

REAL

Masterclass

with

Catherine &
Duane O'Kane



(thrive)

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Disclaimer:

This self-study series is intended for personal growth and development purposes only. It is important to note that this program is not a substitute for therapy. Participating in this course may bring up challenging emotions or memories associated with early childhood experiences. If you have unprocessed childhood trauma, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or have any other mental health diagnosis that may make you unsuitable for this self-study course, we strongly recommend seeking guidance from a qualified therapist or mental health professional instead. By enrolling in this self-study series, you acknowledge that you were informed about the potentially triggering nature of the content and accept personal responsibility for your decisions, actions, and outcomes resulting from the knowledge acquired during the program. The course instructors and organizers are not liable for any direct or indirect consequences arising from the implementation of the course materials.

Introduction

Meet relationship experts Catherine and Duane O'Kane

What do we know about relationships? At times, they sustain us, can torment us and are one of the most central aspects of being human.

Thriving, healthy relationships aren't fiction – and with the right skill set, they are within reach of everyone.

Welcome to the REAL Mastersclass with Duane and Catherine O'Kane. With over 60 years of combined counselling experience, Duane and Catherine have transformed thousands of lives and relationships with their work in Canada and abroad.

Duane and Catherine tell us that “there is now an abundance of well-constructed long-term research that shows unequivocally that human beings are happier, healthier, and live longer when we have strong relationships.” Through this series, you'll learn more about connecting with others and staying authentic to yourself. You will learn how to change the patterns from your past that impact your relationships today.

We recommend you engage with this masterclass in a private space where you feel safe and comfortable. Take a moment to breathe, get comfortable, and settle in with your favourite tea or drink.

You may want to have a notebook and pen to take notes or work through some of the exercises you'll find in this workbook.

We suggest watching each episode and taking a few moments to jot down your initial reaction before reading through this workbook. It can be helpful to look back on your initial reaction as you reflect on the core message of each episode. Take your time, let yourself feel and integrate. Listen to your body as you move through the program. If you're a person who likes the information upfront, feel free to watch the whole program, then watch again and do the exercises.

It's natural to feel discomfort or resistance to certain ideas as you explore your own challenges and trauma. We ask you to join us with an open mind and allow yourself to feel fully into your body in this series. All responses are valid, and there is no wrong way to approach this experience. You may wish to engage with an in-person therapist to support your learning and healing through this. We recommend psychotherapists with a relational/experiential approach.

Ready? Let's Thrive.



“

**It all starts with you.
You are here to be
yourself, to be authentic,
loving, vulnerable, brave,
and honest.**

”

What is happiness

In this first episode, Duane and Catherine discuss the central theme of happiness versus connection.

Many spiritual traditions and wellness experts agree: that the pursuit of happiness above all else is a thorny path. Happiness is an emotion. Emotions are, by their nature, transient – all emotions will pass. It is not possible to sustain one emotion constantly, and fixing your goal upon this will lead to disappointment.

Core messages:

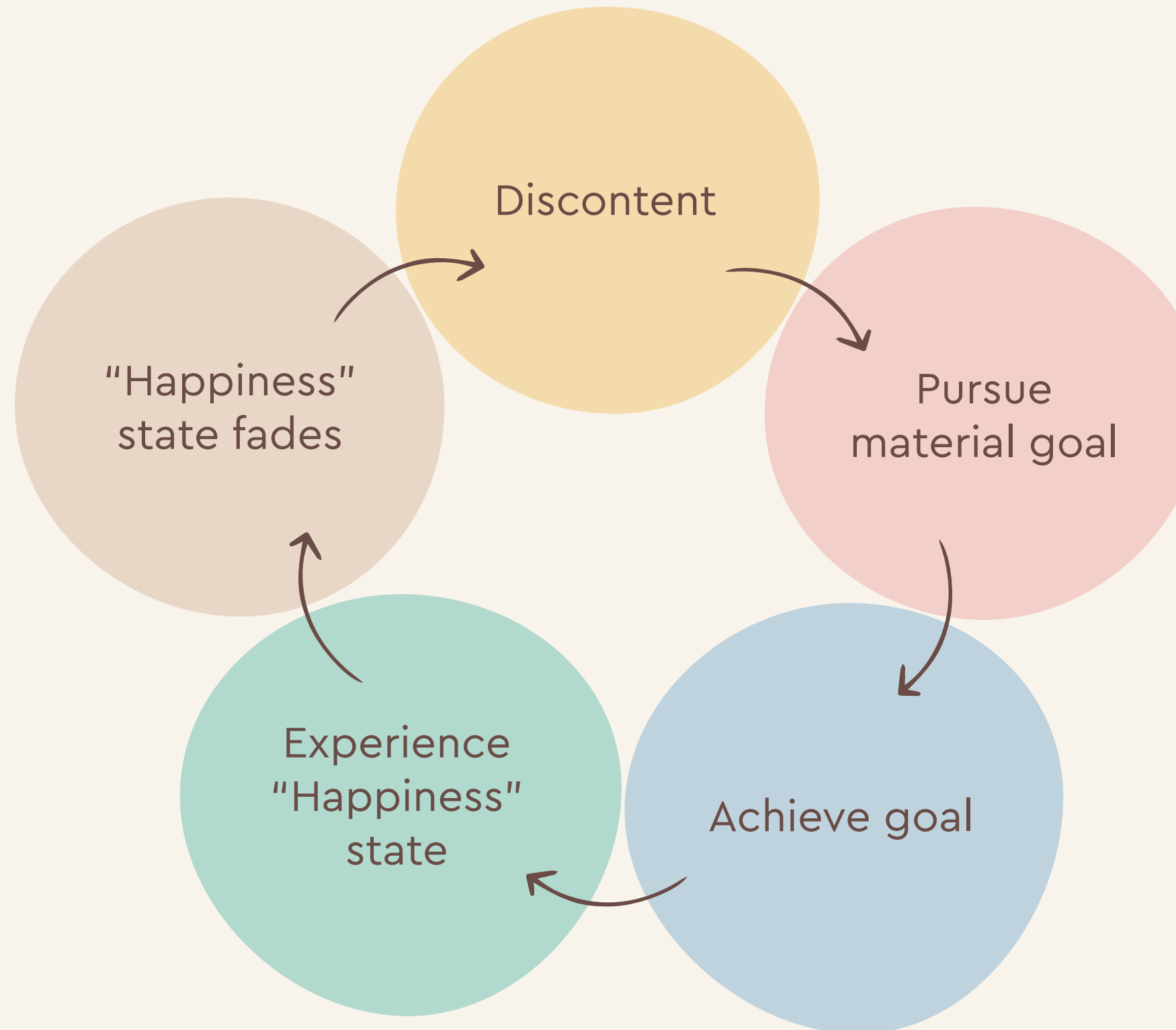
- The underlying premise that "happiness" is a worthy goal in life creates psychological suffering.
- Happiness is a transient emotion, one that is humanly unsustainable.
- Happiness is a by-product, not a goal
- The cycle starts in a moment of unhappiness. We identify something outside of self to pursue under the guise of happiness. We might get the thing, but things provide a moment of pleasure at most. When the pleasure fades, we embark on a new pursuit.

