



Hosted by Dr. Diane Poole Heller...

Healing Emotional Shutdown: A Path to Authentic Connection

LIVE Masterclass with Q&A

Featuring Daniel Vose, MA, S.E.P.



Welcome

- ▶ This meeting is being recorded—and the replay will be sent out within 24 hours. Watch your inbox for a link.
- ▶ Once we start, all audience members will be muted, and cameras will be turned off.
- ▶ Once we start, chat will be disabled.
- ▶ There will be Q&A at the end, where Daniel and Diane will answer as many of your questions as possible.
If you have questions or comments, please type them in the “Q&A Box” at the bottom of your screen.
- ▶ If you’re having technical problems, please reach out to help@traumasolutions.com for assistance.



Daniel Vose, MA, SEP

- **Internationally recognized somatic educator, trauma specialist, and creator** with over 10,000 hours dedicated to somatic trauma healing and nervous system regulation.
- **Certified in Somatic Experiencing® (SE™)**, former **lead facilitator** in SE™ trainings, and co-teacher of the **DARe™ model**, specializing in attachment-based trauma healing.
- Creator of **Trauma Alchemy**, a comprehensive program integrating somatic psychology with practical tools to heal developmental trauma and foster long-term resilience.
- Former **clinical leader at Sierra Tucson**, now consulting and teaching on trauma-informed somatic programming across online platforms, including on Instagram @Vosesomatic



Diane Poole Heller, PhD

- Internationally recognized speaker, author and teaching expert in the field of adult attachment theory and trauma resolution.
- Author of *The Power of Attachment: How to Create Deep and Lasting Relationships*— “We are all born with an amazing capacity to heal.”
- Signature approach—**DARe**—provides therapists and individuals with relevant skills and practical exercises that facilitate healing from attachment and trauma wounds.
- Decades of experience supporting therapists in crisis situations—including 9/11, Columbine, and Sandy Hook—helping professionals respond with trauma-informed care.



A Path to Connection

Emotional Shutdown isn't a personality

- ▶ It's a protective pattern in the nervous system and it needs to be addressed
- ▶ We're going to speak about it honestly, kindly, and practically

Secrets to Healing Shutdown

- Understand the psychology of shutdown and how it develops
- Support natural cycles of reconnection
- Work on nervous system and somatic levels—where the shutdown actually occurs

Healing happens in phases

- Re-pattern the wounds underneath the shutdown
- Grief period as the person re-awakens
- Retraining emotional connection



Let's get this out the way...

We all know the issue is your partner, and not you!!



Obviously this is a joke, but why can it feel like it's "all them"...?

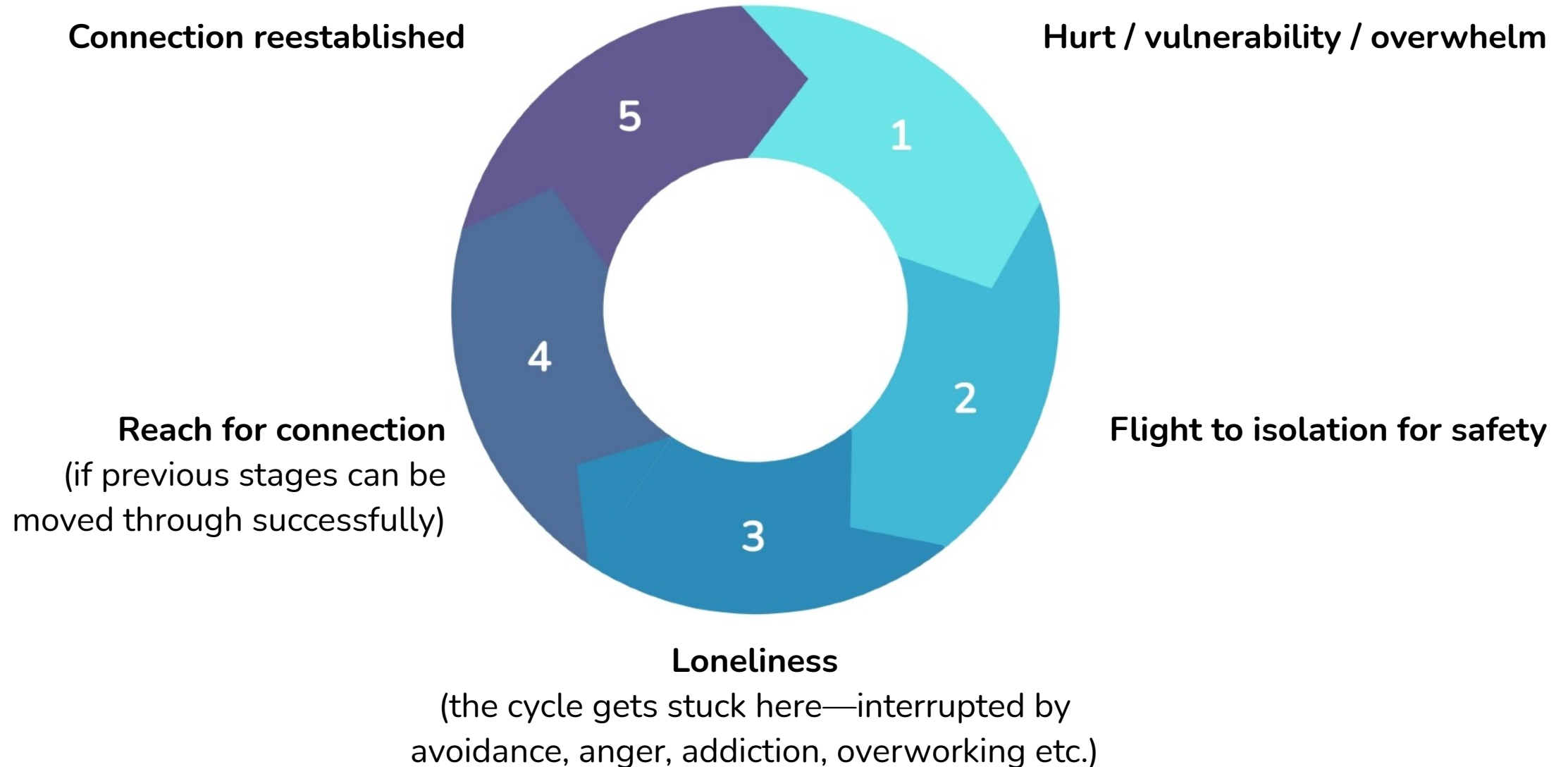
These issues arise in our body and it's there they need to be addressed.



