

Break Through **YOUR** *Personal Glass Ceiling*



**Harness the power of the Nervous System
and become your most amazing self!**

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The Problem

A lot of us have *something* that holds us back. Sometimes there's just one area in our lives we can't seem to figure out.

Maybe you really have the career/money part handled, but you keep sabotaging your major relationships. Or maybe for you it's the other way round, and you're great in love, but keep not getting the money piece together. Or maybe you can't seem to find your way to good health or regular exercise or a healthy weight.

Or it could be you're doing pretty well at pretty much everything in your life, but you just KNOW there's another level for you, and you can't seem to get past that glass ceiling that seems to stop you every time.

For some people it even happens that every time you get close to your personal limit, truly weird stuff happens. You get fired, or break your leg, or your computer goes on the fritz, or you get in a huge fight with someone!

If you've been working on personal growth for a while, chances are you've taken seminars and workshops and maybe done some therapy, and you've learned some really valuable tools and techniques. And maybe you've even made A LOT OF PROGRESS! Which is great!

But somehow you can't get it to work in *this certain area* of your life.

Sometimes, people are making the effort, doing the work, taking the steps, but they can't seem to get it to work.

Even more often, I hear people say that they just can't get themselves to do the work at all.

It's important to understand that when we find ourselves in this kind of position, stuck and frustrated on something for a long time, **it doesn't matter how much effort we put in or how much we try to think it through...**

... because effort and thinking are not the solutions.

The key to getting past these kinds of blocks lies in an entirely different place. A place

inside you where your conscious mind doesn't have much access. A place where feelings can easily and quickly override your best thinking.

I'm talking about the Nervous System.

Turning Your Nervous System Into Your Ally

For the last hundred years or so, psychotherapy -- and thousands of years of philosophy before that-- have had us try everything imaginable to access this internal source of healing. We've been told the answer lies in everything from dream analysis to free association, blood-letting, chanting, mindfulness and punching pillows. And actually, sometimes that stuff really helped. I still teach some of those things myself (especially mindfulness practices, which I'll get to below).

But about 20 years ago we started being able to observe the brain directly, using a new technology known as fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging), which records in detail how the brain responds to things in real time.

And that changed everything!

We were able to see some parts of the brain turn on and others turn off in reaction to events, images and thoughts, and we began to understand why certain things prove so difficult to address.

In the last 18 years, I have studied the neuroscience of behavior, received training in cutting edge technologies, and practiced these techniques with clients to help them overcome significant difficulties. In my work as a therapist, coach and teacher, I've had the opportunity to work directly with thousands of people in finding their path to overcome their particular obstacles.

What I've learned is that we are all unique.

Really, deeply unique.

Which is WONDERFUL. You are so beautifully and uniquely you that no one can ever repeat you, and no one can ever take that away from you.

The tricky thing is, that means there is no one thing that works for everyone. Some of us process information visually, some somatically, some of us have vivid dreams, some never seem to dream at all, and there a zillion other differences. So that means different techniques will work better for some people than for others.

But what is really helpful for *everyone* is to become more skillful in changing how your thoughts and feelings affect one another, learning how your brain interacts with your body, how your feelings and thoughts affect one another, and how to use that information to develop **your own capacity to become really present to yourself** in any given moment.

When you are really present to yourself, you can see more and more clearly what you need in *this* moment, and what will work for you in finding *your* unique path to all that you want.

The Two Keys

The First Key - Knowledge

The first key to developing that presence is really understanding your Nervous System and how it affects your feelings, your beliefs, your choices and ultimately your success.

Without this knowledge you are likely to get caught in the same old patterns that have been limiting you. You are also susceptible to the influence of a lot of inaccurate beliefs about yourself that you might not even be aware you are believing. And you are especially vulnerable to being overwhelmed by strong feelings.

But knowing how these parts of yourself interact gives you access to a map that describes the terrain you need to navigate, and shows you how to find the easiest path to where *you* want to go.

The Second Key - Practice

The second key is practicing techniques that will help you strengthen this connection to yourself. As you do this, you develop a more sensitive and perceptive relationship to your Internal Guidance System.

Each of us has a powerful Internal Guidance System that is designed to help us make choices that will lead us in the best direction to what we want. This Internal Guidance System has access to far more information than the conscious mind holds.

However, many of us are pretty cut off from our Internal Guidance System, so we are operating without access to a lot of the information we need. To develop and strengthen this connection to our Internal Guidance, we need a few good tools, and one of the most useful is Mindfulness.

There's been *a lot* of talk about Mindfulness in the last few years. If you do a quick search, you'll find articles on using mindfulness to fix everything from your marriage to your car! And in one way the hype is true.

By practicing mindfulness, we train ourselves to come back into contact with what is happening here and how – the Present Moment.

The Present Moment is in fact the only point where you have any power at all. If you learn to be present in this moment, you can get back in touch with your own clarity -- clarity about your Internal Guidance System and clarity about the situations you find yourself in, and this clarity reveals the next step on your personal path.