Takeaway

Focus on how to replace happiness with connection as a goal.

We are all lonelier than ever before, yet we shy away from true, authentic connection. By opening ourselves up to the experience of being seen, we are offered the opportunity to connect – and through these connections – find comfort, safety, and contentment.

An abundance of well-constructed research has clearly shown we are happier, healthier, and live longer when we have strong relationships.



Reflection exercise

- 1 Duane talks about the cycle of pursuit and disappointment which we all do to some degree.

To what extent do you engage in this cycle? Describe your cycle.

- 2 Catherine led you through a brief thought experiment designed to help you become aware of how connection can shift your experience – in this case, of an event that would stretch you somehow.

What did you notice happening inside you with your difficult person?

What did you notice happening inside you with your safe person?

- 3 Try setting an intention for connection. Find ways to make contact casually with those around you as you move through your day.

Say hello and smile at a stranger, or make plans for lunch with a friend.

What happens to your mood when you do this?

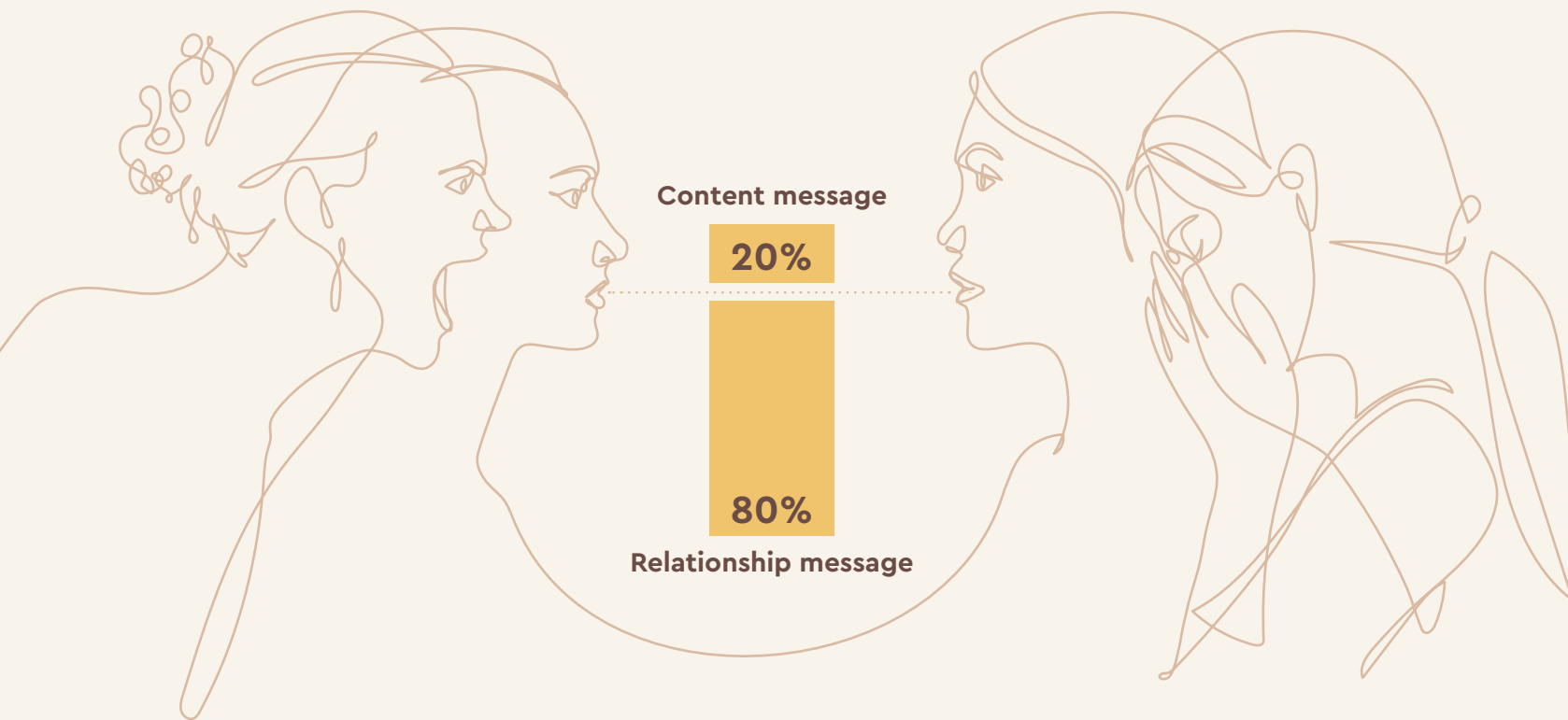
“ In the context of connection, we thrive and become fully alive – this is a more worthy goal than the sliver of human experience we label 'happiness.' ”

3

The power of relationship messages

This episode focused on the power of relationship messages, conveyed through body language and tone of voice.

Every time that we are communicating with another human being there are 2 things happening. There is the content and what you are saying with your words, and then underlying that is a relationship message which is conveyed through body language and tone of voice. That relationship message is an emotional message.



Core messages:

- We all live within a network that we cannot remove ourselves from.
- The influence of others is part of the feedback you respond to and, in turn, influences the ways in which you engage with the world.
- Content would take up 20% these are our words. The more powerful component of any communication is the relationship message, that takes up 80%.
- A message of disconnection is still a message sent.
- We must pay attention to what we are transmitting into the web of connection and how much of it is influenced by our subconscious, our past, and our emotional state.

Takeaway

Most of us imagine we know what we believe about ourselves, others, and life. In reality, who we are emotionally is not necessarily connected to who we believe ourselves to be cognitively. We can start exploring our emotional wiring by becoming aware of what we feel and how we communicate that to others.

You may wonder why your world has arranged itself in a less-than-ideal way. Most people aren't aware of the emotions driving some of our decisions. Exploring this aspect of your identity can allow for incredible personal growth.

