

fact

Your Story Is Keeping You Stuck



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Feeling stuck? Just the facts please....

We all get stuck.

And we all find ourselves falling into the same old patterns over and over again no matter how hard we try.

Are we deficient? Broken?

Nothing could be further from the truth. You (and your brain) are working flawlessly.

But that doesn't mean it's serving you well.

Here's the good news...

With a little attention and a bit of tenacity, you can shift anything. You just need to know how it all works.

3 important things to know about your BRAIN:

1. It embeds what is repeated.

This is called neuroplasticity. Your thoughts are actually little electric pathways in your brain. Similar to foot-paths in the grass, the ones you use repeatedly become more significant while the ones you ignore begin to close in and, over time, eventually fade away.

Most of the time, this is happening outside of your awareness. The people you listen to every day, whether in the media or in your real life begin to shape your thoughts and opinions. The tasks you repeat over and over again, like making coffee as soon as you wake up, or checking you email before you go to bed, become habits.

All of these thoughts and actions, through repetition, are changing your brain – changing you.

This is also true for your inner world. Tell yourself that you're fat, stuck, unlovable etc.... enough times and you'll change your brain to accept the message as truth.

2. It's skewed negative.

Think about your brain as a data base – an encyclopedia of all that you've learned and experienced over the years. Every time you need to make a decision, you consult this data base.



Hugely useful, right? Well, yes and no.

As a species, this data base has evolved for survival. To that end, it is wired for you to retain any information about potential danger.

This is good news. It's why your Spidey-senses tingle when you perceive movement in the dark corner of a parking garage and why you don't put your hand on a hot burner.

How does your brain know what's dangerous?

It's got its own little alarm system that rings out when something is unfamiliar, once alerted this system stands poised and ready to activate your fight or flight response. Any time the alarm has been activated, your brain carefully files the experience away into the data base. The louder the alarm – i.e. the greater the real or perceived danger, the bigger the chunk of data it files.

It makes perfect sense. It was really important for your ancestors to remember what sounds were associated with creeping predators to avoid being eaten and it's really important for you to recognize the sound a car makes as it approaches so you can avoid being flattened.

Where this gets a bit tricky is that your alarm goes off *whenever* something is unfamiliar or has a potentially negative association, not just when you're in mortal danger. This means your brain has filed away data chunks on virtually all of your negative thoughts and experiences.

This wouldn't be a very big deal if the opposite were also true. Unfortunately, it's not. It was far less critical to the survival of your ancestors to retain positive information like where the sweet smelling flowers grew. They may have enjoyed them in the moment, but finding them again would have brought neither food nor safety and so our brains, ever efficient, evolved to let that information go without filing it.

This can be a problem. Remember, you're drawing on the information in this database to make every choice and decision in your life. And it's skewed negative. Not that it's necessarily making your memories worse than they actually were (although it does this too sometimes) but that it's not storing the 100% equally true experiences of your life that were more positive in nature.

3. It loves evidence

I used to work with a woman named Gloria who, when curious about anything, would not stop until she got to the bottom of it. She referred to herself as Detective Tomato, which I still don't get, but the image cracks me up so much that I've continued to use it myself, and now – I give it to you.

Inside your brain lives, you guessed it, your own personal Detective Tomato – seeking evidence and creating predictions (basically stories) for everything that doesn't quite add up. Let's imagine that as you read this, a young girl rings your doorbell. When you answer the door, the girl growls at you and runs away.

Naturally, when you open the door, you absolutely know what it is that you're seeing – she's a young girl – you have no need to think about that any further. She is what she is. But, why is she there? Why did she growl at you? And where on earth is she running off to?



Because these are all unknown to you, Detective Tomato steps in to look for evidence. The ever-vigilant Detective will make a prediction of what may have happened based on, you guessed it – your data-base.

DT is excellent at her job and will next build a convincing body of evidence to support her prediction based on that data-base, which as you now know is skewed to hold more of your negative experiences.

Every action or in-action you take is impacted by those three key elements. And all of this is happening behind the scenes, just outside of your awareness, 100% of the time!

No wonder we feel stuck sometimes; we're in a default loop. Here's where the attention and tenacity come in.

3 Steps to getting unstuck:

1. Notice your thoughts.

When we're feeling stuck or frustrated, we tend to focus on what's wrong (or what we think is wrong) without paying much attention to what is going on inside. Simply pausing to notice your thoughts, (especially if you add in a couple of deep breaths here) will allow you the kind of perspective that's not available to you when you're in a reactive state.

2. Separate the facts from the stories.

(Use a separate piece of paper.)

- Begin by writing the thought you're having at the top of the page. For example: Perhaps you've just been ghosted by a would-be friend. You're hurt, confused and angry. You may think, I always end up losing, no matter how hard I try. He/she was just using me!
- Next write down the facts. A fact is any element of the thought that is 100% indisputable.

In this case the facts would be:

- I'm feeling hurt, confused and angry. (Your feelings are real, they are always a fact.)
- The last time I heard from this person was.....
- He/she has not responded to me since then.



Everything else is a story. It's the evidence your Detective Tomato has created to explain the facts. And it's based on your database. Someone with a different database may have a very different story.

3. Determine if a re-write would serve you better.

We're wired to create these stories, it's the way we make sense of the world. Some of them move us forward, and some of them get in our way.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What other possible stories could explain this situation? (You don't need to believe these.

This is simply an exercise in examining that there are infinite ways to explain the facts.)

- He got hit by a bus.
 - She's so caught up with herself that she's not even thinking about me.
 - He's angry about something.
 - She thinks I don't care.
 - He's been abducted by aliens.
- What serves best here?
 - At this point you may simply accept that any number of things could have happened and feel like you can just let it go.
 - You may feel that you want to respond to the situation in a way that would uncover more facts.

Or you can choose to re-write the story to one that serves you: "I haven't heard from him all week. It probably doesn't have anything to do with me, but dwelling on it is getting in my way. Instead, I'll...(insert alternate behavior).

Remember neuroplasticity. The more you practice examining and shifting your thinking in this way, the more automatic it will become.

