

Ep. 47 Are Your Emotions Potty Trained? Taming and Aiming (Part 2)

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: [00:00:00] Welcome to the podcast today. I started season three with episode 45, which focused on mental wellness and our spirit. Perhaps nothing dampens or heightens our spirit more than our emotions, which is why I'm dedicating not one, but two episodes to what I consider one of the fundamental skills of cultivating mental wellness, emotional intelligence. Maybe some people call it emotional regulation. I call it potty training your emotions. Naming, taming, and aiming. Hey, I spent 21 years in a junior high and there's a lot of potty talk, so don't be surprised that's the method I came up with. In episode 46, we were joined by a listener to talk about naming our emotions. Anger, pain, fear, joy, love, passion, guilt, and shame. The big takeaway from that episode is that our emotions are physical sensations that are followed by a nanosecond of thoughts that help us interpret and make sense of what is happening in our daily life. The only [00:01:00] problem with that is that our emotional reactions happen so quickly and without emotional intelligence, we can easily do things we regret or draw conclusions about people and events that are not accurate. As I like to say, Potty Training Our Emotions help protect us from a lot of crap. Our emotional reactions are deeply unique to each of us, which is why this is not a skill we can hire out. Yep, this is an inside out job. Today, I welcome back our guest. As we move on to the next step of Potty Training Our Emotions, Taming and Aiming. Thank you so much for being here with us again to talk about this important skill.

Guest: Excited to be here.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: You and I decided to do these two episodes almost two months ago and I wondered if we could begin by you sharing with our audience what's it been like to think about emotional regulation in the last two months.

Guest: I've really enjoyed it. This is a choice right to do this You're not holding me at gun point [00:02:00] here. I'm at the point in my life where I want to be doing a lot of internal work, bettering my perspective, bettering my life. This journey for me it's really complimented a lot of other philosophies and practices I have in my life. Yoga is very important to me. I've trained in yoga. I can teach yoga. I have a very mindful outlook on life in general. But emotions is definitely something that I have less control over. I can tell myself to breathe

and relax and chill, but before trying to think about this external versus internal mindset that you have framed out, it's in the past been hard for me to actually implement change.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I really love what you just said, and I want to punctuate one thing that yoga is a practice. It's not something that just happens unless someone says intentionally to themselves, I am going to yoga class. I'm going to [00:03:00] take 10 or 15 minutes to do these poses at home. That it is a decision and an intention that one makes, correct?

Guest: Definitely

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think that one of the really confusing things about managing our emotions is we're not told when we're little that this is a practice, this is a skill that we need to learn how to do. In the early years when we're infants, we often have adults that help us regulate our emotions. And then as children get older, their emotions just run amok, and most parents aren't quite sure what to do. I think that if you have a child, my first child was a pretty easy kid when it came to emotional regulation, so it's easy as a parent to think, oh, This is really, pretty easy to do. He's pretty even keel. He doesn't have lots of ups and downs, but my second child a very deep feeler and then I realized, Oh my [00:04:00] God, I know nothing about this. I have to up my game because what she needed from me so she could learn emotional regulation was unique. That's one of the reasons I think I've worked so hard as a clinician because the bread and butter of all therapists is emotional regulation. I always say to people, Hey, if you're in therapy and you're not learning super concrete skills about emotional regulation, ask your therapist for super concrete skills. We all have it, but sometimes there's so much content that Clients want to give in a session, which is important, that there isn't enough time to learn the skill of just how do I regulate my emotions?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What we're going to do on the podcast today is I'm going to share with our listeners, the model that you have been thinking about and practicing for the last couple months and I'm going to include the one pager in my show notes. After or before right now, you can go look at that. Cause for many of us to visually see something, [00:05:00] it imprints a process in our head that makes it so much easier. What I want to do is share the 40, 000 foot view of my emotional regulation process that I teach and then you're going to give us a couple examples of how you've implemented these the last couple months. Is that fair? Yeah, okay .