Reflection exercise

Catherine speaks about how our bodies are constantly in the middle of a sensory experience. You constantly take in conscious and unconscious signals from others that ripple onward to affect your emotional state. It's easy to lose touch with our inner emotional state – we all constantly experience emotion. Our body reacts and processes these emotions, even when we have intellectually separated ourselves from the feelings.

Take a moment in a quiet space to ground yourself.

Start with **3** deep breaths,
inhale and exhale to the count of **4**
Look around you and name **4** things you can **see**
3 things you can **feel** *
2 things you can **hear**
and **1** thing you can **smell**

**Please review our table of feeling words on pg 12 & 13 to assist you with this exploration*

1 What emotions are you feeling right now?

Were you aware of these emotions before?

How do you communicate your emotions to others, directly and indirectly?

2 How do you express sadness, happiness, anger, love, etc.?

For example, do you go loud when you're angry
or give someone the 'silent treatment'?

Do you express your love verbally to those you care about?

Are you physically affectionate?

3 Knowing your style of emotional expression and considering the power of the emotional or relationship message, what might those on the receiving end of your communications feel?

What emotional message do you most want to convey to those you care about?

How could you communicate or amplify that positive relationship message?



The most important question

Is the universe a friendly place or not?

How you answer that question for yourself will guide your approach to life, to relationships, to risk, and your future. Catherine tells us that we are all wired in similar ways. Humanity is designed to protect itself, but sometimes this can get in the way of real connection.

Core messages:

- Most of us are wired to be cautious and to view the universe as an unfriendly place. There is a good reason for this, but it can be damaging.
- We all eventually arrive at a station in life where everything stops, and we end up in repeating patterns, like in the movie 'Groundhog Day'. We lack the emotional toolkit to progress further.
- When you begin to experience things like events, emotions, and even relationships repeating in their similarity, this is a sign you have arrived at this station.
- Asking for help to expand your emotional toolkit to progress further can be freeing as we unpack the beliefs we hold about ourselves.

Takeaway

Just because you have adapted to the traumatic experiences you have lived through doesn't mean they were normal or acceptable.

You have the power to choose whether you continue to reinforce your existing belief system that teaches others to do the same, or to teach others the way out of that same struggle that they might share. i.e. – you have influence, and you have power.

Reflection exercise

Throughout your lifetime, have you viewed the world for the most part as friendly or unfriendly? Consider what life experiences may have shaped your view and if you are ready to shift your mindset toward one of connection. We will be reflecting more on this in upcoming sessions.

In this session, you hear Duane and Ron's stories. Ron is particularly vulnerable as he shares his deeper story. What happens inside you as you listen to Ron? How connected to him do you feel as he shares his deeper story?



5

How we lose ourselves in 'The Basement'

We are born wired for love and connection. This remarkable fact allows us to bond with our caregivers in infancy, but starting our lives as entirely feeling creatures also leaves us vulnerable to our families pre-existing patterns of behaviour.

Your family has a history and a way of being that predates your entry into it. Duane talks about how we cultivate a 'suspicion of self' – a belief that we are alone, in the way, unworthy, unloveable – defective in some deep, innate manner.

But the truth is, this 'suspicion of self' quickly becomes a 'conviction of self' which rests in the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of what has happened to us. The trauma of disconnection is embedded deeply and follows us into adult life.

Core messages:

- The trauma of disconnection leads us to feel fear and shame about parts of ourselves, and we lock this trauma and the pain associated with it in our subconscious – in the basement of our psyche.
- Trauma can occur in small moments. It can occur in adulthood. Trauma is not necessarily linked to large events or childhood, but we are particularly vulnerable as children because we do not have the cognitive ability we have as adults.
- We learn to separate the feeling from the thought because the feeling is too painful. This emotion is what we lock in the basement, and it is what must be addressed.
- The fear of being seen can become overwhelming and take control of your life.
- We believe we are defending ourselves against an unfriendly universe. Instead, we are being controlled by our fear and our hidden self.

Takeaway

Moments of disconnection that are repaired build resilience – humans have an incredible ability to heal in connection. Disconnection that is not repaired is at the heart of trauma. We have nowhere to go with our pain and lock it down in 'the basement'.

We all have a particular intellectual understanding of who we are and how we operate, which differs from how we feel. This is the dilemma facing most adults: we know better intellectually, and what we know doesn't match how we feel. But however hard we try, we cannot talk ourselves out of our feelings. It is the feeling that gives the mistaken belief so much power.

Our response to the fear of being seen, judged, or rejected is powerful and helps us understand what we have locked in the basement of our psyche. The suspicion of self can lead us to need utter control over everything in our life. However, this overwhelming need to control and play a role will ultimately run our lives.





'I'm scared
to show
myself '



'I don't feel
safe'



'Am I good
enough,
do I
belong?'



'I'm failing
them as a
Mother'



'Did I do
it right,
is there
something
wrong
with me?'



'I feel so
alone in
this world'



6

Hello from the basement



'I'm alone...
I will always
be alone'



'We're going
in to correct
that crazy
conclusion
because it's
not True'



'I'm always
in the way'

Reflection exercise

What is your automatic response when something emotionally painful or impactful happens? Are you able to feel? Do you get overwhelmed with feelings, or do you go numb? Do you turn towards others or pull away? This automatic response is there for a reason. How you respond to emotional pain is how you have learned to respond.

Do you relate to the idea of feeling flawed, not good enough, unloveable etc.? Many people refer to this experience as an internal 'critic.' How does this unconscious or conscious feeling play out for you? Where do you run into the fear of not being good enough?



Consider this question:

When someone looks at me long enough, what am I afraid they will see?

Stand in front of a mirror and look at your own reflection for a minute.

What do you see?

Jot down your thoughts. We'll use these in the exercise found in the next episode.

Our survival strategies develop

Learn how the Hide, Pretend, Defend strategies build your strategic self – and how to dismantle these.

As we explore the basement of our psyche and the suspicion of self, it's important to remember that the basement is not all of who we are. We're focusing on this aspect of our being because it often gets us into trouble.

We develop a strategic self by figuring out what we have to do to survive – spiritually, physically, and emotionally. This strategic self compensates for our internalized suspicion of self.

Core messages:

- To develop a strategic self, we try different types of behaviour until we find one that delivers the reaction we crave to feel valid and secure.
- Presenting our strategic self to the world is a way to get the love we need and an attempt to hide the suspicion of self we harbour.
- We may use one or more of three key strategies: Hide, Pretend, and Defend.
- The 'Hider' will disappear, fade into the background, escape and ghost in their own life. The 'Pretender' projects a persona designed to achieve what they long for, such as acceptance, approval, admiration, love, respect, care etc... The 'Defender' protects what is hidden in the basement, using aggressive or passive-aggressive strategies we learn in our families.