When we put the two keys of Knowledge and Practice together, we can unlock the mystery of why we get in our own way.

To summarize: Knowing your Nervous System intimately, practicing ways to it *in the present moment*, and learning to listen to its messages, puts you in touch with *your* Inner Guidance System. You become grounded in *your own* awareness and in *your own* knowledge. This allows you to access *your own* power, and *your own* insight, and you can respond more skillfully to whatever life throws your way.

And ultimately, you can transform the MOST IMPORTANT areas of your life.

“Since I learned how to use mindfulness and work with my nervous system, I no longer feel heavy and trapped. I no longer make decisions that continually hurt me. I attract healthy relationships because I have a healthy relationship with myself.”

~ Private Client, NYC

Getting to Know Your Nervous System

I'm about to give you a description of what happens in the Nervous System when we are having a strong response to something, but before I tell you about it, let me explain a little about how this information evolved.

When I was first developing this understanding, I spent several years working with clients, observing what worked and didn't work, and slowly creating a simple explanation of how the Nervous System operated that I could share with them. I wanted to offer my clients a tool they could take with them everywhere they went, so they could respond more and more skillfully to the circumstances of their lives. I showed it to people and got their feedback, and I tweaked it so it got clearer and clearer, and finally came up with this model.

When I finally had it, I thought, "Wow, I have something really helpful here." I immediately started teaching it to my clients.

And then a weird thing happened. It didn't seem to help. The people I explained it to didn't really get it, or didn't seem to find it valuable, which confused me. After all, this was a simple description of a process I had seen work with so many clients, and I had used it myself with really great results. So what was the problem? I started to lose a little confidence in it, but still, I knew the description was accurate, so some part of me wouldn't let it go.

Then, one day, I brought it up again with a client I had showed it to before. This is a woman I really like. She's a talented and successful actor and entrepreneur, and a wonderful mom. I admire her a lot and could always see her amazing qualities, but in spite of all her success, she always seemed to get stuck. She struggled with a really deep sense of unworthiness and hopelessness, and a feeling that any happiness or success she experienced was fake, or in her words "Bullsh*t."

My description of the process hadn't really seemed to mean anything to her the first time we talked about it, but as we went through it again, it was as if a light turned on inside her. She started to really get it, at a deep, intuitive and understanding level. That

was the day our work together changed.

Since then she has had massive breakthroughs, releasing painful beliefs that have plagued her for many years, and finding real understanding and compassion for her own process of growth. She said to me that this is the first time in her life she has felt a real possibility of transformation and long-term happiness.

That helped restore my confidence in this process, and I started sharing it with more of my clients, knowing I might need to show it to them a few times. In fact that has turned out to be the case. No one seems to get it at first. And sometimes I have to come back to it a number of times before it “clicks.” So I have learned to stick with it.

The way I do it these days is: first I’ll do the basic introduction of the ideas, just as I do here, and then I’ll bring it up again at a later time, in the midst of an issue they are dealing with, to illustrate what is happening. With this more skillful approach, I have had the chance to see more and more of my clients have that light turn on inside. Even if they kind of zone out when I’m showing it to them the first time, the second or third time they see it, something in them wakes up, and this understanding of their own inner process becomes a power tool that they can use to find their way through all their internal confusion and noise, and cut through it to clarity...

... and in that place, everything becomes possible.

I wanted to explain this process to you, because, on your first read, this description might seem a bit simplistic. Like, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, that’s pretty obvious.” It might not seem like an idea that could do very much for you.

But I want to assure you, **this is life changer.** Truly.

So if you don’t get it the first time, that’s no big deal. In fact that’s likely. Just come back to it later. You could wait until something comes up – maybe you get really upset one day or find yourself doing the same old, same old that always keeps you stuck – and then come back and read this again, and see how it can apply in that context.

I think you’ll find you begin to develop your own road map to where you want to go.

So read on, and at the end I’ll give you some practical tips about how you can begin to implement this in your own life.

The Anatomy of an Experience

Just as a doctor can do more skillful and effective healing work with a good understanding of the anatomy of the body, in the same way, if you develop a clear understanding of the anatomy of an experience – ie what it is made of and how the parts interact -- you will be able to respond to the circumstances of your life with much greater skill.

So here's the anatomy you need, stripped down to its simplest essentials.

Step 1 – Something Happens

This is very important as a starting point, as simple and meaningless as it might sound at first, so bear with me here.

The something that happens might be someone cuts you off in traffic, or you knock over your coffee cup as you're racing out the door, or you get a phone call with bad news.

For our purposes let's represent this event as a dot.