What does this feel like to you?

- ▶ Longing? Feeling trapped?
- ▶ Shutdown is physical. It needs more than just talk.
- ▶ "You just aren't trying hard enough" will not cut it.
- ▶ Having the right map > Effort

The Cycle of Disconnection and Reconnection



Be on the Same Team: Building Bridges

Shutdown People May Feel....

- Frustrated
- Anger
- Confused by feelings
- **Longing for connection**
- That they are the problem
- Inadequate
(I'm failing and I don't know why or how)

Partners of Shutdown People May Feel...

- Frustrated
- Anger
- Confused by mixed signals
- **Longing for connection**
- That they are the problem
- Inadequate
(If I were better than they would be more available)

Quick Formula to Connect

1. Mirror body language
2. State shared emotions
 - "I see you may be feeling x, I feel x too"
3. Name shared desire
 - "I would also like to connect"



Your Partner May Not Understand... But That Doesn't Make You Wrong

Shutdown People May Feel....

- ▶ Disconnected even when they want to be close
- ▶ Afraid of opening up and being judged or overwhelmed
- ▶ Frustrated by not having the words
- ▶ Physiological overwhelm
- ▶ Like they're living "behind glass"

Partners of Shutdown People May Feel...

- ▶ Like they're "too much" just for wanting connection
- ▶ Emotional exhaustion from doing the "emotional labor"
- ▶ Like they're talking to a wall
- ▶ Deep loneliness and isolation
- ▶ Like walking on eggshells
- ▶ Fear of losing the relationship entirely



Do you ever have confusion about what's yours and what's theirs?

- Repressed feelings can live in the shared space



Mac vs. PC: Different Systems, Same Desire

You're not broken—you're speaking different emotional languages.

- ▶ **Different Operating Systems**
 - ▶ Shutdown people are often overwhelmed by high-emotion environments.
- ▶ **Learn Their language**
 - ▶ Connect in their language (slower, spacious, less verbal)
- ▶ **Establish Common Desired Outcome**
 - ▶ This builds trust and reduces shame

Understanding the Shutdown

The still face isn't calm—it's flooded.

- ▶ **On the Outside**

- ▶ Blankness
- ▶ Silence
- ▶ Deflection

- ▶ **On the Inside**

- ▶ Survival physiology
- ▶ Pressure
- ▶ Shame
- ▶ Fear
- ▶ “What's my value?”

- ▶ **Signal that something is horribly wrong.**





The Double-Bind

Shutdown is so difficult because it's layered.

- ▶ Raised to believe vulnerability is weakness
- ▶ Showing weakness = being rejected, which triggers survival systems.
- ▶ However, they may feel high expectations, that they are suppose to be a master of their emotions, even though they are emotionally frozen in time and unable to express vulnerability
- ▶ This leads to further feelings of inadequacy and shame
- ▶ “Boys aren’t born more stoic—they’re born more sensitive to stress. They just learn earlier that expressing it costs them connection.”
(Weinberg et al., 1999; Tronick & Cohn, 1989)

Restoring the Reach Reflex

What happens when you reach... and nothing comes back?