Takeaway

When we tell ourselves stories about who we are, we develop a suspicion of self and a strategic self. We also develop strategies and behaviours to try and receive the type of emotion or affection we crave.

By addressing the core of the stories and beliefs we hold about ourselves, we can alleviate the overwhelming fear of being seen. This, in turn, allows us to connect with others in a real and authentic manner.

Two selves: Real and Unreal

Join an intimate glimpse into the struggle with the authentic self.

This episode focused on an intimate glimpse into the struggle with authentic self and who we believe we should be or need to be, to receive love. The core problem with being loyal to our Hide, Defend, and Pretend personalities is that we stop being real by doing this.

When we stop being real, we also stop taking risks. We find ourselves sitting on the sidelines of life, waiting for things to magically happen to us rather than entering the playing field. The good news is that the REAL self is still there, untouched and undamaged, as is so apparent in Nicola. The part of her that knows the truth is there. The trick is to make contact with that truth and let it guide us into new territory.

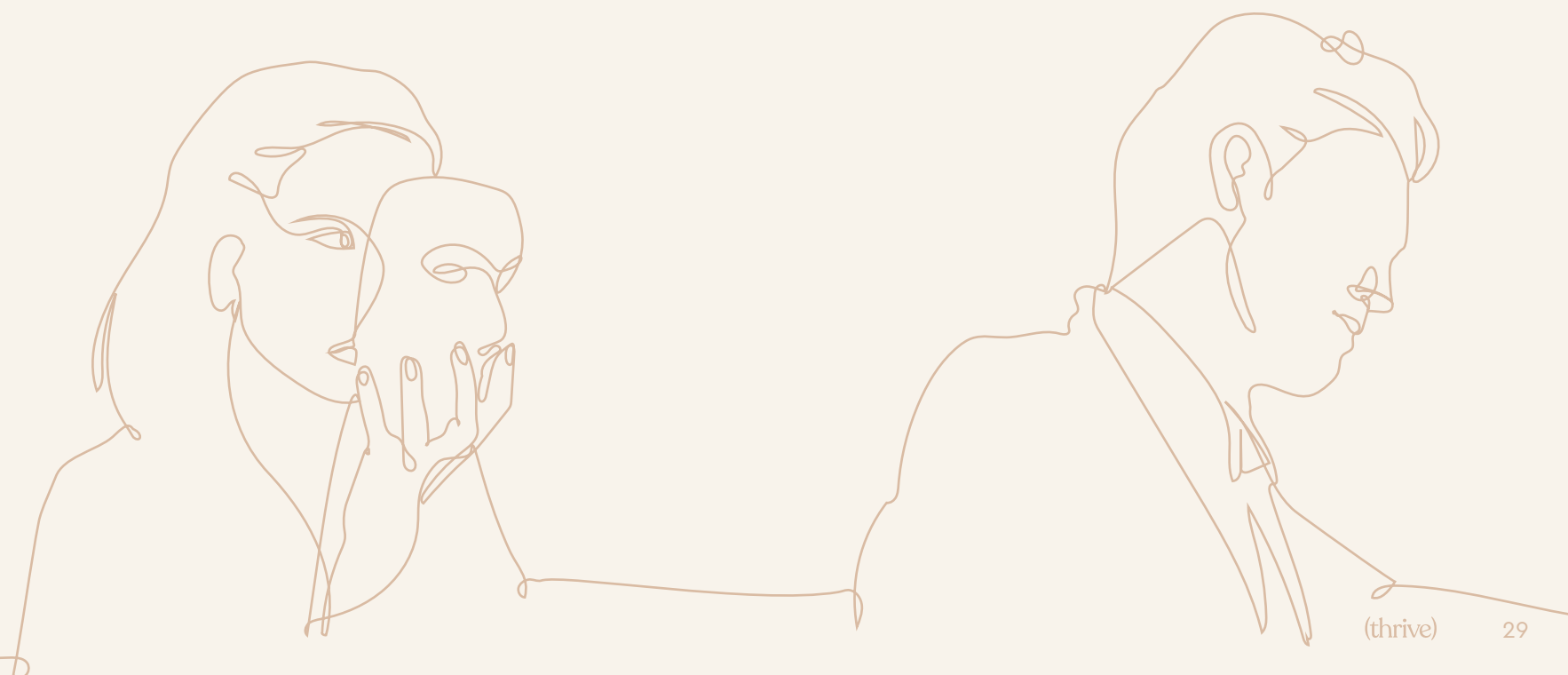
Core messages:

- We are sometimes unaware of how we contribute to our dilemmas and life frustrations by staying loyal to our Hide, Defend and Pretend personalities.
- Our defences often create what they are intended to defend against; for example, when Nicola believes she must be perfect and presents that persona, others hold her to that standard as well.
- When we drop our defences and reveal our vulnerability, others are drawn to us. Vulnerability invites connection.
- Connection provides the safety we need to explore ourselves deeply and open up to new exciting possibilities.

Takeaway

As we have seen, we aren't individuals; we are individuals-in-constant-connection. We can only ever truly understand ourselves in the context of the relationship landscape that surrounds us, our relationship web. The connecting lines in our relationship web are active: we are constantly downloading, uploading, and passing along emotional information, both positive and negative, helpful and harmful. The stories we tell ourselves form part of this emotional information.

How we hide, pretend, defend, and offend in all our relationships is key to what we end up experiencing in life. Freeing ourselves to be REAL opens up exciting new territory, internally and in all our relationships.





Reflection exercise

Nicola's process is a beautiful illustration of how we run into our suspicions about ourselves (the 'yappy voice') and automatically become strategic (in Nicola's case, be strong, be perfect). You watched Nicola work her way through the historical fear behind that strategy (Dad being angry), and find her way into real connection with the people in front of her. She felt **'free to be me'**.

Like Nicola's story, we invite you to do your own experiment.

- 1 **What is the possibility you would like to achieve for yourself?**
- 2 **What does your yappy, critical voice say about you?**
- 3 **Where did that voice come from?**
- 4 **How do you respond when that voice says those things?**
- 5 **Reflecting on Nicola's process, what step do you need to take to change that story in your head and enter new territory?**
- 6 **If your suspicion about yourself is not true, what is true?**
- 7 **What step would you naturally take, believing that new possibility?**

Acting out and acting in

Explore how your tendencies to act in or act out impact your relationships.