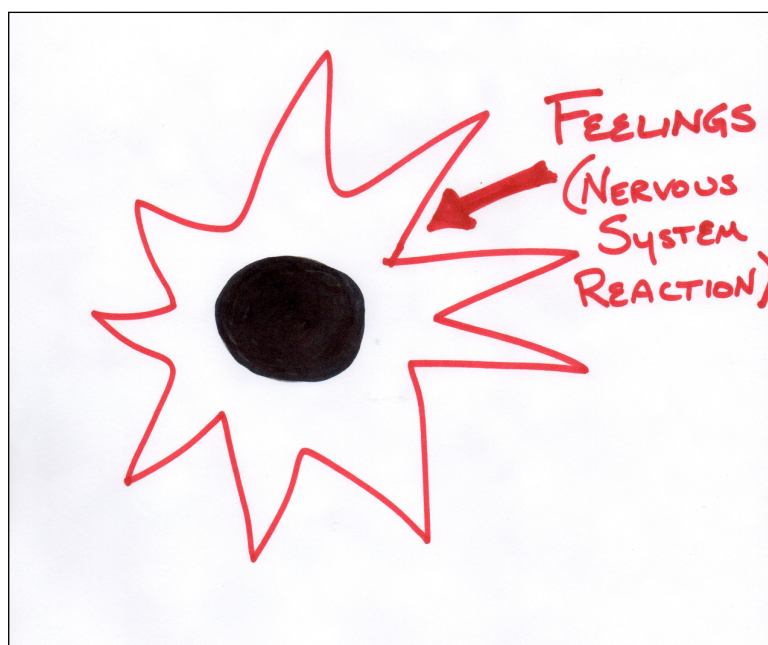
Now I'm referring to it as a dot, as an event, and as something happens for a really important reason. I want to keep it generic. For our purposes, I don't want to differentiate between any of the possible events. Whether it's stubbing your toe or breaking your leg, I want us to withdraw our attention from the details of the event, and just recognize that it's an event.

You see usually we do the opposite. We go over and over the details of the event, telling the story, thinking about whose fault it was, thinking about what we should have done differently, etc, etc, etc.... and this just leads us down a rabbit hole that keeps us stuck.

So for now, it's just an event. A simple black dot.

Step 2 – You Have a Feeling Reaction

Whatever this event is, it causes a reaction in your nervous system. Let's draw that as a kind of explosion. This is a sudden surge of *feeling*. (There is also thought associated with it, but it's so fast we can't even perceive it, much less stop it, so it works for us to just think of this explosion as a *feeling*.)



The reaction will change depending on what happened, both in terms of its intensity and its characteristics. For example...

- If someone cuts you off in traffic you might get angry.
- If someone cuts you off in traffic, and you're running late and you already knocked your coffee over as you were racing out the door, you might get very angry.

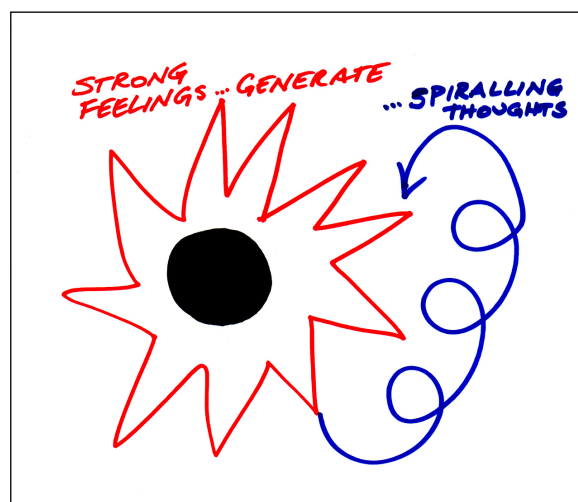
- If you get a phone call with bad news you might feel a spike of anxiety, or a surge of despair, or a feeling of overwhelm.

Here's an important thing to know. Whatever reaction you have (anger, despair, overwhelm, or any other) you can think of it as a sudden activation in the nervous system. Again, let's not get too caught in the details, and just notice that it is a Nervous System activation. I'll explain this more in the practice section later, so bear with me.

Step 3 – Your brain start to think a lot of thoughts

So we all know what kinds of thoughts these will tend to be. The technical term for them is “rumination” but that doesn't really give a sense of how intense they are. I see these thoughts as a crazy spiraling energy that feeds on itself and grows.

