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IndigoBLUE

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By Sandeep Kulshrestha



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We settle into a blossoming May and we can feel more motivated as the days get longer and warmer. It is time to get outside and breathe in some fresh air. And to breathe some freshness into our goals. Are we ready to get onto a path of wellness? Do we need to get back on track and more focused? In this issue, our authors offer tips for practicing mindfulness and avoiding self-sabotage. We also learn how to maintain a strong heart center. We remain committed to helping our readers achieve their goals, maintain their health and wellness, and establish lasting, healthy relationships.

Laura Boyle

CONTRIBUTORS:

Publisher / Editor-in-Chief
Laura Boyle, MPH, MIPP

Writers
Sandeep Kulshrestha
Ronny Maye
Kate Orson
Laura Parr
Stan Popovich

Production and Design
Jennifer Strass

Photography
various photographers from Canva
Cover Photo: *PeopleImages*



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Five Ways to Address Self-Sabotage

By Sandeep Kulshrestha

Self sabotage is not that uncommon. We struggle with plenty of self-doubt, especially when we go through life transitions. But persistent self-doubt can lead to self-sabotage, and then we get in the way of our own success.



Photo: matt_benoit

Self-sabotage can happen consciously as well as unconsciously. For example, when we procrastinate or are driven toward perfectionism, we may end up sabotaging our life choices. A person who thinks that he or she is a perfectionist may end up missing the deadline and could be labelled as a 'procrastinator.'

Maybe you are a fitness enthusiast who runs 10 miles a day but then consciously indulges in binge drinking and eating junk food. Or are you an accomplished business executive who feels you do not deserve that promotion for reasons you are telling yourself? If you are telling yourself that you are not good enough, you are sabotaging your chance for that next opportunity.

Low self-esteem is often a trigger for self-sabotage. When someone is told consistently that they are not good enough or that they will fail in anything they undertake either in a career or relationship, this can lead to a pattern of self-sabotage. This is also linked to the kind of parenting received in your early years. Positive parenting can enhance self-esteem in children and prevent this pattern.

But if you missed out on a positive environment early on, there are a few ways in which self-sabotage can be managed, reduced, or even eliminated.

Journaling: Journaling the emotions that arrive out of self-sabotage can be therapeutic. Writing itself is a process that can release many pent-up emotions. You can journal about a way you could have handled a situation or emotion differently, boosting your self-esteem by documenting a lesson learned.

Hiring a life coach: Getting coached on self-sabotage and how to eliminate or minimize self-sabotaging behaviors is another way to achieve your goals. Coaching is a positive activity to get you to a better place in terms of your self-esteem. Life coaching is future focused and can

help you make important decisions. There are coaches who specifically work in the area of wellbeing and self-esteem.

Using positive affirmations: Positive affirmations help in enhancing self-esteem. People with higher self-esteem have less chances of getting into the mode of self-sabotage. Examples of positive affirmations are, “I am unique,” “I deserve to be happy,” “today I am better than yesterday,” and so on.

Meditating: Guided meditations are good ways to calm the mind and help you accept yourself the way you are. Mindfulness practice that focuses on being in the present helps people to stay calm and accept themselves.

Activating social connections: Having a group of friends or family who make you feel respected and loved can help you tackle your self-sabotage. Positive social connections have the capability to uplift you and enhance your self-esteem. If you have lost touch with few friends, it is a good time to rekindle those relationships. You may send a note of gratitude and a simple apology and try to reconnect. If you already have a great social circle, make sure that you interact with them often.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sandeep Kulshrestha



Sandeep was born and brought up in Agra, India, and is trained in business and psychology.

He is a former human resource professional, having spent almost 20 years in the private sector, working for organizations like the Holiday Inn and Sightsavers International. He also has been a well-being and leadership coach, author, and teacher, and is passionate about using positive psychology interventions and techniques. He is the founder of the International Institute of Positive Psychology, an online school based in Hyderabad, India, and loves writing poetry and connecting with new people.



Photo: FatCamera

Conversations With Kids Series: **EXPLAINING THERAPY**

By Ronny Maye

In past segments of this series, therapy has often been a listed resource for parents, caregivers, and children. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has reported 1 in 5 children have a mental disorder, but only about 20% of those children received care from a mental health provider. Truthfully, although mental health resources like therapy are becoming normalized, it is still met with many apprehensions due to the stigma and shame within some communities. There are also other barriers like cost and accessibility.