Using our strategic self is often not enough to avoid all discomfort and anxiety that is bubbling up from our basement. When our anxiety at being seen and being real arises, it's common to turn to counter-productive 'anxiety binding' behaviours. These might make us feel better in the moment, but in the long term only produce a 'groundhog day' effect where we are trapped in a cycle of our own making.

Core message:

- When we can't stand the anxiety we are experiencing, we commit to alleviating it in an unhealthy way. We seek to engage in acting out or acting in behaviours.



Acting out

Over-functioning:

caretaking
perfecting
performing
pleasing
approval-seeking
enabling
controlling

Aggression:

fighting
threats
violence
passive aggression

Triangling:

gossip
affairs

Addictions:

sex
gambling
shopping

Acting in

Under functioning:

distancing
avoidance
cutting off
emotional cocooning

Self-Aggression:

depression
suicidal ideation
eating disorders

Addictions:

food or substance
(which can escalate into acting out).

Escape into fantasy:

porn
TV
internet
devices

All these acting out and acting in behaviours are meant to alleviate anxiety, but they only work in a very temporary way. Addicts and alcoholics know this story well.

Reflection exercise

- 1 What acting out or acting in behaviours do you engage in?
- 2 What situations trigger these reactions?
- 3 Take a moment to reflect on one of these situations. What was happening inside you, that triggered the behaviour?

What were you thinking and feeling?

What happened to these thoughts and feelings when you acted out or in?

Takeaway

We will never address what is in the basement if our go-to is the harmful acting out/in behaviours we engage in. When we choose to commit to refraining from the acting out and in behaviours, what is hiding in our basement will make itself apparent.

When this becomes apparent, we can address it and eventually, we will not feel the desire to turn to these acting in or acting out behaviours in the same way.



Our real self is in the basement

Learn why "when the strategy works, it still doesn't work".

We develop our sense of who we are in connection. When we see ourselves being seen, hear ourselves being heard, and feel ourselves mirrored by our caregivers and loved ones, we learn how to be real.

The part of us that gets us into trouble in life is born in the moments of disconnection. The strategic self we develop is not real,
the real self is in the basement.

Core message:

- Our strategy system is about thinking our way out of a dilemma – how can I survive this emotionally? How can I get the love I crave back? The real self is emotion-based and fully integrated. What we know matches what we feel to be true in this state.
- In the part of us locked in the basement, what we know doesn't match how we feel. As long as we leave that pain locked away, we will seek outward-facing explanations for the pain we feel. We'll tell ourselves, "I am angry because of him," not "I am angry because of what I hold inside."
- There is a difference between the healthy feeling of anger and the anger triggered by our fears. We look for external confirmation of our fear-based beliefs. We latch on to what agrees with the beliefs and fears we're already bringing along with us.
- If the strategy works, it still doesn't work. If we are externally validated by actions taken by our strategic self, how we feel internally will still be mismatched.

Takeaway

Our strategic self is not real. To be real, how we feel must match what we're thinking. When operating from the strategic self, if the strategy works, it still doesn't work. We still won't believe it inside if we are validated as being "perfect" by the outside world.

Anger is a natural, healthy human emotion that arises when a boundary is crossed. The other sort of anger – where something in the external world triggers a fear locked in our basement – when we are in this mode, blaming someone else is projected guilt and shame.

Your body is a mess of emotion and sensation and feeling, whether you are willing to address it or not. Those feelings are looking for ways to make themselves right. We're looking for people to blame, places to dump that guilt and shame, and unload what we already carry.



Reflection exercise

Think of a situation that always makes you feel angry, or 'triggered'. Consider if there are internal triggers in your basement – **experiences, memories, feelings** – that arise when you are in this anger-inducing situation.

Although not physically present, who else from your past might you also be reacting to?

When have you had these intense feelings before? With whom?

Can you tell the difference between healthy anger, and when you are triggered, reacting more intensely than the situation warrants?

What differences are you aware of?

The pursuer-distancer dance

Investigate your triggers to move past the point of discomfort in intimacy.

Intimacy in relationships is something that we all desire but often find difficult in practice. As couples come together at the beginning of a relationship, both parties hold such hope for a new future and a new story.

While a relationship progresses, there comes a time when we hit a wall. We feel scared to go further because we might be fully seen and rejected if we get closer to our partner. So, we begin to blame our partner for this fear.



Core message:

- We unconsciously learn how close we're "allowed" to become to someone from our family. When we cross this threshold, we experience fear and discomfort.
- When we attempt to stick to this allowable level of intimacy, things become positional instead of relational. We become focused on how we are perceived.
- Most people tend to take on the role of either Pursuer or Distancer. Pursuers believe they can be intimate and tend to chase their partner – over-functioning, over-planning, and backing away from threats to the relationship. Distancers become aggressive when confronted, run from intimacy, and try to protect themselves through distance.
- We tend to pick someone who replicates past patterns of intimacy, because we are used to it.

Takeaway

Most often, the other is not causing your distress. The other is triggering your distress. Duane and Catherine illustrate a pattern that played out in their relationship, based on what was triggered in their basements and the automatic behaviours attached to that trigger. This is how difficult relationship patterns work. The problem is what you hold in your basement, which you end up transmitting into your relationship web, which sets up a negatively reinforcing situation with the people around you. Changing the definition of the problem allows for a new solution.

Moving past the point of discomfort in intimacy is where a relationship can truly begin. By sitting with this discomfort and not falling into old patterns of pursuing or distancing, we can begin to heal old wounds from within our relationship.

Reflection exercise

A '**pursuer**' is the one who wants more contact, and works to make it happen. The '**distancer**' is the one who tends to avoid contact and runs the other way.

- 1 Do you behave more as a pursuer or a distancer when you are in a relationship? Say more about what that behaviour looks like?
- 2 Think about how your answer relates to your fears of being seen in a relationship. **What do you hope to hide by pursuing or distancing?**
- 3 Consider where you may have learned this behaviour from – **was it modelled by a family member?**
- 4 What 'tool kit' did you inherit for navigating relationships in your family?



Redefining the problem

Duane begins this episode with an old Zen parable.

An old farmer had tended his fields for years with his only horse, and one day the horse ran away. His neighbour came by to offer his advice and opinion. **"Such bad luck."**

He said. The farmer responded, **"who knows whether it is good or bad"** to the confusion of the neighbours.