Say we're in scenario 2, where the guy cut you off and you're already running late, and that triggers anger. In anger, the thoughts will go something like this:

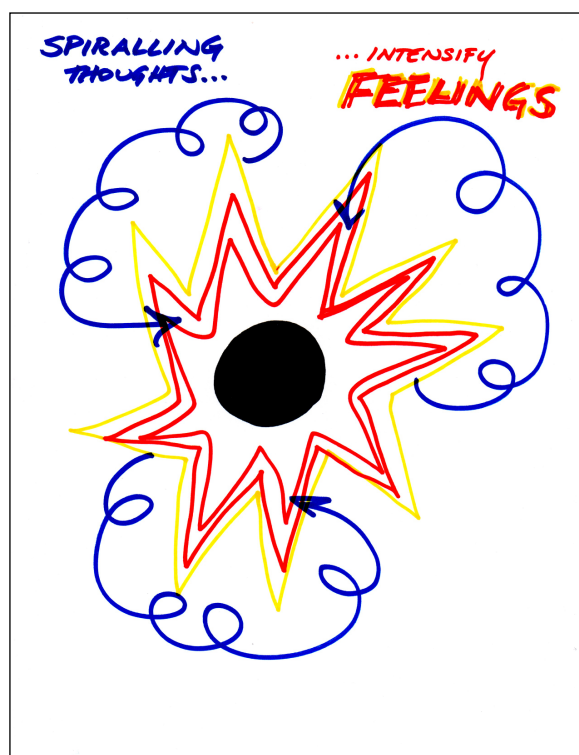


*“Hey you idiot, what the h*ll are you doing! Can't you see where you're going? Did you even look??? I can't believe what a jerk that guy is. It's people like that who cause all the accidents on the road. He should have his license taken away. I can't believe I have to drive in this awful traffic, and I'm totally going to be late again. Oh god, if I don't start getting to work on time, my boss is really going to lose it... I really can't afford to lose this job. But I hate this job and I hate this commute. How am I ever going to get myself out of this crappy situation. My mom was right, damn it, I should have gone to law school... (etc, etc, etc.)”*

The main characteristic of these thoughts is that one leads to the next, and the next, and the next, until you have wandered far from the original thought and are in a whole new territory of anxiety and worry. They also tend to grow in intensity and become ever more universal until they are leading to thoughts like, “There's no way out of this.” Or

“It’s ALWAYS like this,” and “I’m such a loser.”

Another big problem with these spiraling thoughts is that they *feed back into the feeling* you have and intensify it. This means just when the feelings might start to subside because the actual scenario has changed, instead they’re being fed by all these new thoughts. So now, in addition to feeling angry, maybe you’re also feeling guilty and worried and frustrated.



So now we are in a kind of intense feedback loop, and as if that’s not enough, at this point another a part of the nervous system takes over. It’s called the Autonomic Nervous System. You’ve probably heard of this reaction. It’s known as the Stress Response, and people also refer to it as “*Fight or Flight.*”

The moment we are kicked into *Fight or Flight*, the rational parts of the brain pretty much shut down. If you were looking at this on an fMRI, you would see the Prefrontal Cortex, the part of the brain that deals with decision making and language, go almost completely dark. And instead an ancient part of the brain lights up like a Christmas tree. This is the Amygdala, and its only intention in fight or flight is *survival*. It doesn’t care about anything else.

So when we are in Fight or Flight, we can get very aggressive and intense. Our heart

rate increases and our body is flooded with Stress Hormones. These are the moments where we actually curse at the guy in traffic, or when we are fighting with our partner and we say things we cannot later believe we said.

We are simultaneously at our most activated and our least rational. This combo makes it essentially impossible to make choices that lead us in the direction of success.

So that's the problem.

The Solution

Now, just to be clear I'm talking here about the Fight or Flight response to things like getting cut off in traffic or your partner overdrawing the bank account again. I'm not talking about things that are actually dangerous. In life threatening situations, the Fight or Flight response is very appropriate, and might just save your life or someone else's. But in our regular lives, it repeatedly gets trigger by situations that it is spectacularly poorly equipped to address.

So here's the solution in these days to day situations.

If... and it's a big if... IF you were able to just quiet your thoughts and not do anything, slowly the feelings would naturally subside. The Autonomic Nervous System would settle down, the Parasympathetic Nervous System would bring you back into regulation, your thinking would gradually get clearer, and eventually you would be able to respond to the situation without doing or saying things you regretted, and you could find you way back to your own goals, intentions and desires.

All you have to do is stop thinking and wait for a couple of minutes.

I know this might not feel true, but I promise you it is. I explain it more below, but in a nutshell:

If you can find a way to quiet the thoughts temporarily, the feelings will naturally subside, and you will find yourself clear and able to make skillful choices.

Now this is challenging for many reasons, but let's see if we can build the skills to do it.

THE DANCE OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Learning the steps in the Dance of Thoughts and Feelings is really useful, because if you can to learn the differences between thoughts and feelings, then you can

Since I learned how to use mindfulness and work with my nervous system I can slow down and pay attention enough to return to my physical body, my present surroundings, and my essential well self. I am able to ask myself what I am feeling - is it sadness? is it anxiety? - and I attend to this circumstance by first calming my nervous system down in order to gradually stabilize myself. After that, I am able to make another smart decision about how to take further care of myself.