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What my clients have taught me, didn't read this in a book, but what I saw from 46, 000 hours of therapy sessions is that most people come to therapy with what I call an external mindset. They have emotions going on in their life and the way that they regulate them is by blaming the source that made them feel the emotions, or by unclaiming it and just detaching from it. An external mindset is not healthy, but it is what most people learn. What I've come to learn is a really easy way for people to [00:06:00] regulate their emotions. It's what I call an internal mindset, and that is tend and befriend. You do that by naming, taming, and aiming your emotions. I'm going to begin by walking through what external mindset blaming and unclaiming looks like in an event.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's say you're so excited, you're going to have lunch with this friend and all of a sudden you get a text and that friend says, can't meet today. Inside you have an intense emotional reaction because this is the third cancellation in a row with this person who you really like. Everyone's going to have their own unique reaction. There's not a right or wrong reaction. We don't get to choose our reactions. We do get to choose to become aware of them. The external mindset where we're blaming and unclaiming, you get this text and maybe your reaction is one of four things: fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. A flight reaction might [00:07:00] be you begin to in your head call this person names. A flight reaction is you're like, forget this person. The freeze reaction is you just are paralyzed and you don't do anything. And a fawning reaction is you go one down and you're like they're so important. Fight often leads to blaming. You begin to call them names, you maybe text a friend and say, can you believe they did this again? You're in your head with thoughts. When we unclaim, that's the freeze and the fawn. Maybe you freeze and then you get right back to work and you don't let yourself process your emotional reaction because you're not sure what to do, or maybe you just start scrolling on your phone and an hour and a half later, you should have been at work, but you're still on TikTok. That's an example of an unclaim. Blaming is usually fighting and, placing blame on others or on oneself. Fawning can sometimes be blaming [00:08:00] I'm not good enough for this person to clear out their schedule. But the bottom line is, At the end of the process, your mind and your body feel unease. The emotion isn't worked through. When we have an external mindset, we usually feel worse at the end of it. This happens very quickly. I've just spent two minutes explaining it. This all happens in 30 seconds. Again, you might be scrolling on your phone which is a form of unclaiming. Some people might feel rejected, so they smoke pot. They might have the effects of pot for six hours. Pot is a form of unclaiming. Some people might eat a bag of chips. Another form of unclaiming, because one of the most helpful pieces of information I've ever learned about emotional regulation is that we cannot digest food and process emotion at the same time. That's why when people have intense emotions, they

like to eat, because [00:09:00] it tamps down their feelings. The same thing in having a glass of wine or beer or smoking a joint. All of those behaviors disrupt our body's natural way of moving through an emotion.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: It's really important that we understand emotions are our reactions to something. If we think of them as a bell curve, they go up, and they go down. In an external mindset, what we typically do is when our emotions get too intense for us, we actually take them offline through behavior instead of moving through them. That's the external mindset. I wondered if you could share with us a couple examples of your own that represent that to our listeners.

Guest: Yeah, definitely. I was smiling during that because your example of canceled plans, I feel comes up so often. I'm a big TikToker for my unclaiming behavior. So it was, funny to hear you say that. One of, one example, I think I can share. Is definitely tied [00:10:00] to shame. For me, specifically embarrassment. In the first episode I shared how I am incredibly klutzy. Actually just this past weekend I was grocery shopping and I grabbed a glass jar of jam and put it in the top where kids sit in the cart, but I hadn't flipped up those flippy things so it fell and completely shattered everywhere. Glass everywhere, jam everywhere. Even after two months of trying to focus on an internal mindset, embarrassment for me is just so hard to not have that freeze or slight response from it. I think, a good example, and I can't really blame it on anybody else, right? I wasn't really blaming, but it definitely had that urgent response to both freeze and plap at the same time, if that even makes sense.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's a great example. Can you talk a little bit about the state of your mind? Cause our mental [00:11:00] wellness, which this surprises lots of people, it's our mental state. It's what is our mind doing? What was your mind doing when it was freezing or wanting to get the heck out of there?

Guest: Honestly, only one woman in the aisle with me who was like shopping in the other direction, but she saw the whole thing happen and was staring at me. And didn't say anything at first. It's like just a total body like uncomfortable feeling to be honest. I was like, oh, she just saw that and I don't know, just feeling like it's my fault, right? I should have put the little flippy things up so stuff doesn't fall or like, why would you put a glass jar right near the big hole?

