

Ep 18: Navigating the Holidays During a Pandemic

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Rock Your Brain Rock Your Life podcast. The only podcast that teaches unfulfilled high-achievers like you to rewire your brain, get unstuck and smash big goals. Here's your host, rockstar entrepreneur and bad-ass life coach: Sarah Moody.

Hey rockstars, happy December. I hope you all had a super relaxing Thanksgiving if you're here in the U.S... I did. It was so awesome. I spent it in San Francisco with my sister and her partner. And it was this really gorgeous blue sky sunny day, like this really crisp winter light. And we spent hours at the beach by the Golden Gate bridge and then came home to a really yummy takeout turkey dinner that was all prepared and just needed to be heated. It was so yummy and so [00:01:00] easy. There's this company that cooks their turkeys in these commercial grade ovens, which I think run at about 600 degrees. And it's the most moist, delicious turkey ever.

Also as many of you know, I'm a big believer in taking the time to invent and create and make your life super yummy versus spending hours and hours like cooking food if that's not your jam and not your joy. So it was a really relaxing, easy, peaceful few days. And I feel so grateful for that because it's definitely thanks to the thought work I've done in the last few years that I was able to have this peaceful, relaxing experience. And I want you all to be able to have the same, which is what we're going to talk about today.

Okay. So before we dive in, it's the top of the show. So I'm asking you all for podcast reviews again. I'm working toward a hundred. So I'm going to keep asking until we get there. [00:02:00] And thank you so much for those of you who have already reviewed so grateful for you.

So navigating the holidays can be a tricky subject in the best of times. And this year we're working with a pandemic as well. And I can speak to, you know, those of us in many of the States. As of last Friday, there's been a lot of shutdowns. In San Francisco everything is shut down. So this is new territory for your brains. So expect they are going to completely freak the fuck out. Seriously. But don't worry! I've got your back and we're going to go over four tools to help you navigate whatever circumstances you find yourself upset or stressed about this month.

So first up is the manual. The most frequent issue I hear from y'all that comes up, especially around the holidays are the expectations you have for how other people should behave or resistance to how they think you [00:03:00] should behave. Remember I call this the manual. The manual is that unconscious instruction guide we have for how we expect ourselves and others to act. When we feel upset by others actions or our own actions, it's 99% of the time because those actions don't align with someone's manual.

And I know you all want to jump straight to the, a line, the action line and figure out what you should be doing in these circumstances, but let's back up and look closely at this concept of the manual. The manual is comprised of a belief or set of beliefs about how somebody else should behave so we can feel good and be happy. Most of us also have manuals for ourselves. But for this episode, we're going to focus on the manuals we have for other people we're in relationships with.

Usually the manuals unspoken [00:04:00] so the other person can't comply, even if they want to. Although sometimes we say them out loud to certain people, a good way to recognize the manual is by looking for the sheds in your life. Do you think someone else should be doing something? That's probably the manual. And if someone's ever told you that you should be doing something, that's their manual. I believe that every single person on the planet has a manual for someone. So why is it a problem if everybody does it? By subscribing to manuals, you put your emotional experience in the hands of other people and in the hands of your primitive puppy brain. If other people don't follow your manual and they usually don't, by the way, you feel negative feelings.

And then you blame the other person for your feelings. In essence, you've handed over control of your feelings to somebody else.[00:05:00] And if you're waiting around for another adult to change their behavior and act exactly the way you think they should. You might be waiting for a really long time, my friend.

So that brings us to what you can do about it. Whether it's your mother partner, friend, yourself, fill in the blank on whom it's important to drop expectations of other adults. You can absolutely make requests to people. You can ask them to take out the garbage, do the dishes, help cook, set the table, but if they don't. Then it's up to you to decide how you want to think and feel about the situation. Do you want to make it mean that they're a terrible person and feel angry and pissed off all day? That's one option. Or you can decide that your manuals don't align and choose how you want to feel about that.

