

THE STORY WE TELL OURSELVES

EP #55

“Do I need a life coach?” You’re listening to Episode 55, with Rhiannon Bush

Welcome to the Do I need a life coach? Podcast. We’re here to discuss the ins-and outs- of the life coaching industry and give you tools to use, to see for yourself. I’m your host, Rhiannon Bush. Mother, management consultant and a passionate, certified life coach.

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Part of our ability to grow our emotional intelligence, and therefore our emotional maturity is about being able to label the emotions we’re experiencing at any given time. And also, more importantly, to understand the intricacies and differences we’re experiencing, especially the subtle ones, that we have different labels for when it comes to anything we might be feeling.

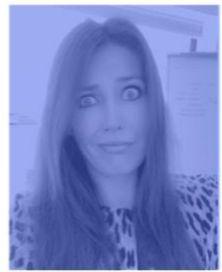
For example, there’s a difference between irritation and annoyance, and frustration, and anger. And the first step is knowing how they differ for you, and how they feel in your body, and where you feel them in your body. It’s a really valuable skill to learn to enhance your self-awareness and emotional intelligence. And when you can identify not only the emotions but the intricacies accurately, you can move to step 2 which is when you can begin to start asking and diving into what triggers them.

Any one of us can look up a definition for an emotion, and sometimes that’s a great place to start. Like Charles Feltman who defines trust as “choosing to make something important to you vulnerable to the actions of someone else.” But like the surgeon calling themselves a surgeon when they’ve never actually held a scalpel and cut somebody open, there is a huge difference between understanding something theoretically, and understanding it because you’ve had a whole body, immersive experience of it.

Emotions are exactly the same. You can learn what it’s like to be a leader through books, white papers and podcasts, but until you’ve actually lead people and dealt with the complexities that arise, can you truly call yourself one? Also when it comes to emotions and understanding where you feel, store and react can be closely linked to specific events that are likely to evoke certain emotions, consistently.

For example, I’m sure anybody who steps in a boxing ring and has an actual fight feels very similar things. Maybe not exactly the same, but similar. And it’s predictable, yes? Fear, shock, bewilderment, pain, adrenaline, focus, nervousness, maybe excitement, and others. And yes, to a degree, the more you do it, the more you can anticipate what feelings you’ll experience before you actually get into the ring and actually feel them, and you can then come





up with coping strategies ahead of time to be more resilient and stronger. But the predictable emotions are there.

Just the same as if we've suffered trauma or abuse or if we see a loved one or eat ice cream, there is a level of predictability, a general pool of emotional responses, that someone is likely to experience depending on that specific or even category of event. Instead of the feelings being broad and unknown, based on an event you could guess that somebody will experience emotions x, y and z because that would be, as society puts it, "normal".

For instance, it's fairly predictable that when somebody eats ice cream that they're going to feel joy, or happiness, or pleasure, or brain freeze. So while we can never truly understand the precise response or even the sequence of emotions somebody will experience because depending on their programming from a young age, it will change... but certain events will have a level of predictability around the emotional response somebody is going to have.

Another common misconception is that we feel one emotion, strongly and in its pure form at one time. When we describe other people, we often blanket them a specific way, always a particular emotion. For instance "she's peppy", "he's grumpy", "she's chatty". It's very linear, and it's a very singular, 2D, simplistic view point when we define or describe other people. Because otherwise, we don't know how to define people. While the English language is complex, we don't have so many words for so many things. When you think about love, you can identify what it is and where you feel it in your body. Well I could anyway, most of my life. Now I love Damien but it's so much more than that. And then I had kids. There isn't a word to describe that kind of love. We don't know how to characterise people or to have the language around the complexities of emotions that we feel at any one time and even the language we do have, we don't necessarily use as specifically as we could. I have a Dictionary of Emotions by Patrick Michael Ryan and words like 'forebearing' and 'solicitous' and 'opulent' aren't words I frequently use.

So sometimes we feel emotions that overcome our entire being, and when we have that experience we can, indeed, feel one predominant emotion in that moment. But it's often the case that we think so much faster than we feel, because of how our memories are stored, and how our memories create emotional representations in the body. So why we can't access the memories we have, we get the feeling when we experienced similar or associated events or when we experience something that triggers it.

The point I'm trying to make is that as a human being, we rarely only feel one thing. And because we rarely feel one thing at any given time, we are often thinking many different thoughts that are generating those different feelings in the body. So you might have been really excited to go on a holiday. And the predominant feeling is excitement. You know where you're going, you've planned your transfers, you're super excited. And then you start to





think about everything else you have to organise. All the things you have to take, the bags, you have to pack, travel insurance, getting someone to look after the dog while you're gone, what happens to the Amazon parcel being delivered while you're away, what about those commitments you've made and events you'll miss out on while you're gone... So excitement's just abruptly shifted to anxiousness. While excitement maybe the overarching, more intensely felt emotion, that doesn't mean that there aren't other feelings right there with it, ready to show up and take over.

I'll never forget Tyran Parke who was a teacher of mine at the Australian Institute of Music, telling us a story in this beautifully animated way about when he was accepted into the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. Being an actor, he re-enacted it all right in front of us, pure magic. So he received his letter in the post and was ecstatic. Immediately following that state of being was "oh gosh, I have to move to the other side of Australia"... "I'm going to be moving away from my friends and family"... "what if I get there and I'm terrible"... and it was the most perfect display of us in all our humanness. Which is the emotional spectrum we feel that slides up and down instantaneously, and all over the place, depending on the thoughts we're thinking and is anything but linear. It's full technicolour and immersive.