Photo: mmpile

For this segment in the Conversations with Kids series, we spoke with licensed clinical social worker [Brandon Outlaw of Tree of Life Counseling](#) to discuss what therapy can be like for children, how to introduce them, and what they can expect.

How Can Therapy Be Explained to Kids?

Often, children will not talk to adults in their life for several reasons. The most common cause is the fear of disappointing their parents or caregivers. Outlets like therapy can be the perfect place to feel comfortable opening up about their thoughts and feelings they may not openly express in other settings.

The simplest way to explain therapy to kids is by telling them they will speak to another adult about what they are dealing

with. It is a chance for them to share any big feelings they may be having or anything they are not ready to share with their parents or caregivers. You can further explain how therapy sessions can happen.

It can be helpful to share your concerns as the parent with your child beforehand and mention the possibility of therapy. For example, you could say, *“I noticed you are/aren’t XYZ. Is there anything you want to discuss with me, or perhaps we can work together to find a therapist?”* If there is a specific reason, such as the dynamic family shifting, try saying something like: *“Our family is changing due to XYZ, and I/we think it would be a good idea to visit a therapist to talk about it.”*

Whatever approach you take, avoid blindsiding your child with something

this big. It will not be ideal to surprise them with an unexpected therapy session randomly.

What Is the First Session Like?

The first session is called an intake or consultation. This session will exchange information between the therapist, parents, and the child. The child or parent can share any concerns, any prior diagnosis, family dynamics, general demographic details, and expected outcomes. During the intake, the therapist should also be able to share and explain potential therapy methods. Both the child and parents can also use the intake as a time to ask the therapist questions. The intake session also allows the child to tour the office to acclimate to a new environment. Together, the parents, child, and therapist can decide if they would be a good fit for each other. However, the parents and child should take time to discuss the visit together after the intake. *How do they feel about the therapist? Is this someone they would feel comfortable talking to? Do they feel ready to give therapy a try currently?*

When you decide to proceed with services, what happens during the sessions can look very different from the intake session. Therapy isn't always lying on a couch and talking or crying. It's much more than that, especially for children. Sometimes a therapy session is doing an activity together, like playing with toys or assembling a puzzle, and it can be learning coping mechanisms like breathing exercises or countdowns. For older kids and teens, it can be talking through a problem.

What Happens If Your Child No Longer Likes the Therapist?

The relationship with a therapist is the most intimate relationship anyone of any age can have. It is critical that the child feels that they can trust this new adult with their most personal thoughts and feelings. Establishing rapport and building a relationship takes time—however, continuing sessions should always be at the child's and their parents' discretion based on the child's comfort (and progress). If they do not like the therapist after the initial session, or if that revelation occurs after several sessions, it is ok to express that to the therapist. *It's encouraged!* After all, this is a service you are paying for and should feel mutually beneficial to all parties. Therapists are trained not to take “being fired” personally. When appropriate, they will assist in connecting the child and their family to another therapist that will be better suited for their needs. Their goal as therapists should always be to do what is best for their patients, which means that sometimes they are not the best option.

What Does the Therapist Share with Parents?

Trust in the patient is essential, and kids need to know that what they share in therapy will not be shared with their parents without their consent. However, this rule has a few exceptions, and sometimes they must share things with the parent or caregiver.

If the child shares that they are engaging in self-harming behaviors, having suicidal

ideation, or expressing that they want to harm someone else, the parents or caregivers are informed. Therapists share this information because a child's safety is always a priority. By involving the parents, therapists can create a safety plan together. A safety plan (as shared by resource [Zencare](#)) is a written set of instructions that serves as a crisis-prevention plan to be utilized when faced with negative emotions or stressful experiences that trigger the potential for harmful, unsafe behaviors. It is a step-by-step outline that helps to lead a person experiencing distress to safety.

Another exception to the confidentiality clause is if the child discloses abuse or neglect during a session. Therapists are [mandated reporters](#) and must report any abuse or neglect to child protective services.

Overall, the most important thing to remember is that therapy should be where kids are excited to go because their voices should always be amplified and heard before anything. Kids are not always heard in life, and their feelings are minimized or ignored. The great thing about therapy is that while the therapist is the adult in the room, the therapist should also ensure the child knows they are in charge of their session and can speak openly and freely as they work towards results.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Ronny Maye



Ronny Maye is a North Carolina native where she attended NC A&T State University.

She's a former early childhood educator with a passion for volunteerism and community service. Her writing career began several years ago with the co-launch of a blog and publishing a collection of poems on *WattPad* in addition to writing for several online publications. Currently, she curates the lifestyle blog, *The Life Of Ronny*. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, cooking, beaches, and perusing the aisles of Target.