The very next day, his horse returned with three wild horses following behind. "Amazing," said the neighbour. "Such good luck!" Again, the farmer responded, **"who knows whether it is good or bad."**

When the farmer's son rode one of the wild horses the next day, he immediately fell off and broke his leg. The neighbour said **"such bad luck,"** and again the farmer responded, **"who knows whether it is good or bad."**

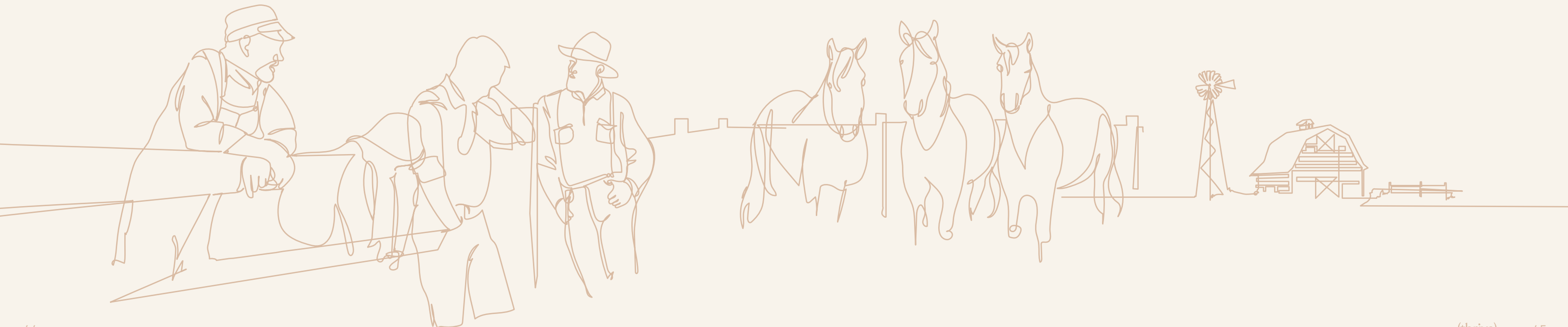
Soon after, the military came through the farmer's village to recruit young men. Because the son's leg was broken, they did not force him into service. The neighbour spoke to the farmer and said, **"such good luck!"**

"who knows whether it is good or bad," said the farmer.

We're always in the middle of a story. We're all a part of this ongoing story of the friendly universe, and we can't possibly know what comes next.

Core message:

- We think we know when a story ends, and we think we know what it all means. This cannot be possible for anyone.
- When you draw conclusions about a situation, you're halting the process of evolution. By stopping yourself from being open to new information, you trap yourself into the same behavioural cycle again.
- An enlightened master is in awe at the perpetual unravelling of the universe. Being able to hold onto awe and the knowledge that you don't know what it all means will allow you to relate to difficult circumstances.



Takeaway

When we talk about the universe being friendly, it's not meant to be a "fluffy" and over-optimistic view – there are really hard things happening in this world. But human beings love and care, and if we allow this to be our guiding force we can make a genuine difference.

The perspective from which we see the world from impacts how we see what is in front of us. Changing the definition of the problem allows for a new solution.

Reflection exercise

Evolution stops when we reinforce old, mistaken beliefs by finding evidence to prove these over and over again in our current life experience. We see what we are looking for, unconsciously.

- 1 **Can you relate to the idea of seeking evidence to prove a painful belief? What are you looking for?**

- 2 Consider a time when you stretched, grew, succeeded at something that was important to you, or had a positive new experience.
What was that like?

Did your perspective change, and if so, how?

How did you feel about yourself?

- 3 Think about a challenging situation in your life right now. Next, take a moment to tap into the experience you identified in #2, above. **See if you can reignite how you felt about yourself. From this place inside of you, does your perspective on the challenging situation shift, and if so, how?**

You can only heal in relationship

Begin working on the beliefs you hold in your emotional basement.

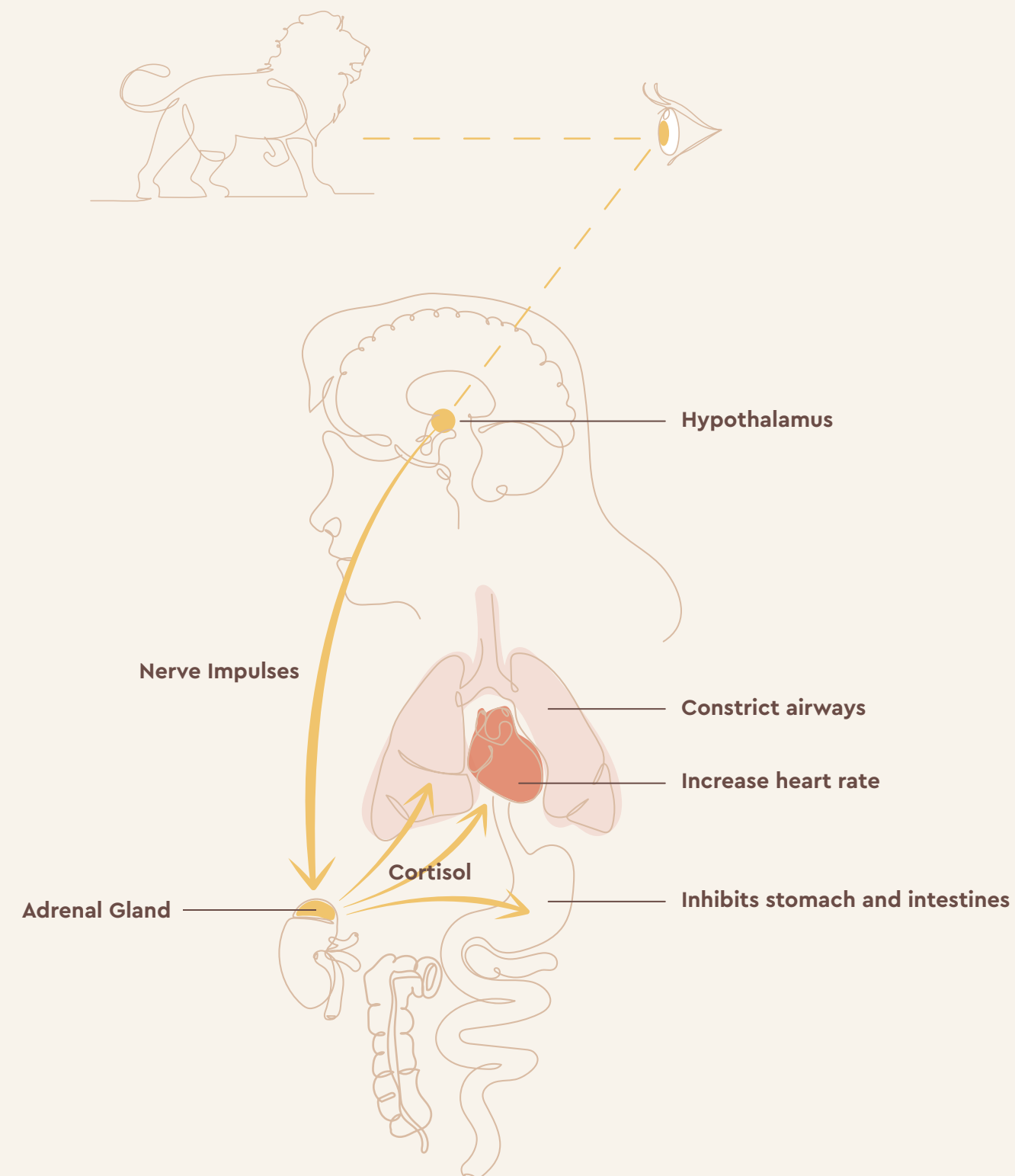
The emotional discomfort and pain that we try to avoid can teach us, if we let it. To do so, we must visit our basement to change what we believe. This can be done by using our feelings as a portal to identify the beliefs we have built over time.

