories about what's happening in our life. It's hard for stressed out brains to find and create peace.

Imagine now that you're able to access more peace of mind. How does it feel? If you could help your brain and body feel more peaceful when things got tough, challenges could be easier. Your emotions would be less intense, your thinking might be more flexible, and you'd feel more empowered.

Today's strategy is a thinking and communication tool that can help you access a peaceful mind and body more easily. It's a combined concept and language tool that can help you quickly shift from negative to more positive thinking and from a narrow perspective, to having mental flexibility and seeing a situation from multiple perspectives.

The strategy we're talking about today is recognizing, naming, and honoring the different parts of you. This concept comes from an approach to psychotherapy called Internal Family Systems, or IFS, for short. One basic assumption of the IFS model is that our minds are naturally subdivided into different personalities or parts. With IFS, people work to recognize and reorganize their parts in order to achieve more internal balance.

Although coaching and therapy are distinct, they both share a goal of helping people have more clarity and peace of mind, and, to do this, they can incorporate similar ideas and tools.

We can use this idea of “the parts of us” in coaching as a tool to help our brains and bodies feel more at peace – to feel calmer, clearer, and more in control as we think about and approach our life.

In practice, this tool is simple. It involves saying, “There’s a part of me that..” and then naming that part. And then saying, “There’s another part of me that....” and naming that part. And so on. When we get curious and allow all of our parts to exist, it calms us down.

Years ago, one of my coaches said to me, our feelings have feelings, too. Recognizing and naming our feelings is a brain tool to manage stress. Because when we identify and choose names for things, we’re activating our prefrontal cortex and higher-level thinking

This coaching tool of naming the different parts of you works especially well when you find yourself below the line – that is, stressed, overwhelmed, and anxious and having thoughts that are catastrophic, negative, and binary. That’s the time to pause, take a breath, and recognize and name the different parts of your feeling and thinking.

Here’s an example. I was having a conversation with a client, and she described a lot of recent stress. An email from her colleague created a chain reaction of anxiety and frustration, and her brain was making lots of assumptions. She was letting those negative emotions write the current story of her life.

At the same time, though, she acknowledged that she wanted other things. She shared about wanting to spend more time with her young children, and she mentioned exploring new hobbies. And then the negative feelings about her colleague would overtake her thoughts, and she’d return to that narrative.

My goal was to help her reduce her stress so that she could problem solve her relationship with her colleague more effectively. I shared with her “the parts of us” coaching tool, reminding her that she has many parts, all of which want to be seen.

To show her what I meant, I started naming some parts in her that I saw. There’s a big part of you that is really upset about your colleague’s communication, I said. There’s a part of you that really wants to spend more time playing with your kids. And, there’s a part of you that wants to set boundaries to have more fun in your week.

She added, there’s a part of me that wants to confront my colleague. There’s a part of me that’s ready to let go and move on. There’s even a tiny part of me that can feel joy right now.

As we recognized and named the different parts of her, my client’s brain calmed down. It shifted from seeing only the negative to seeing other possibilities to focus on. It shifted from a victim story to a story of agency and choice.

That’s the power of using the parts of me coaching tool. It’s a stress management tool that invites peace and calm into the brain and body because it’s a tool of allowing. It allows us to be multi-faceted. It allows us to be complex, interesting people who have full lives, with a variety of thoughts and emotions.

Stress happens when our brain feels forced to make a choice and choose only one way to be, think, or feel. Because it’s just not true that we have to make a choice about only one way to think or feel.

Practicing the parts of us tool helps us build mental agility and flexibility. It helps us to hold multiple perspectives as true. Because they are.

When we appreciate the complexity of the human experience, we can give grace to ourselves and others. We can be more intentional and thoughtful, and see solutions more easily. We're better leaders and fuller human beings.

So let's bring this to you. When you find yourself too easily slipping into a stressed brain mode that's prone to catastrophizing or getting stuck in a fixed perspective, please try this tool.

Take a breath, pause, and look for and name the different parts of you.

What's one part of you?

What's another?

What's a third?

As you honor all the parts of you, you'll be helping your brain and body have more calm and peace of mind. And when you can hold multiple points of view at the same time, you're not only a better colleague and family member, you're also a more compassionate and understanding human being.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you would like to have a coaching session to think through and name the different parts of you so you can have more peace of mind, please reach out. You can email me at deb@debelbaum.com or go to my website debelbaum.com to schedule a complimentary consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!