Photo: instaphotos

Growing Your Real Life Roots

By Kate Orson

As we spend more time in an online world there can be a tendency to feel a little detached from the ‘real world.’ We can work, shop, socialize, and exercise all at the click of a button. But some of the benefits of living offline, such as face-face connection can be hard to foster online. Then there are the side effects of spending hours on the screen such as poor posture, and eye strain.



Photo: StockLite

Online life can become like a habit that's hard to break. We might even forget the things that we used to do offline, especially after living through a pandemic, or other life changes like becoming a parent, or moving to a new city.

Maybe it's crept up on you, and you've noticed that your life has gradually shifted online. It's quick and convenient, but could a lack of offline living be affecting your wellbeing? Working from home can allow us more flexibility and productivity, but without colleagues to chat to it can be isolating. Social media might seem social but [studies have shown](#) overuse can lead to depression and anxiety. When it comes to exercising or studying online there's so much choice, but we lose the benefit of having a teacher there in the moment to offer one-to-one attention.

Reflection

Here are some journal exercises to bring conscious awareness to your online habits and reflect on ways to bring about more offline living.

Start with writing a list of all the activities you do online; the exercise classes you take, the online shops you order from, work, entertainment, and socializing.

Now think back to your life, 10, 20, and 30, years ago. Write a paragraph or two for each decade of your life, reflecting on what you used the internet for (or didn't), and how you met all of your needs, for shopping, work, and fun.

Have a look at what you've written and think about some ways in which you could return to offline living for any of these



Photo: perfectwave

activities. For example: Zoom call, with a friend who lives far away. How about arranging a weekend meet-up? YouTube exercise videos, how about a visit to the local swimming pool, or try out a gym? Netflix, or Amazon Prime, how about a visit to the cinema or to the theater? Working from home, how about trying out a co-working space? Shopping, how about trying to support some local business, or visit a market? Write a list of alternatives to your online activities.

Now, do a Google search — yes I know it's online, but it's a springboard to your offline life! - to find out what's going on in your local area. If you've been living the online life a lot you may be surprised at what's available and what you've been missing. Joining local Facebook groups can be a way to kickstart local connections and discover events. Local businesses often use Instagram for publicity. Check out real-life

cafes or other venues with a noticeboard to see what's going on.

It might seem a bit overwhelming to think about suddenly adding a whole load of offline activities to your schedule but just take it slow and see how things evolve. Try out a new activity and notice how it feels to add in some real-life connection. Even just going to the grocery store instead of shopping online can make a difference. [Research has found that even the small moments of connection](#) such as the interaction in a store can positively affect our wellbeing.

Consciously thinking about how to cultivate offline living into your life, can make all the difference. When time feels short, or motivation is low, just consider how taking an offline option might open up new possibilities. For example, a new friendship cultivated at an exercise class,



Photo: vladans

a networking opportunity at your local co-working space, an acquaintance you bump into at the store. Life can blossom in so many unexpected ways, when we swap speed and convenience for the great life outdoors.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Kate Orson



Kate is a freelance writer and author of *Tears Heal: How to Listen to Our Children*.

She writes about wellness, parenting, and sex, and is currently crowdfunding to publish a memoir, *A Cut in the Brain*. Originally from the UK, she now lives in Italy with her husband, author Toni Davidson, and their 8-year-old daughter.



Photo: Simon Robben

How I Incorporate Mindfulness In My Daily Life

By: Stan Popovich

Life can be full of stressful situations that cause anxiety and fear. Between work, maintaining your household, paying bills, and general anxiety about the state of the world, it's important to maintain mindfulness and make your mental health a priority.

While this may seem out of reach for some people, it's possible with a little education and practice.



Photo: SolStock

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the practice of becoming more fully aware of the present moment rather than dwelling in the past, projecting into the future, or what's going on around us. It generally involves a heightened awareness of sensory stimuli such as our breathing and being “in the now.” Practicing mindfulness involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.

The Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has been scientifically researched and proven to be a critical component in reducing stress, fear, and anxiety while improving our everyday

happiness. When we meditate, we infuse far-reaching and long-lasting benefits into our lives.

- Lower stress levels
- Become kinder to ourselves and others
- Understand our past traumas and pain
- Reduce brain chatter
- Gain insight and awareness

How I Use Mindfulness with Meditation

Meditation is the first step toward mindfulness. Monks are known for waking up early and meditating for 1 to 3 hours and doing the same at night, which some researchers say can alter the brain's chemistry. But even sitting in silence for 10 minutes a day can do wonders for your mind, body, and soul.