This can be a confronting and difficult step because our **nervous system** responds when we are scared – an emotion easily triggered by the feelings we harbour in our basement. Safety is available in connection with a trusted other.

Core message:

- When working on our beliefs in our emotional basement, it is useful to remember that the antidote to fear, stress and anxiety is the feeling of safety – which happens in connection.
- It is so hard to let ourselves feel because our nervous system reacts to this process as a threat.
- Transformation occurs through feeling. Bringing loving attention to our pain is how something new can begin.
- We need an 'other' through which to be seen and known to see and know the self. When our inner experience is validated – when we feel seen and understood – it feels good, even in the middle of intense pain, because we aren't alone in it anymore.

Nervous system stress response





Reflection exercise

Please make sure you have heard the instructions to this next exercise before making a decision that feels right for you.

- 1 If you felt comfortable enough to undertake Catherine's exercise in this episode, take a few moments to reflect on how you felt afterwards. **What happened inside you as you told your story, and noticed the expression on your friend's face? If your friend responded verbally, what was that like? How did it feel?**
- 2 If you are not quite yet ready to try the exercise, **notice what thoughts and feelings are coming up for you as you considered sharing a painful moment from your past? How did your body respond to that idea?** This is just information for you.
- 3 You could consider this instead. Imagine that a difficult moment in your past happened to your best friend, rather than to you. Imagine your friend telling you about this difficult, painful experience. **How would you respond? How would you feel toward them? What happens when you imagine it from this perspective?**
- 4 You may not yet connect with the idea of pain your basement. If so, take a moment to reflect on some of the experiences you have had, particularly in childhood. **If those experiences had happened to a child close to you instead of you, what would you feel?**

Takeaway

Vulnerability invites connection, and the feeling of connection is the correction for the mistaken beliefs we hold about self. The aspect of self that we lock away is disconnected and suffering in isolation. The feeling of connection pulls us back into life and activates our internal connection to our core self. The more real we feel to ourselves, the more we perceive others accurately.

Our task is to let go of the pursuit of safety through hiding and defence and allow ourselves to be directed by our legitimate human need for love.



5 Skills of emotional responsibility

Step toward vulnerable communication with these valuable skills.

It doesn't matter how many self-help books we read in our lifetime or how many times we intellectually tell ourselves things like "I am enough" or "I don't need to be afraid of vulnerability." It will be difficult to change our existing patterns and practice vulnerability until we are prepared to feel our feelings and move through our emotional experience.

Learning how to enact a "contain and reflect" approach when an experience triggers something in our basement is an important step forward towards changing these patterns .

Core message:

- When we are triggered by something, it's normal for our typical automatic response to start. The key is to recognize this and take a step back. By asking ourselves, "what am I actually feeling?" we can learn how to live inside our own felt sense.
- By using the "contain and reflect" approach, we can feel our feelings (contain) and explore if the feeling is true or if it comes from something in our basement (reflect). This gives us the space to choose to take a non-defended and vulnerable action for connection.
- Communicate vulnerably, by stating a positive relationship intention (I love you, you're important to me), being accountable for yourself (I am sorry), and being transparent (I get scared that I am not enough).
- Apply the principle of "functioning at 100% of your 50%" in all of your relationships, by bringing and speaking for yourself, instead of about the other.

Takeaway

We are wired to depend on one another, to collaborate, to cooperate, to exist in community. Asking for help is one of the most vulnerable actions we can take. Focusing on establishing "rules" within your relationship that effectively help you avoid confronting those hidden and deeply felt beliefs in your basement means you will deprive yourself of the opportunity to dismantle and process these feelings. These feelings and fears are healed in connection with others. We are at our best when we feel connected.

Skill 1

Containing

If you have experienced trauma please follow Catherine's advice about using a guided meditation to support you exploring your inner landscape. In this first step we are allowing ourselves to feel what we are feeling, without allowing that feeling to trigger an automatic behavioural response (hide pretend defend response).

- If you feel triggered, pause and take a moment to turn your attention inside and notice what you are feeling. Get curious about what you are experiencing. Does this feeling feel familiar?

Skill 2

Reflect vs Reload

As you feel the feelings, get curious what those feelings are trying to tell you about who you are and what you are experiencing. Ask yourself some questions. What am I believing about myself? What am I believing about the other person? What am I making this issue mean? When in my past have I experienced these feelings and beliefs?

This step is about being emotionally responsible and from this place you can enter into the next step.



Skill 3

Vulnerable communication

1. Positive relationship message (80% felt 20% words)

- Kind, explicit and felt (example: I am having a really hard time right now, can we sit down and talk this through, you are important to me). Front loading this with what really matters gives the other a reason to listen to you.

2. Take Ownership

- I statements (speak from only your point of view)
- Separate facts from your interpretation
- Be accountable (find something you can apologise for)
- Be willing to be wrong (if you want to be right this will not work)

3. Be Transparent

- Reveal yourself (trust is formed when each person takes a step towards revealing parts of themselves)
- Where power dynamics are tricky – share the wisdom of your struggles



Skill 4

100% of your 50%

My opinion of you over in your 50% is **none of your business**, only share your opinion if you have been invited to.