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's a good example of blame. Your mind is thinking I should have done this or they should have done that.

Guest: Or I think that lady thinks I'm an idiot.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Great example. Again, shame is a really hard emotion. It's one of the hardest emotions for us to work through without using the tool of blame.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: What's another example [00:12:00] of your external mindset?

Guest: I had an anxiety specifically tied to fear. I had a wake that I had to go to for a family friend. It was , somebody that I grew up with elementary school, middle school, high school, the whole shebang. His father has passed away, my mom was friends with his mom, my mom was out of town. I would have went with her, but because she wasn't in town I, I felt a responsibility to go and had a lot of anxiety around it. Because, my dad passed away six years ago. I had a lot of anxiety around going and having to stand in the line. It was a lot of anxiety for me, that was next to impossible to move into an internal mindset. At the time it felt like a freeze situation. Dreading it all week, sitting in the parking lot, having to walk in. And unclaiming, I think, in this sense, for me, was sitting in the parking lot and having to hype myself up to go in like waiting [00:13:00] it out. Oh, maybe I should check in with a friend or whatever before I go in.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So this is a really beautiful example, though I want to acknowledge, it's just so sad that your dad died and sad that your friend's dad died. Most of the time we don't feel just one emotion. Because while you were feeling anxiety, you're also feeling sadness.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And you're feeling your sadness. But you're also feeling the sadness that you know your friend and his mom are feeling and all that happens that they have no idea. We don't use an external mindset because we're not smart. We use external mindsets because emotions are super complex and intense. Sometimes they're not as complex. It's the jelly jar dropped. But a lot of the times they're really complex like this. And it's not just what we're feeling for ourselves, but it's also what we're feeling for others. it's also what we're [00:14:00] projecting other people are feeling as you walk into the funeral home. Because as people see you, then you know they have sadness for your loss but that loss becomes present for everybody there again. And that's a lot. One of the things I would say is, you had somewhat of an external mindset, but it was a combination. Because you were very aware of what was going on inside of you. Sometimes I work with people who've had such a significant loss and they're six years after it, and they think it should be over. They don't have your self awareness and they walk into the funeral home and they have a panic

attack. This is a true story. They have no idea why they would have a panic attack when they walked into the funeral home. But you have a lot more self awareness.

Guest: Thank you. Thank you. Years of therapy.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Exactly. Because any kind of loss that is significant, we're not supposed to know how to move through it in a healthy way.[00:15:00] If we can go get coaching lessons for pitching or basketball or tutoring for math, we should certainly give ourselves coaching for grief. It's really healthy that you've done that. But you share with our listeners you're in the car and you're like, maybe I'll unclaim this and phone a friend. We're going to, talk about that sometimes phoning a friend isn't unclaiming. Before we move on to talking about the internal mindset, which is the healthy way to move through our emotions, can you talk a little bit about how having the words of blame and unclaim, has that helped you up your emotional intelligence?

Guest: One of the things that I've noticed throughout this whole process is not only my own level of emotional intelligence, but the emotional intelligence of people around me, whether it's family, friends, co workers, etc. It's been the easiest to, spot either in myself or other people, this blame and unclaim nature. It's the almost, I'm gonna use the word irrational, even though [00:16:00] it's very rational in your mind this blaming and unclaiming that you see either within yourself or other people that I've been able to pick up on. I've noticed some other people that I'm like, wow, they blame a lot. It's not something that I've noticed in the past. It's made me aware of my own emotional intelligence and where I'm at with that, as well as other people that I interact with on, a daily or weekly basis.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: This is a great point. When we become more emotionally intelligent, we are aware of emotional dynamics in a different way outside of us then we can respond to them, even if they're unhealthy, with more emotional intelligence. Have you been able to do that with someone who was blaming?