Photo: Oxana Denezhkina

Here is how I achieve mindful meditation in my life.

1.) I Find a comfortable place.

First and foremost, you'll want to find a comfortable seat in a relaxed and stress-free environment. I recommend sitting on a meditation cushion or chair with your feet on the ground. Allow your head and shoulders to rest comfortably; place your hands on the tops of your legs with upper arms at your side. Put your upper arms parallel to your upper body. Rest the palms of your hands on your legs wherever it feels most natural.

2.) I Focus on my breathing.

Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and relax. Keep your attention on the sensation of the inhale and exhale of your breath. Focus on the air moving through your nose or the rising and falling of your stomach and chest. Many people worry about whether they're breathing the right way. I recommend breathing in whatever way feels comfortable to you. Just be mindful if you stop breathing.

3.) Reducing my wandering thoughts.

It's normal to have wandering thoughts or distractions, so don't judge yourself if

you start becoming distracted. Instead of wrestling with your thoughts, just let them pass by, without focusing on any particular thought. Thoughts will try to pull your attention away from your breathing. Notice them, but don't pass judgment. Gently return your focus to your breath. Some people count their breaths as a way to stay focused.

4.) *Being patient is key*

Do not be harsh or judgmental if you find your mind wandering. Mindfulness is also about accepting yourself and treating yourself with compassion. Show yourself the same compassion and understanding that you would to a close friend. Once you've finished, gently open your eyes and be conscious of your thoughts and feelings. Think about how you want to spend the rest of your day to bring you inner peace.

5. *Practice makes perfect.*

A daily practice will provide the most benefits. It can be 10 minutes per day, however, 20 minutes twice a day is often recommended for maximum benefit. Do what you can with the time you have.

Mindfulness Practices You Can Use Every Day

Too busy to meditate? Although mindfulness is a beneficial practice in achieving with meditation, it's also possible to perform everyday tasks while being mindful, including brushing our teeth, commuting to work, or savoring our food. Rather than going through the motions, tune into your five senses, which include sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch.

Using Mindfulness in My Daily Life

Learning to incorporate mindfulness into my daily life is not always easy. It may take some time and practice to learn to slow down and live in the moment. Some things that you can do that may help:

1.) *Live in the moment.*

Try to intentionally bring an open, accepting, and discerning attention to everything you do. Find joy in simple pleasures.

2.) *Practice focusing on one thing at a time.*

Multitasking can leave you feeling distracted, so try simply concentrating on one task with your full, focused attention.

3.) *Pay attention.*

It's hard to slow down and notice things in a busy world. Try to take the time to experience your environment with all of your senses — touch, sound, sight, smell, and taste. For example, when you eat a favorite food, take the time to smell, taste, and truly enjoy it.

4.) *Go outside.*

Spending time outdoors such as walking is a great way to live in the moment and observe the sights, sounds, and sensations of the world around you. Make sure you consult with your doctor before doing any physical activity so you do not hurt yourself.



Photo: Lolostock

In Summary

If you have trouble using mindfulness in your life then seek help from the professionals. You are not alone when it comes to your mental health challenges and mindfulness will go a long way in your recovery. In addition, there are many support groups in your area where you can get assistance from others on how to relax when it comes to dealing with your stresses and anxieties. Remember that you will start seeing the results in your life with the more you use mindfulness in your life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Stan Popovich



Stan Popovich is the author of the popular managing fear book, *A Layman's Guide to Managing*

Fear. For more

information about Stan's book and to get some more free mental health advice, please visit Stan's website at

<http://www.managingfear.com>



Photo: Natali_Mis

What Is Your Heart Coherence?

By Laura Parr

Do you *wear your heart on your sleeve*? Have you ever had your *heart broken*? Can you recall how different you feel when sitting next to someone who is *hard of heart* versus someone with their *heart in the right place*?



Photo: siriwannapatphotos

It's no accident that our language is brimming with heart-based metaphors. If you've ever felt happiness or joy, grief, or anguish, you've probably experienced those emotions in the vascular organ commonly known as your heart. It's not your imagination.

Research carried out by the [HeartMath Institute](#) shows that when you are aware of your heart during daily activities, you experience numerous benefits. Simply put, heart awareness is an antidote to stress.

What happens when you are stressed?

Stress is a normal part of life, and your body is wired to cope with it. Whether

you're running away from a bear or trying to cross a busy road, your body will produce stress hormones to trigger the fight or flight response. Your heart starts pounding, you breathe more quickly, your blood pressure rises, and you act fast.