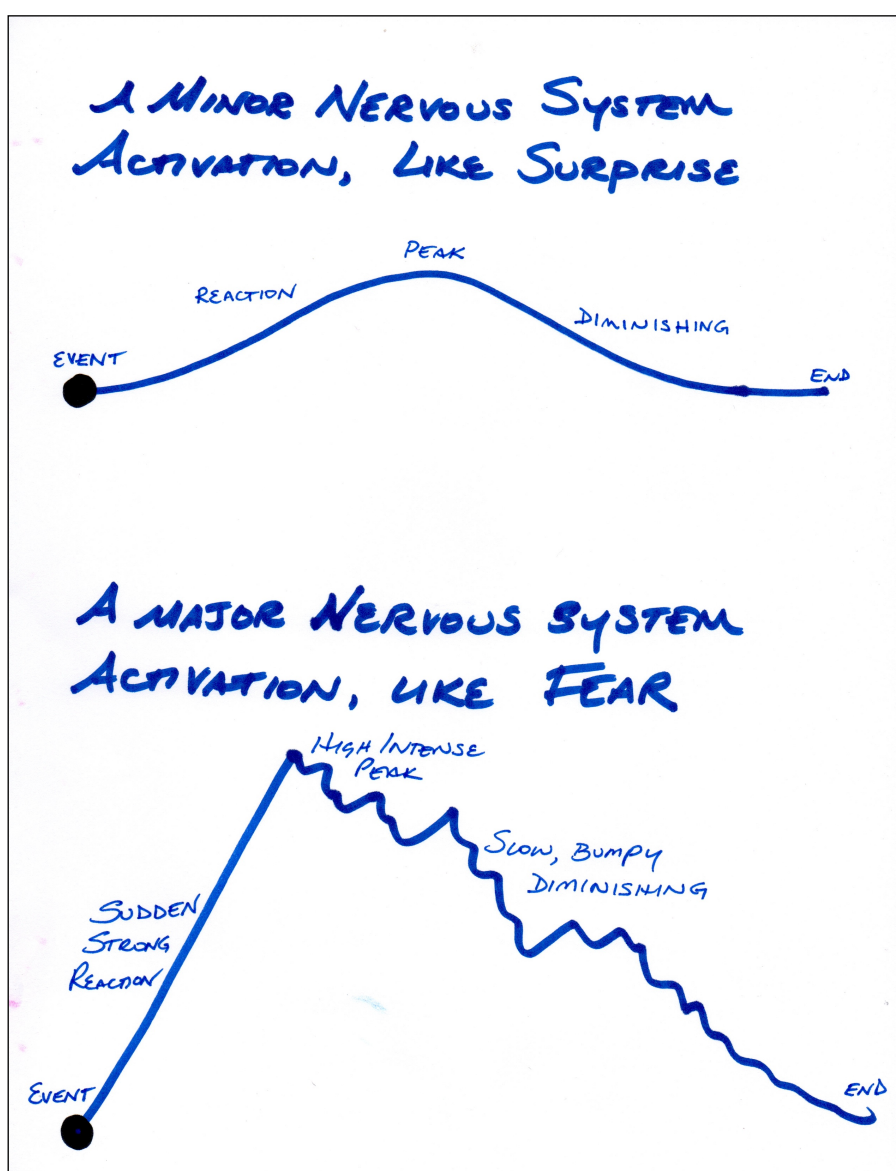
~ Private Client, Philadelphia

work with each in the most skillful way. It's like a series of dance steps that we can become really good at navigating. So let's learn the steps.

What is a feeling?

A feeling is an activation in the Nervous System that functions like a WAVE.

All feelings follow a certain pattern. They start, increase, peak, subside and disappear. They vary in terms of intensity and duration...



... but every feeling naturally follows this process.

Every. Single. One.

I promise.

That's hard to believe, because we don't often discover that wave-like nature of a feeling, since the spiraling thoughts keep sparking new activation in the Nervous System. We never notice that the first feeling has passed, because we are already caught up in eight new ones.

So to take advantage of this understanding, a little later we are going to learn how to let the feelings follow their natural wave-like process: to peak, diminish and pass.

Another important thing to know is that **we feel feelings in our bodies**. Whether it's tension or sadness, anger or tightness of breath, feelings are a *physical* experience that we actually sense *in our bodies*.

Ok, so what about thoughts?

Thoughts behave very differently from feelings. As I mentioned before, one leads to another and another, and rather than subside, they tend to increase. You could picture them like a chain, where one link leads to the next, and the next, and the next. And while one link can't bind you, once the chain is long enough, it can really trap you.

Dealing with feelings requires time.

Feelings require time to subside. This is because when you're kicked into *Fight or Flight*, your body is flooded with stress hormones. You can't just suddenly feel better because you want to, because it takes some time for your liver and kidneys to filter them out. It's like being drunk. If there's alcohol in your blood stream, it's going to take some time to get your blood levels back to a point that you can start thinking coherently again and feeling better. The same is true for stress hormones.

But the good news is, it's a natural process for feelings to subside. It's like shaking up a snow glow. If you just leave it alone, gravity will bring the glitter back down to the bottom. Every time. Unless you shake it up again of course. And so it's important to know that what shakes up the feelings and prevents them from settling is those spiraling thought loops.