Guest: I definitely have had instances with a family member that does blame a good portion of the time for a lot of emotions and events that happen. Understanding the logic behind it, you can't really control unless you're [00:17:00] putting a lot of thought and practice into it, what your response is going to be. It's given me, a little bit more peace or understanding of the behavior and why they choose to act or respond in ways that they do.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: There's two ways of responding when people are blaming us. Often it's reactive and we can just be direct and say hey, I see you're really upset are you blaming me for what has happened? That gives people a second chance to own if they want to blame. Sometimes they are blaming, but often what happens is when someone is blaming us, we get defensive and we begin to be little lawyers and we just escalate. But if we have emotional intelligence and someone's blaming us, we can take a breath and we can clarify. I will say 80 percent of the time it calms things down and it gives that person a chance to think about what they're doing in a different [00:18:00] way than if we just escalate in everybody's defense of trying to win. It has to be a higher value to do right than be right. People want to be right and we often follow that energy of, I want to be right at the expense of doing right, not just for ourself, but for our relationships, our jobs, et cetera.

Guest: That's great advice.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Let's move on to the internal mindset and I'm going to do the same thing where I walk through what is the healthy way to move through our emotions. Again the method I call is are your emotions potty trained because we have an event happen and it lights up our body in one way or another. This example I'm going to use is an internal experience. I have this a lot in my office, where somebody does something that they're not proud of, it's a mistake. I was talking to one of my clients last week and in a meeting people were brainstorming, and [00:19:00] he said, I think that's really a dumb idea. Everybody kept on going. After he said that, he noticed that everything in his body was lighting up and he was full of embarrassment because he felt guilty that he had called this person's idea stupid. He knew this method, he noticed he felt guilty, grounded his feet while he was sitting at the table and he put his hands on his thighs and he took some breaths without anyone really even knowing he was doing it. He wasn't paying attention to the meeting because his emotional reaction took his brain somewhere else. He named it- guilt. He tamed it by just taking some breaths and then in his notes to himself, he wrote, what should I do? He began to doodle and then that part of the meeting ended they had a break and he went up [00:20:00] to his colleague and he said, Hey, I'm so sorry that I said that was a dumb idea. That really isn't a dumb idea. It just was something I hadn't thought of and I needed more time to think it through. I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings. And she said to him, Oh, wow. I thought I was being overly sensitive that was really embarrassing. I'm really grateful that you said that. Then they both laughed. They walked over, got something to drink, came back to the table. When we have an internal mindset, we tend and befriend our emotions. We name them, we tame them, and we aim them. Think of it like a bell curve. Something happens, we notice that inside we're emotionally dysregulated, we name it. Sometimes we can't really get the name of the

emotion because it all happens so quickly, but we know that emotionally we feel dysregulated. And then we commit to taming it. And all we have to do is [00:21:00] breath work. That is just taking a few breaths, 30 to 90 seconds, typically tames it enough that we have more mental clarity. We help that taming process by moving our awareness to our feet, and putting our hands gently on our body, either where the emotion is, of course, in this example, putting his hand over his heart would not have been okay in the meeting, so he just put them on his legs. He did the breath work. And then what happens is we get mental clarity. It doesn't mean the emotion goes completely away. It means that it decreases enough that we have an idea of how to aim the emotion. Typically there's five things we do when we've calmed or tamed the emotion enough. We do a physical activity, go for a walk. Maybe we need a little more breath work. Maybe we do some kind of journaling, just like he did. He scribbled notes and got clear on what he [00:22:00] wanted to do. Sometimes it's a really intense emotion and we might have a big cry. Sometimes we just need to do something that's creative. People paint, they play a song, they listen to a song. Sometimes people just need affection. They cuddle their cat. They pet their dog or they ask their friend or loved one for a hug. Those five things have scientifically been proven to help complete the cycle of our emotion.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: When we've moved through the internal mindset in a healthy enough way, does it need to be perfect? We go from our initial reaction, which is uncomfortableness, To what we call wise mind, and that's where the emotion and logical information have been integrated enough that our mind is more at ease, and we have a new perspective. That example, where he reactively said, that's a stupid idea and he moved through the whole process, less than four minutes, [00:23:00] he told me, and he ended up feeling proud of himself for owning his misstep. She accepted it, and he went back to the meeting clear minded, feeling good about himself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Can you share with our listeners a couple examples where you used the internal mindset?