This is all good when it comes to staying alive in the face of danger. But there are so many stressors in modern life, it's sometimes hard to come out of the stress response. If you've ever made an impulsive decision when feeling agitated, you might have lived to regret it. That's because the erratic heart rhythm caused by stress limits your ability to think clearly, reason, remember, and make effective decisions.



Photo: agsandrew

[Rollin McCraty](#), research director at the HeartMath Institute says one of the most effective ways of reducing overwhelm is to access your heart's intelligence. When your heart, mind, and emotions are aligned in harmony, you're living in heart coherence. The important decisions you make in such a state will be infinitely better than those you make when stressed.

How to access the inherent intelligence of your heart

It may sound complicated but accessing your heart's inherent intelligence and finding that point of coherence is surprisingly simple. [The quick coherence technique®](#) involves taking your awareness

to the center of your chest and imagining that you are breathing in and out of that space.

After you've taken a few breaths, try to experience a regenerative feeling. Think about a person or pet you love or recall a time you felt great or achieved something. Try not to simply have an image of these memories in your mind. Instead, immerse yourself in the feelings they trigger.

You have a responsibility

Your heart produces a magnetic field that can be detected up to three feet away from your body. The information contained in this field reflects your emotional state and

that of those around you. This is exciting stuff, as it means your emotions are not just inside you!

If you've ever thought that you can sense what another person is feeling, you're right. But that also means that whether you're aware of it or not, your emotions affect others. So, what do you want to put out into the world? Do you want to emotionally drain your loved ones and work colleagues? Or would you prefer to inspire them?

When you practice heart coherence, you're also connecting to the hearts of others. Amsterdam-based yoga teacher and lifestyle coach, [Tanja Wendelgelst](#), uses the concept of heart intelligence in her own life and teaching.

"It's so simple," says Wendelgelst. "But it requires absolute dedication and discipline. When I imagine the field of my heart expanding and opening as I recall a beautiful memory, I ask myself questions. I might not get the answers immediately, but I often find that intuitive thoughts kick in".

Your heart is intelligent

There's a reason Wendelgelst finds answers when she listens to her heart. Contrary to popular belief, your heart sends more signals to your brain than the other way round. When you're in a relaxed state, these signals will be more coherent, and the more coherent the signals are, the more synchronized your brain activity will be.

A synchronized brain is crucial for healthy mental functioning, and it also affects your

emotions. The more heart coherence you have, the better you feel. But it's not just about feeling good.

Building resilience to stress

Stress doesn't only feel bad and lead to poor decision making. It is also linked to a plethora of health conditions, including cardiac issues, fatigue, diabetes, neurodegenerative disorders, sleep disorders, and sudden cardiac death. Stress is an emotional disease, and your emotions really play a role in how you experience life.

By working on your heart coherence, you will become more resilient. You'll be more able to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from life's stressors, and this will help you stay physically healthy. [Research shows](#) that when you practice bringing your heart, mind, and emotions into more coherence you experience better decision making, creativity, listening skills, clarity, reaction time, and coordination.

Other ways of building resilience to stress [include:](#)

- *Maintaining a good work-life balance*
- *Getting plenty of exercise and rest*
- *Having fun*
- *Building healthy relationships*
- *Being considerate of others*

At first, you might find bringing awareness to your heart awkward. Wendelgelst understands. "Sometimes the 'brain God' that we worship so much in Western culture kicks in," she says. "And if you have an outcome in mind when you practice, you might be disappointed".



Photo: Stokpic

But she encourages her students to keep trying. “Building heart coherence will improve your ability to discern,” she says. “When I practice, I come more easily into the flow state. All of a sudden, ideas come to me that I didn’t have before”.

You can practice this simple technique alone. Try bringing it into your daily routine, on waking, before coming home after work, before making a stress-inducing presentation, or before going to sleep at night. And if you need more support, you’ll find plenty of help at the [HeartMath Institute](#).

Whether you’re a health professional looking to train up, or a busy parent in search of support, working on these coherence-building skills will help you change your habitual patterns and improve your health and wellbeing, both as an individual and as part of a community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Laura Parr



Laura is a yoga teacher and therapist with a background in nursing and public health.

She thinks that health needn’t be complicated and is passionate about helping people find simple ways to achieve wellness in their lives. Laura founded [Slow Yoga Portugal](#), and when not on her mat or at her desk, she can be found running with her dog or growing vegetables.



About *IndigoBlue Magazine*

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