I personally would rather feel happy and peaceful. So I challenged myself to think creatively about how I can accept that person and feel happy and peaceful.

[00:06:00] When you drop your manual, your expectations can be boiled down to this: number one, you're an adult. Number two: you get to be who you are. Number three: you get to decide what you think and how you feel.

This requires taking a lot of responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, actions, and results in your life. It's not easy, but it's so freeing.

I also want you to watch out for when you've dropped the manual, but your sister, parent, or partner, haven't about your brother, for example. Remember, you can't control what your brother, parent or partner do. It's their journey. So instead of having a lot of drama, I suggest that you use a thought like, "Aha, that's their manual cropping up," and then evaluate how you want to respond to their request.

[00:07:00] And who knows, maybe you drop in your manual will inspire the family. Remember. This doesn't mean we can't make requests or maintain boundaries. We simply do not give away power based on unmet expectations. No matter what people do, how they act or what they say, we don't have to give others the power to determine how we feel. When you drop your manuals for people you love, including yourself, you allow them to be themselves. That's true intimacy, my friends.

So stay in your bad-ass power seat and feel peace. Manage your thoughts and that bad-ass brain. Keep thinking creatively during the holiday season in a global pandemic. Take a page out of my playbook: support one of your local amazing restaurants and order takeout.

Okay, tool number two is called your future self.[00:08:00]

Your future self is one of my favorite cognitive exercises to practice building love for yourself and engage your CEO brain or prefrontal cortex. I use this tool multiple times a day. This is the perfect tool to use when you're feeling anxious about a specific outcome, thinking about the new year and are evaluating your past actions. So let's define what the future self is. Your future self can be five minutes from now, one day from now, five years from now, five decades from now, whatever you decided to be.

And the intention is to channel that person you will be and develop a relationship with them. The amazing thing is that you can glean wisdom from your future self so that you can become them now. Yeah. Like today. Your future self is an amazing resource that's always available to you. By thinking about what your future self would [00:09:00] do say or believe you're engaging your prefrontal cortex and putting your CEO brain in charge. And if this feels a little woo or challenging to imagine, I understand. Think of it as simply a brain exercise. If it's helpful, you can

start by writing a letter to your past self to get in gear. Then you can move on to visualizing your future bad-ass self.

The holiday season, even as we socially distance can be a time when you find your brain saying sentences to you, like ask, screw it or just one more or I'll be fine. And staying up later than you'd like, drinking a few extra glasses of wine or cocktails or thinking another dessert is a great idea. And remember, nothing has gone wrong with your brain. Please remember this. But society y'all has conditioned you to believe that celebrating with food and booze and [00:10:00] parties and staying up late are just what you do during the holidays. It's a lie. The holidays are a time to be very aware of your primitive puppy brain and his tempting voice luring you down easy pleasure street.

There's nothing wrong with pleasure or parties or wherever you want to celebrate. Just be sure not to lie to yourself that you're practicing self-care when you're actually self-sabotaging or you don't like your reasons

So when you notice your primitive puppy brain's tempting thoughts, go ahead and have a chat with your future self. Ask yourself how we feel tomorrow if you stay up for two hours past your bedtime or insert anything that breaks your integrity with yourself.

Remember, the future self tool is not an opportunity to indulge in worst case scenarios. Your future self is the person who loves themselves, who knows they are worthy of your dreams. We make everything up y'all so we might as well make up an [00:11:00] amazing story.

Which brings us to tool number three. Probably the most universally applicable tool that will be of massive help to you to keep you grounded during the holidays is just feeling your feelings, processing them versus avoiding them.

Our human experiences are made of both 50 50. That includes times like the holidays, where there may be expectations --hello, manual--that we're happy and full of holiday magic. Or our partner reads our minds it has a perfect present ready, or our mom doesn't make critical comments to us, but typically we end up experiencing some type of negative feeling and I'm guessing that will be amplified this year with the pandemic.