Skill 5

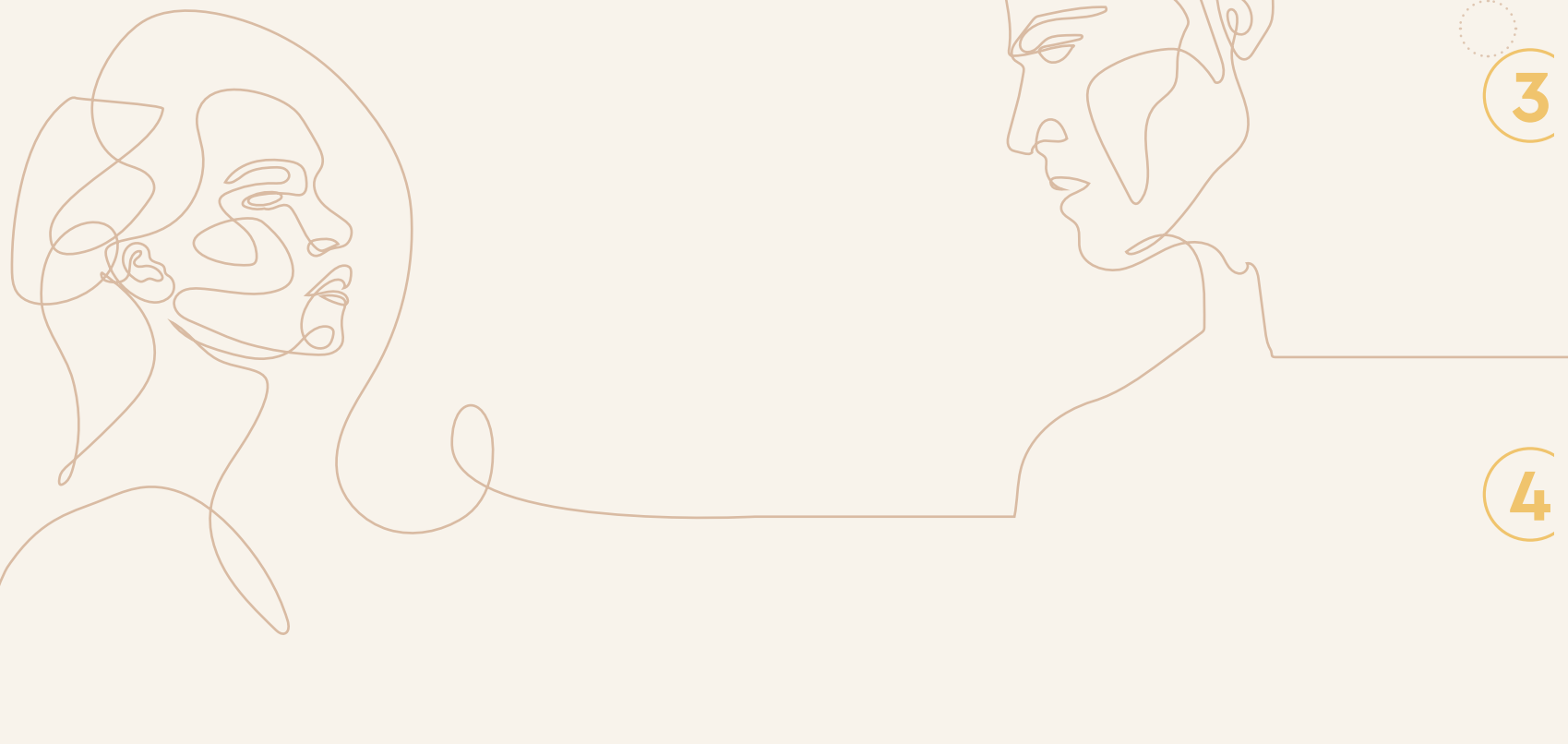
Asking for help

If you are already familiar with meditation and have a regular practice, consider how you can use these learned principles to apply the contain, feel and reflect approach to your practice. If you are not familiar, experiment with feeling based meditation available online. As Catherine suggests, guided meditation is a wonderful place to start, especially if you have experienced significant trauma at any stage in your life.

- Emotions are the driver for the painful patterns we find ourselves locked into, as Catherine illustrates here with her personal story. The turning point for her was considering: What if my fears about myself are not true? What if I am okay as I am. What if you are okay, just as you are? What if your fears about yourself in the basement are not true? What happens inside you when you consider this possibility?

9 step chart

The next time you are triggered and choose to reflect rather than reload we invite you to follow our 9 step chart:



1

What is the Trigger? (event that you are predictably going home to that predictably causes emotional reactivity)

2

What do I make it mean? (About other/life/self)

3

Just like when in my life (JLW)

4

What do I do when I make it mean that? (acting out/in behaviors)

5

What is the cost when you react in this way? (What is the result in the end of your own reactivity to this situation? Where does it leave you? Feeling what?)

6

Do I actually know what it means?

(NO) *The answer to this question is always NO.*

7

What might it actually mean? (Widen the context...systemically or deeper view of the other and self etc)

8

What would I do or say if it meant that? (What actions would naturally follow seeing it differently?)

9

What would be the benefit to my life?

Reflection

What did I actually do or say after completing this chart?

What was the actual benefit to my life after what I did or say differently?



Step in stay in and look around

Congratulations!

You've completed the final episode of "Thriving in Relationship."

Throughout these episodes, Duane and Catherine have explored what it means to be authentic, how to connect with your hidden self, and the power of being Real in relationship.

In the coming weeks and months, how will you continue to practice the principles and skills covered in this course? Consider if a list of your most important takeaways would be useful to refer to from time-to-time.

Core message:

- Duane and Catherine have invited us to carry the over-arching principle of this course forward: step in, stay in, and look around.
- Stepping in will ask you to put down your armour, become authentically vulnerable, and walk bravely towards life's playing field as yourself.
- Staying in will challenge you with discomfort as you maintain a connection with yourself – including everything you've worked so hard to hide. Lean in to this long overdue meeting with yourself.
- Looking around at the playing field, acknowledging that hurt is still possible, and continuing onwards anyway is the next step forward.

Takeaway

Being on the playing field doesn't mean it will be all okay – we know that hurt people hurt others, and it's impossible to protect yourself from all negativity.

Know that we can learn to love one another, respect one another, and be real together.

By undertaking this course, you've explored important aspects of yourself and built a toolkit that will allow you to connect with your authentic self – and to share that self with others in a genuinely real way.



**Thank you
for joining us
on this journey.**

(thrive)