Dealing with Thoughts

Thoughts are very different from feelings. As I said, they don't naturally subside. Left to their own devices, they tend to continue indefinitely and increase in intensity and hopelessness. So thoughts just need to be stopped right away. The good news is that unlike feelings, they don't need any time to subside. We can literally just stop them.

Now this is where a lot of people will argue with me. After all we have been taught that we need to think things through. The thoughts themselves will be telling you, "It is VERY, VERY important you get to the bottom of this." But as I mentioned, the kinds of thoughts you're having when you're in the middle of the *Fight or Flight* response are not beneficial or skillful, so there actually isn't any point in pursuing them. *Plus* they feed back into the process and prevent the Nervous System from moving toward regulation.

So you *need* to stop them.

That's easier said than done, but I'm going to help you with that.

Calming your feelings

With the thoughts quieted, you can return to your feelings and give them the kind of attention they need. I give some pretty detailed instructions below, but for now just know that if you can pay attention to them with skillful (mindful) attention, they will subside all by themselves. And once they have – and remember you have to give this enough time -- then you can turn your attention back to your thoughts.

Returning to thoughts

At this point, your thoughts will become more skillful. The Prefrontal Cortex comes back online, the reasoning and language parts of the brain start functioning again, and you can begin to have the kinds of skillful thoughts that will help you figure out how best to deal with the situation at hand.

The Dance in its Full Splendor

To summarize:

1. An event causes a Nervous System response.
2. This creates strong feelings.
3. These feelings generate spiraling thought loops.
4. If we stop these thought loops, the feelings naturally subside.
5. When the Nervous System is back in regulation, we can think more skillfully and figure out what to do.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH MY PERSONAL GLASS CEILING?

If there is an issue that holds particular difficulty for you, then I bet you have already spent a lot of time and energy thinking about it and trying to address it. If that hasn't worked, then it's pretty likely that some part of you has a belief about it that is in opposition to what you want. As Henry Ford said,

**“If you think you can do a thing,
or think you can't do a thing,
you're right.”**

It would be helpful to know what the beliefs are that are in your way, and sometimes people will ask you about your limiting beliefs, but the truth is, that information is often not readily available to the mind in terms of thoughts. And in fact some of these beliefs are deliberately hidden from your conscious mind by another process known as dissociation. So the frustrating thing is, *you often can't get to that information through the usual conscious channels of thought.*

We can also be pretty sure that whenever you take steps to address a “big” issue, feelings are going to arise. They might be anxiety, fear, confusion, overwhelm, or a dozen others, and they will tend to trigger that ruminative thinking we talked about before, and again, thoughts lead to feelings... feelings trigger more thoughts... thoughts accelerate the feelings... and on and on and on.

Your Nervous System Knows The Whole Story

Even though it might be hard for the conscious mind to figure out what's going on – why you continue with certain behaviors, why you zone out, what the underlying beliefs are -- the good news is your Nervous System has access to all this information.

It knows where these beliefs came from; it knows what events made you start believing them; it knows how they block you from taking action; it knows how they subtly change your perception so you only see evidence of things continuing as they are. It knows far, far more than your conscious mind can hold at any time, and although it can't tell you what's going on in words, it can communicate what you need to know through your Internal Guidance System.

This is great, by the way, because you really don't need all that detail anyway. Think of it like this. If you're hiring a computer programmer to write you some software, you don't want her to tell you all the ins and outs of all the steps. For one thing, you don't want all that info cluttering up your mind, and in fact you probably wouldn't understand it even if she did explain it. That's why you hired her. So she could deal with all that. All you want is the final result, presented in a way you can use it. So you ask for a certain result, and you trust her to do her job.

That's the relationship you want to develop with your Nervous System. You really don't need to understand what it knows. And it's actually a great assistant. You can just trust it. It's on your side, and it is a great and powerful ally!

So to conclude this understanding for now, here is the essential message:

- Through learning to soothe the Nervous System and find your way to clarity...
- Through developing the ability to hear what the Nervous System is telling you...
- Through consciously developing a relationship with your Nervous System that is skillful and trusting...
- ... You will have access to your Inner Guidance System, which can tell you what you need to know to create your best life imaginable.

A Process for Dealing with Difficult Feelings

I think it's clear by now that learning to soothe the Nervous System is an essential step in the creation of your wonderful life.

That might sound like a kind of "Step A, then Step Z" idea, but I will also offer you this: By doing this Step A, you will discover all kinds of surprising Steps B, C and D, or sometimes even a way to just fly straight to Z. But if you *don't* take this step, you will be very likely stuck where you are indefinitely, or at least slowed way down.

So I have developed this exercise for the process we were talking about above:

- Quieting the mind.
 - Soothing the Nervous System activation
 - Allowing the feelings to naturally subside.

