

LESSON 2

Understanding What Happens Physically

Not only do your emotions from similar past wounds combine with your most recent hurt, your body has chemical reactions which make releasing the past difficult. Your emotions trigger parts of your brain and the body's stress response increasing the difficulty.

This lesson is to show you that your emotional pain has a physical cause and difficulty releasing it isn't a weakness of character.

YOUR BRAIN REACTS IMMEDIATELY

When you discover you've been betrayed, rejected, or your loved one is gone, your brain and body react immediately.

YOUR BRAIN ACTIVATES A SERIES OF PHYSICAL RESPONSES RESULTING IN CHEMICAL PRODUCTION THAT AFFECTS YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS:

1. **Your limbic or emotional brain reacts to your emotional pain or trauma.** This activated the stress response producing fear and anxiety.
2. **Extreme emotional trauma can result in PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder).** PTSD can make changes to the brain which can be long-lasting. The result is extreme emotional sensitivity affecting relationships with others, yourself, and your environment.
3. **Your prefrontal cortex, the thinking part of your brain, is stressed.** This makes it difficult to think clearly and may cause problems with your memory.

EMOTIONAL PAIN TRIGGERS YOUR STRESS RESPONSE

Your body's response to loss and betrayal is ancient. You need people to survive both physically and emotionally.

Your body developed physical responses to help you stay alive. Many of these make it difficult to release painful feelings.

SEE HOW:

1. **Your stress response, also called Fight-Flight-Freeze, activates stress hormones:**
 - **Adrenaline, produced by your adrenal glands on top your kidneys, is released.** Being rejected, betrayed, or losing your loved one is certainly stressful.
 - **Adrenaline focuses your attention on the painful experience.** This focus makes letting go difficult.
 - Norepinephrine, produced by the adrenal glands and the brain, is similar to

adrenaline. Norepinephrine combined with adrenaline are designed to help you run away or fight to save your life.

- **The challenge with emotional wounds is that there's no place to run to.** You end up "stewing in your own juices," making it difficult to let go of what happened.
- Cortisol, activated by the brain and produced by the adrenal glands, is the stress hormone which does the most damage. It weakens your immune system, can mess up your digestion system, and can cause weight gain.
- These stress hormones can save your life when you need to react immediately, like jumping out of the path of a speeding car. With emotional pain, they interfere with your health and make it difficult to let go.

2. **Sex hormones are affected.** You might not think that emotional pain would affect your sex hormones, but it does.

- Estrogen increases in both men and

women, making them more sensitive to stress. Since women have more estrogen to begin with, this affects women more.

- Higher estrogen levels in men lead to a decrease in testosterone.
- **High estrogen levels in both men and women lead to an increase in depression.** When depressed, it's more difficult to let go of the hurts and pains of the past.

3. **Neurotransmitters: Chemicals produced by the brain.** Your brain reacts immediately to every change in emotion. Your brain responds to your painful feelings by producing neurotransmitters which act with the other body chemicals discussed above.

- Dopamine, when you're stressed, acts on the very front part of your brain (prefrontal cortex) and makes it difficult to think straight. When you can't think straight, you can't logically think through what is happening to you.
- Acetylcholine can interfere with your

sleep. When you can't sleep, you can't think well, you're more sensitive emotionally, and have greater difficulty handling the "ordinary" stresses of life.

- Glutamate is crucial for your brain and your health. **When you have too much, which can happen with the stress of betrayal and rejection, depression can be one of the side effects.**
- Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) is wonderful for being calm and relaxed. When you have too much, as with extreme stress, the reaction is opposite, resulting in anxiety.

SUMMARY

In this lesson, you've discovered some of the physical changes which occur during extreme emotional pain. These are changes you had no control over. Your body responded immediately to your emotional reaction to what happened.

The difficulty you've been having in releasing the past and moving forward is not your fault. You'll learn strategies to overcome what's happened in a later lesson.

YOUR MENTAL REACTIONS TO BEING HURT

In the next lesson, you'll explore what happens mentally when you've been deeply wounded. This includes how your thinking processes have been affected.

REFLECTION

Before moving to the next lesson, spend a few minutes reflecting on how the emotional pain you've experienced affected you. Prepare for releasing the pain, by saying aloud the statements given. This prepares your subconscious mind.

For each question, think back to before you were hurt. Evaluate how much the following emotions have changed on a scale of 1 to 5.

1 - Not at all

2 - About 25% more

3 - About 50% more

4 - About 75% more

5 - 100% or more than before the hurt

1. Anxiety: _____

Say aloud: Anxiety was chemically created by my

body and I will be able to reduce it.

2. Depression: _____

Say aloud: Depression was chemically created by my body and I will be able to reduce it.

3. Hopelessness: _____

Say aloud: Hopelessness was chemically created by my body and I will be able to reduce it.

4. Mental Confusion: _____

Say aloud: Mental Confusion was chemically created by my body and I will be able to reduce it.