Guest: For me an example of anger, and more specifically frustration, came up. I've been traveling a lot this summer and when I was traveling my brake line on my car snapped. Um, which all good. Everyone's okay. I could feel myself going into the external mindset with anger and I noticed that I was getting in that why me type of mindset. And I had to take a step back. I noticed it was happening and really wanted to practice breathwork with it. I have a mantra that I say a lot in my professional life, which is no one's a doctor here, [00:24:00] no one's dying but I don't really apply it a lot into my personal life. This will be okay. You will get your car fixed. You'll be able to do whatever you need to do.

It's really not that serious. For me, that was really helpful to take something that I use a lot in my professional life and trying to use it with breath work. It's not the end of the world. There's no real reason to let this upset your whole day.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Wow. That is a great example because within that example, you're demonstrating the power of the internal mindset. One is you noticed that you were angry and you actually have made a commitment to not letting the anger control you, but you managing the anger. You do the breath work. Simply doing breath work, you're given a new perspective, which is really humorous, right? think of all the times we're in our car, it's working perfectly. We don't even thank it. We just think that car is there to [00:25:00] be, perfectly working every single second of our life. Then when it does break down, which of course we know they break down, we are so angry and inconvenienced. We have to have some tools to what I call right size ourself . As I said in episode 45, anger is often a capital I where we get rigid. This car should never break down. That's just not possible. What we're trying to do with emotional intelligence is keep our minds stable, happy, and alert. So when the car breaks down, you have a wise mind, a healthier perspective, by saying, wait, I'm not a doctor. There's no emergency here. This is an inconvenience. I need to have a healthy perspective that allows my mind to stay in a healthier place and not have it make me miserable. It's a great example.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So I know you said you had a second example, but before you give that, I'd like you to talk about how do you remember [00:26:00] to use this new way of managing your emotions? Because I think that's one of the trickiest parts.

Guest: Through this whole process, what I've really realized is for me, whether it's gonna be anger, pain, fear, shame, guilt. Any of the ones that are quote unquote negative. They're so uncomfortable for me and don't feel good that what has really allowed me to shift forward into this internal practice is recognizing this does not feel good, and I would like it to feel better. And this is the way that we do it now has really helped me. It's really trying to be self aware. I'm not wearing a red string around my finger as a reminder or anything like that. It's more of a this doesn't feel good. How do I fix it? Type of internal conversation with myself.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's really helpful. So what's your second example of when you use the internal mindset?

Guest: One of the things that I had asked you when we embarked on the last two months [00:27:00] was how do you do internal mindset set for the good

ones. It makes a lot of sense, especially when you see it mapped out in your takeaway sheet that you have linked in the show notes, but it's harder to understand how to do it with the more positive emotions. The example I'd like to share is love, because I think that one is obviously a emotion that's really important, but it's harder to name, tame, and aim. This summer, I felt really blessed. being able to travel a lot. I was able to see my sister and my college best friends three different times this summer for weeks at a time, which was very enjoyable. A lot of life events were happening in the friend group, weddings, things like that, vacations. It was overwhelming almost how much time and love I was able to spend and receive from my sister and my college friends. So recognizing it [00:28:00] was really important for me. These are the relationships that really keep you going, right? Realizing these are the people that matter the most to me in life. Talking about emotions and being like, I have loved spending time with you. This has really made my summer. This is something that I really value. Not that I wouldn't have done it before the internal mindset, but it was really nice to be able to really recognize, this feels really good.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: That's a beautiful example again, because to connect to the first episode 45. When we have emotional intelligence, we are aware of when our spirit is being nurtured. Love, joy, those positive emotions, happiness, passion, excitement. What I hear you saying is when you had all this great time with people, you actually became aware and you didn't take it for granted. Not that you would have, but This process actually encourages us [00:29:00] to do what I call bank it. Where in the first example that you shared, it was I'm going to do breath work so my anger doesn't get out of control. But in this example, it's I'm going to ground myself and really feel the love and do what I call banking it, where you're actually depositing it into your heart and really owning it. Was there any time that you allowed yourself to do that?