I've been getting some great reports about how it has helped my clients. Even as I was writing this, I received this text:

"The exercise we spoke about really works/helps! Thank you :-)

*Last night I was frustrated, and I stopped and felt the feelings,
and then it went to sadness, and then it went away! Awesome!"*

~ Private Client, NYC

This exercise will allow you to encounter these difficult feelings in a skillful and compassionate way. This will give them the space to subside, leaving you feeling clearer and more prepared to make choices that will improve the situation.

10 Easy Steps to Clarity

1. When you feel strong or difficult feelings arising, immediately put your hand on your heart. (This physical contact is helpful.)
2. Ask yourself, “What am I feeling?” Send your awareness into your body (feel into it) and see if you can locate and identify the strong feelings. They might be bodily sensations or emotions or a combination of both. For example you might notice a feeling of tension in your chest and a feeling of anger connected with it.
3. Say hello to the feelings you encounter. If you can actually speak the words out loud that’s really helpful, but if you are in an environment where you can’t do that, just think the words as clearly as you can.
 - If you can recognize the feeling as a specific feeling like anger or sadness or fear, then you can say, “Hello my anger, I see you,” or “Hello my sadness, I feel you.”
 - If you can feel it, but you can’t quite identify it, you can just say, “Hello my strong feeling,” or maybe, “Hello tension in my stomach.”
 - If using the word “my” feels too strong, you can also just say, “Hello feeling,” or “Hello fear.”
 - If it feels right, you can add, “I am here for you,” as in, “Hello my sadness, I am here for you.” This affirms an important thing. We are not trying to push away the feeling. We are trying to simply be present with it.
 - It’s important to use words, either out loud or thinking them, because this will help you avoid ruminating about what has happened (remember we need to stop the thoughts for a little while). Using words will occupy the language channel of the brain with your intentional statements, making it impossible for the ruminative thoughts to take over. This will also help you stay with the experience of what you are feeling in your body as it is unfolding.

4. Now would be a good time to try putting your two feet on the floor and resting your awareness in the soles of your feet for a few breaths. This contact with the floor triggers another part of the Nervous System (the Parasympathetic Nervous System) to start calming the stress response, helping your heartbeat regulate, and quieting the Autonomic Nervous System's activation.
5. Breathe in and out for a few breaths, concentrating on feeling your feet as best as you can.
6. If new feelings arise and distract you from your feet, just say "Hello" to them, one by one. As best you can, don't think *about* them, but stay with your felt awareness in your body. Continue to use language to help your mind avoid ruminating, saying, "Hello my feelings. I'm here for you." Come back to your feet when you can.
7. After a little while, you will probably begin to notice the feelings change:
 - The feelings might simply start to diminish.
 - Or the feelings might intensify or increase, and this is ok. Remember how a feeling is a wave? This just means that you encountered the wave while it was in the increasing phase. So just stay with it, because if you can do that, it will reach its peak and begin to diminish.
 - It could also be that you'll notice that under one feeling, you'll find another. For example, under your anger you might find fear or sadness, or even a feeling of happiness.
 - Remember this phase of the process takes as long as it takes. If the feelings are very intense, this could take as much as a minute or two. Less intense feelings might pass in a few seconds.

8. You can begin to breath more consciously if that feels good. Slowing and deepening the in-breath, and relaxing more completely on the out-breath.

9. Check for any tension in your body — in your hands, your shoulders, your legs, anywhere at all — and just gently soften the area around the tension, letting your muscles be a bit softer. It might also feel good to stretch at this point.

10. As your Nervous System begins to move into a state that is a bit more regulated, your capacity to think and make skillful choices will begin to come back online. This is where you can begin to figure out what this particular moment needs, but don't rush this! Thinking really is the last step here.
 - You might be noticing the feelings subsiding a lot. Sometimes just staying with the process is enough to move you all the way into feeling happy.
 - Or you might realize that you're going to need to take another step to help you feel better. Perhaps you need to go outside and take a walk. Or maybe you'll suddenly remember you haven't eaten, or you'll realize that you're exhausted, and you need to rest. Or you could realize that you are not up to dealing with this particular situation right now, and you need to excuse yourself.
 - Or you might recognize that there's no changing this situation in this particular moment, and so you have to find a way to deal with it, even without it improving. (See the Bus Shelter story below)

Super Simple Summary

So that's the process. Let me restate the essentials of it as clearly as possible and make it so simple that you can't forget it:

- 1. Put your hand on your heart and say hello to the feelings.***
- 2. Feel your feet on the floor as best you can.***
- 3. Stay with this practice until the feelings subside.***

That's it. As I promised, it's a very simple process, but you do actually have to *do it* to get results. So let me STRONGLY encourage you to try it.

Try it right now if you like... after all you're always feeling something. Can you take a moment to sense whatever is there and say hello to it? We'll wait... :^)

That's All Folks!