I was speaking with a client recently and I started talking about emotional bandwidth. And it was something I've never really considered before in great detail until I mentioned it and explored the idea of further, but when I talk about emotional bandwidth, I mean how intensely you have the capacity to feel.

I'll start with negative because negative are quite easy to bring back to mind. It's four times easier for us to experience negative emotions and access negative emotions than it is positive because it's a safety mechanism that we have hardwired within us to keep us safe and to keep us alive.

The way I consider emotional bandwidth, is if you feel negative emotions at a certain intensity, it's my belief that you can feel positive emotions of equal intensity, and at your most extreme. Think of it like a rubber band, and when it's stretched as far as it possibly can be, and it's as tight and tense as it possibly can be, this is your emotional bandwidth.

So people who have been through situations that are highly traumatic, and have been made to suffer in ways others cannot even comprehend, and by this I think of Eddie Jaku, Turia Pitt, and people like that.. while those events and trauma, were something of incredible pain and suffering, with those experiences your bandwidth increases. Meaning that if you can feel that intense one way (i.e. negative), then your bandwidth can also stretch in equal measure, the opposite way, and you can feel that equal intensity in the positive as well. I consider it to be almost the reward for being able to feel positive and good after being put in a situation that caused you so much pain and suffering.





I think that's a really empowering way to look at it anyway, whether it's true or not. By looking at it that way, it might make you feel better, it may give you hope and you also may get super curious about trying that on for size and I mean that in the positive emotion. A lot of the time, managing the thoughts we have is about being able to think a thought that feels better than the thought we're currently having. Let me repeat that. Managing our emotions is nearly always about being able to think a thought that feels better than the thought we're currently having. How true or factual the thought is, is secondary in importance because how that thought makes us feel is more important. You can always ask yourself when it's a question of does it really matter? Does it really matter if the thought is an accurate one or not?

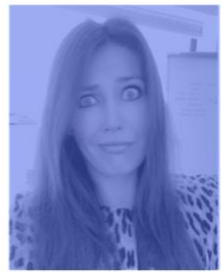
Our unconscious mind doesn't know the difference between whether something has happened or not. When we go to see a Marvel movie, we know the difference between fantasy and reality but when it comes to our achievements or things that have happened or not, our mind has difficulty distinguishing the difference. That's why there's been a lot of studies done on interviews with police officers and suspects of serious crimes, because if enough seeds are planted enough times, our minds piece it together for us. It's a gift and a curse, depending on the circumstances.

It's also a reason visualisation is such a powerful tool and is incredibly important when it comes to the law of attraction and us creating our future or achieving the goals we want. Because our minds don't know whether something has or has not come true already, whether it has happened or if it's in the future. And when our brains work like that, when we can visualise successes we want to achieve ahead of time, we can start to feel all of the feelings we anticipate we'll feel when we achieve it. And while it might feel slightly different in reality, we'll start vibrating on the frequency of those feelings and that visualisation which is what attracts the opportunity to us. And that's why the story we tell ourselves and the thoughts we think, need to be geared towards how they make us feel, rather than focusing on their accuracy.

So, in a way, I'm saying it's okay to lie to yourself. If that lie moves you forward. If that lie makes you feel better in that moment, and if that lie isn't going to hurt you or anybody else in the process. If it serves you, then why not?

I'm not saying it's okay to shift perspectives in a way that gives you a justification for bad behaviour. Or that makes it okay to paint a scenario in a light that isn't true to get you out of something, or to feel better about something that you did. The only time that that would be okay as if everybody else involved has actually forgiven you for the thing, and you're having trouble forgiving yourself.





What I'm saying is that asking yourself a different and better question, or telling yourself something that makes you feel better than the story you're currently telling yourself which is creating how you're feeling now, is beneficial.

I was coaching a client a few years ago and this client didn't know what to do with their life. They wanted a purpose and some direction and to decide on where they wanted to go and they were finding it very hard to find that direction. They knew they wanted to start their own business and contribute a lot in a way that gave not only them a really great life, but also helped others as well. And as I was coaching him, he kept saying "I just don't know what I want". I probed and coached and over time we worked through it. Eventually, the thought that made him feel better about it all was "what if it was already written?". He'd been putting so much pressure on himself to make a decision, to find his direction, and execute on his life's purpose that he was being weighed down with it instead of feeling inspiring and freeing and fluid. So by finding that one thought, everything shifted. And by everything, I mean emotionally. He was able to feel much better about not having a direction right this very minute, and by releasing that pressure it enabled space for him to feel feelings that would at the very least help him to find the thing he was looking for. Feelings like inspiration and hope and wonder and curiosity. All the things that will help him and serve him in finding a path, and finding a direction, and having a vision. When we're weighed down with emotions caused by the thoughts we put ourselves under, especially if those thoughts create pressure, stress, anxiousness, restlessness, comparisons, or feed into our 'I'm unworthy' or 'I'm not good enough' story, there is absolutely nothing about that that moves us forward. It's super unresourceful.

Are you struggling right now with thoughts that are weighing you down? If so, what are the thoughts and what do you need to think differently to shake off the negativity, and the pressure and the burden? If you can spend five minutes doing that, and identify the new thoughts to feel better, you're well and truly be on the path to making a shift that could change everything and help you find what you're looking for. In away that will serve you in solving the problem on a much deeper level.

Get curious and have a great week my friends. I will see you next week.

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Also, if there are any topics you'd like me to cover specifically about life coaching or the life coaching industry, visit rhiannonbush.com to contact me. Thanks for joining and I'll see you in the next episode of Do I Need A Life Coach?!

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