Guest: I don't think I did it independently, but in the conversations that I was having with my sister and my girlfriends, it was more of let's hug for a very long time. We love each other and this was great. So it was more of a I guess symbiotic experience.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Yes, because our emotions are relational. There was this saying in the 90s of you can't make me feel that. But then we learned about mirror neurons, and mirror neurons are in the front part of our forehead. And that means what you feel, I can feel. Not all the time. That's why if you're at a [00:30:00] football game, everybody starts to clap. You just start to clap, because there's an element of emotions that are contagious and that is true in physical illnesses. And because of the pandemic, have lots of information about

how to minimize contagion. We need to minimize contagion when emotions are like anger and fear and pain. But we also want to maximize contagion when we feel love towards someone or appreciation or awe. My husband sent me a text last night and said, look at the moon. That was a way of him maximizing his awe by sharing it with me. That's a really cool example that I think just takes emotional intelligence into a whole nother realm that it really does help solidify not only our relationships, but if we don't have a healthy spirit, we're not going to feel mentally well. We need to notice what are those things that uplift our spirits and relationships really are one of the primary [00:31:00] drivers of mental wellness.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I want to talk before we end about two common things when it comes to dealing with our emotions. One is flooding. That is when we feel something really intensely, and we're not sure what to do. Any insights on what you might do when you flood, given the emotional information that you've learned?

Guest: Yes, for me, flooding looks like crying, like wanting to lay down and nap and just not look at my phone. On the contrary, it also looks like excessively looking at my phone just depending on the situation. I think those are the three like flooding All right. unclaiming behaviors.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: And now what would you do? Because flooding is different than having an uncomfortable emotion. It's like having an uncomfortable emotion on steroids where you disconnect in a way. What would you do now to manage your flooding?

Guest: It's interesting because having lived with this flooding coping [00:32:00] mechanisms even though they're I'll say it like nobody wants to cry, nobody wants to have to take a nap because sleeping is better than having to think about it.

Guest: I think, recognizing they're just two uncomfortable things that you feel, even if these are things you're doing by yourself, they're still feeling very uncomfortable. Through this process, being able to recognize this is a heightened level of uncomfortable and I would love to do anything for it to not be that. Oh yeah, there's the internal mindset. Let's do that as an option has been beneficial for me.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I think we can learn from how we take care of ourselves physically. I very intentionally used the term tend and befriend our emotion. If somebody has a small strain in their back, They'll be different than if

it's a major ache in their back. They tend and they befriend that ache and that when someone has flooding, we don't want them to be self critical. A lot of times people are wired to feel things more intensely. Our Feelings are on an intensity scale 1 to [00:33:00] 10. Some people are just really deep feelers.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: They're in that 8, 9, 10 category. They're going to flood more. But they also tend to be people who love in a really intense and connecting way. They often are creative types. It's really important to be accepting of who we are and then to be very, very tending and befriending in a soft kind of way. Because then we move through that bell curve of the emotional reaction with gentleness versus criticism. Does that make sense?

Guest: Yeah. I'm a 10.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: I work a lot with people who are 10s because they often come to therapy to figure out how to regulate their intense emotions.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: So let's talk a little bit about rumination. Rumination is when something happens, there's an intense reaction to an event, and you notice it, but you can't get it out of your mind, and it goes over and over and over again. Typically everybody has something they about [00:34:00] some time or another, unless you unclaim everything. When you have that, what do you do?