So this month, if you notice you're feeling sad or anxious or frustrated, remember that there are four things you can do with a feeling. Number one resistant number two, react to it.[00:12:00] Number three, avoid it. Number four, allow and process it.

The goal of thought work is to learn how to take that fourth option allowing and processing feelings.

This applies to any feeling when you're experiencing anxiety about COVID-19, sadness about being separated from loved ones. Or frustration with people not meeting expectations. You might notice these are all negative feelings and that's because we typically don't resist positive feelings, but this is applicable for those as well.

Because of our society, we have a misconception that feelings should be good and comfortable. Most of the time, this idea is often ironically, what perpetuates our misery. We buffer also known as checkout from life with overeating over-drinking, mindless shopping, the list goes on. When we learn how to truly process feelings [00:13:00] confidently, we stop needing to escape from them with food work, booze, Netflix, or other buffering behaviors. We become less afraid of feeling anything. We don't intensify feelings by resisting them or create results we don't like by reacting to them. When we aren't afraid to feel completely we open ourselves to the full human experience: the happy and the sad in life. The 50 50. Being able to stay present with our feelings does take practice. I suggest you choose a mindset of curiosity and care while diving into processing feelings this month.

And finally, we're going to wrap up with tool number four. Make a fucking decision. This is another one of my favorite tools. Y'all okay. I love them all, of course, because they all work! [00:14:00] So let me share a story that one of my students was telling me the other day, this student shared that they were sad because they hadn't seen their family since February.

And that they felt confused daily because they couldn't decide what to do about traveling to see their family for Christmas. And I felt so much empathy for them, but I also had to call them out because they couldn't see that they were completely stuck in indulging in confusion. Remember, confusion is an indulgent emotion that does not serve you.

There are two reasons why we get stuck in confusion. Number one, y'all you aren't managing your brain because you are accepting. Quote, I don't know, or quote, I'm confused as an answer and believing you can't change your confusion or that answer will just automagically arrive. Or number two is you're terrified of how [00:15:00] you think you will feel if you make a decision that you later decide was the wrong one. And then you beat yourself up in the future.

So here's the lesson. The worst thing that's going to happen from making a decision is a feeling and feelings are just a vibration running through your body. They pass.

So really, if you're staying in confusion, you're doing so because you're just scared of a thought that you will have in the future.

You're accepting that you will just abandon yourself to the perils of your unmanaged brain in the future. But you know what else you don't get to do when you stay confused? You don't get to have the knowledge that you have options and that you're a bad-ass human being and most important, that you can manage your brain and handle any fucking feeling.

So here's how to stop saying, I don't know what I want and feeling confused. You just make a decision and like your reason. [00:16:00] You decide now that you will have your own back in the future. Making decisions is one of my favorite lessons for y'all because decisions are how you move your life forward.

Now, I want you all to notice here by not making a decision. Guess what? You're making a fucking decision. Your playing is so sneaky like that! But when you don't make a decision, you choose the status quo. You just don't give yourself any power with it. It's kind of a lose, lose. You're choosing the status quo. You're holding off making a decision. Not making a decision is making a decision to choose where you are right now. But the shitty thing is you don't get to feel powerful, which we do when we make a decision. You stay stuck in feeling anxiety because in your brain, you're still confused.

So if you're in the same position as my student and you're indulging in confusion about whether to go see your [00:17:00] family, here's what you can do today. 1) Decide to go! You can drive to see them, quarantine, test when arrive, figure out the safety protocol that works for you,

OR 2) you can decide to stay! Schedule virtual gatherings to eat, watch movies, be together in spirit.

And guess what? You can make a new decision tomorrow or next week or any time. It's that simple. Okay. Rockstars. You're amazing. Okay, happy holidays. I love you all so much and I'll talk to you next week. Okay. Bye.

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