You really don't need to know anymore about this, and you can just practice it and not read on any further. After all it's in the *doing* of it that you will discover the benefit of it. But in case you want to know some more about what this simple practice is doing, read on...

It draws on something the great Carl Rogers was referring to when he said,

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change."

By doing this exercise you can *develop the capacity to simply be present with what is arising in this moment*. And by simply making space for it, it begins to change all by itself.

The various steps support this process by doing a number of things.

First, the hand on the heart brings attention back into the body. This is a really powerful shift in awareness that begins the process of recovery. The body is where the feelings reside. By contacting it, we withdraw some attention from the agitated mind and begin the process of Nervous System regulation.

Second, naming the feelings and saying hello deliberately uses the language part of the brain in a mindful activity. This interrupts the process of rumination and reactivity, and begins to put the Prefrontal Cortex back in charge.

Third, the process creates an "I" that is not based in the feeling, but is actually a completely different part of the mind. We can call it The Observer. When The Observer says, "Hello my feeling," it is making an important separation between the feeling and the "I" that you identify with. Now you are identifying with the part of you that is observing the feeling. This changes the situation in a really important way: Instead of "you" being trapped in the feeling, the feeling is now *in* you. And if you are *noticing* the feeling, that means there is a part of your awareness that is outside the feeling. This tiny, crucial gap begins to allow clarity and calmness to sneak their way in.

Fourth, just following the whole process takes some time and slows you down to allow

for the quieting of the Fight or Flight response. The Nervous System can begin its very natural process of moving toward regulation and well-being. Remember, it's like the glitter in the snow globe responding to gravity. If you don't shake it up again, it naturally settles.

I promised the Bus Shelter story, and here it is. It comes from a powerful training called Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy.

Imagine you are walking home, late on a cold night, and suddenly there is a crack of thunder, the heavens open up, and it starts pouring down rain. You have no hat and no umbrella, so you frantically look around for some way to get out of the rain, and you spy a little way down the next block a bus shelter! You race toward it and duck in with a big sense of relief. Phew! You shake yourself off, wipe the rain from your eyes, and take a breath. You think, "Well, that rain came out of nowhere, and it's raining so hard, it can't last for long. I'll just wait until it slows."

So you stand in the bus shelter, waiting for a few minutes... waiting... waiting... But the rain shows no sign of stopping. You wait some more, but eventually you realize this rain is not stopping any time soon. And you want to get home. And that means you are going to get very wet and very cold.

Now you are faced with a choice. You can walk home through the rain, hunched over and angry, bracing against the cold and feeling miserable. Or you can walk home through the rain, your body relaxed and your mind free, even looking forward to the feeling of warmth you will get when you take off your wet clothes and put on your comfiest robe.

How you do it is your choice. Either way you're going to get wet and cold. But the choice of whether you will be miserable is now up to you.

This is an important understanding of this exercise. It's not always going to make you feel better. For example, if the event that caused the reaction was that you sprained your ankle or you received some bad news, doing this won't heal your ankle or change the news you received. So you might still be feeling the pain of the ankle or the worry

about the news. But like the bus shelter, it offers a temporary refuge so you can reset, recover a little, give time to allow the Nervous System activation to subside, and eventually assess the situation, and make the best choice you can in the moment.

One Last Note

Let me say again: if you really want to experience the benefit of this practice you will *actually need to practice*.

So if you feel at all inclined to explore this, let me STRONGLY suggest you do this practice today three times. You don't need to wait until you're feeling stressed. You can just set times to practice.

And then do that again for the following six days.

That's 3 times a day for 7 days, just 21 times this week. And since it usually takes about 2 or 3 minutes, that's a total of about an hour.

I am willing to guarantee you that if you do those 21 practices, something will open up inside you. You will learn something about yourself that will not only benefit you, but also will put you in touch with yourself in a way that you can't yet know.

One of my clients is a public defender in a really high-crime neighborhood in Brooklyn, NYC. Can you even imagine the stress of that job? I can barely imagine it, and I've heard the stories. He was one of the people who took me seriously on this challenge to practice from day one. When he came in the following week, he described how he would sit in court, waiting for the judge to call his case, doing this practice, and at the end of the week he couldn't believe how his stress levels had diminished.

So if you want to make a commitment to giving this a try for seven days, send me an email: support@marycordelia.com

This is my mission – to save the world one Nervous System at a time! Ok, slight hyperbole, but it's kind of true too. So if you want to take this on, I will support you!

So whether it's every day for a week, or just when you feel upset, give it a try! I'd love to hear how this works for you.

Or if you've already been using it a while and finding it helpful, write to me about it, and I'll post your success to encourage others to give it a try.

I hope this helps you weather the next internal thunderstorm you encounter with a minimum of misery and a maximum of mastery!

Sometime soon, I will be posting an audio version of this book, with a guided practice that you can use, and I'll send out an email when it's up, so if you want to receive that, drop us a line: support@marycordelia.com

Until then, may many good things come to you!