Guest: One of my biggest pet peeves is I really hate poor communication. When I have a friend who is bad at communicating, whether it's like they're a bad texter, they don't pick up the phone all the time. I really internalize that and will spend time ruminating. Feeling like, did I do something wrong? Do they not like me anymore? Do they not want to be my friend? Why wouldn't they be messaging me? I know they're on their phone. So I do feel like I do a lot of ruminating on lack of communication or poor communication, at least to my standards. That's always hard for me to take a step back and put a perspective in the other person's point of view. They're probably busy. It's more about them than it is about me. I didn't do anything wrong. And, having to move into that mindset of gentleness or compassion for the other person. Thinking what are they going through? Why might [00:35:00] This change of communication be occurring has been helpful to get out of a rumination type of state.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: This is a really common thing I have in my office. So people just put their feet down. We think we want to run away from rumination. We actually want to tend and befriend it. We want to put our feet on our floor, move our awareness to our body, find where we're ruminating. A lot

of times in my office, people put their hands on their head. They breathe and allow themselves to have this reoccurring thought of my friend doesn't like me, my friend doesn't like me, I did this bad thing, I'm really stupid, whatever it is. And then after they breathe for 30 or 40 seconds, exactly what you said happens. It's probably not about me. They're probably on their phone doing work. Oh wait, this is their mother's birthday or whatever clarifying thought comes. We befriended ourself by not haunting ourself with the worst case scenario, which is what happens with rumination. Nobody ruminates, Oh my God, if I win [00:36:00] the lottery, how am I the money? Everybody ruminates on, I'm going to get fired. They don't like me. I did the wrong thing. And that's just normal. The mind is wired to protect us from bears. And that's why you can see in both of these mindsets, we always start with the negative.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Emotional intelligence moves through the bell curve and ends up at a wise mind. My earlier example where the man misspoke. He did something wrong. But we can always repair. And a really important part of emotional intelligence is repairing. Sometimes we repair with ourself. Sometimes we repair with another. But when we have it, we're always able to repair. External mindset usually is not repairing, it's actually doing damage. Sometimes the damage is small, but sometimes it's really big, and it's really something people regret.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Any other thoughts before we end?

Guest: No, this has been such [00:37:00] a great journey, MJ. I'm so excited that we did this podcast and I was able to go through this process for the last couple months. 10 out of 10 recommend the internal mindset for anybody wanting to up level their emotional intelligence or simply feel better.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Thank you so much. And it's free. That's the thing. We often spend money to try to feel better, but all you have to do is go to the link in the show notes and you can see the one pager. I think that the one pager really helps solidify the image in our minds. So thanks to Cathy Hall, my graphic artist, who made it.

MJ Murray Vachon LCSW: Here's my Inner Challenge insights

Insight number one.

Like many people, you may have grown up in a family that didn't learn to name tame or aim your emotions. Like many people, you now have your own children. Aren't second chances grand!.

Insight number two.

Developing emotional intelligence does not mean we figure out how to stop having uncomfortable emotions. It means that we're [00:38:00] smart enough to have a process of moving through them. So our reactions don't make us look dumb.

Insight number three.

Here's the saying from therapy land, when it comes to our emotional reactions: if it's hysterical, it's historical. Ever have an adult tantrum? I actually had one, a couple months back. They suck. But with emotional intelligence, one learns to take a journey backward and see if something in your past is connecting to your present, making your emotional reaction bigger than makes sense. Our guest today showed her EQ when she understood that her intense anxiety about attending the wake of her friend's father connected to her own experience of her father's death. Such emotional intelligence. Helped her move from blaming to tending and befriending a challenging situation.

Insight number four.

Do you have loved ones or colleagues who are blamers? Did you notice [00:39:00] how today's guest was able to shift her mindset when she was around a blamer? In her words, not mine. Noticing gave me a bit more peace and understanding of the behavior and why my family member acts this way. This is why EQ is a foundational tool in cultivating mental wellness. She felt a little bit more peaceful.

Insight number five.

Emotional intelligence helps us to stay in the river of wellness, where we use self-awareness and reflection to know when to use the tools of flexibility, adaptiveness coherence, energy and stability. So our reactions to daily events move from rigidity, where we try to impose control, and chaos, where we feel out of control. To mental states where we're more peaceful, happy, and alert. The hardest part of this is our own resistance. We love [00:40:00] negativity. Today's guest gives us the antidote to our resistance. When she says, I just recognize this does not feel good and I would like to feel better. And this is the way I do it now. No red string needed. Just an update.

Thanks for listening. Please check out the one-pagers on the show notes. This is your inner challenge.