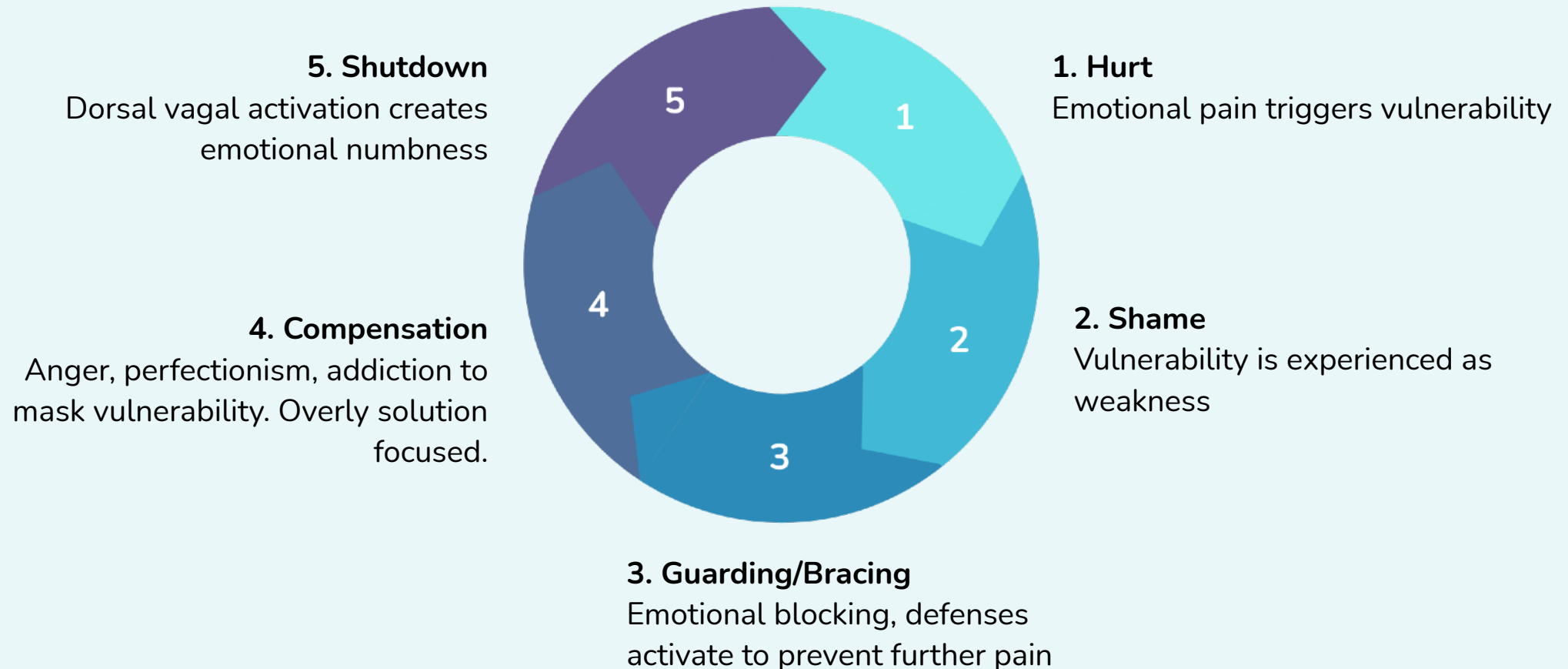
- Reach is biological
 - Wired into the nervous system
 - When the reach is ignored, the body collapses and experiences shame—“**I am not okay**”
 - The system learns to defend against hope
- **The root of long-term shutdown is, in large part, shame and collapse**



The Male Cycle of Repression

The Male Cycle of Repression is a feedback loop that perpetuates emotional disconnection.

- ▶ This self-reinforcing cycle ultimately results in emotional numbness and shutdown as the nervous system adapts to protect against further emotional injury.
- ▶ Understanding this pattern is the first step toward breaking it.



The Experience of Shame

The experience of shame is more common than you think

- ▶ Shame is often invisible to others and even to one's self
- ▶ Performance pressures and increased sensitivity
 - ▶ "Everything is my responsibility"
 - ▶ The stress of performance eats up bandwidth
- ▶ **Developmental Environment**
 - ▶ Threat of ostracization if not competent.
- ▶ **Evolutionary Function of Shame**
 - ▶ Shame can be a protective function of freeze/collapse states in the nervous system, triggering emotional shutdown
- ▶ Invisibility Exercise: Find safety in imagining being invisible





Kind Eyes Exercise

Emotional Shutdown

Emotional shutdown is often a developmental freeze.

- Ask yourself: “What age is the shutdown?”
- Doesn't make it okay but might help it not feel so personal
- Helps to see how to care for the situation in a way that releases the frozen child state



Pace Your Emotional Bids



- **Soft Approach**

- Don't demand—ask for your needs to be met within a reasonable timeframe—not right in that moment

- **Structured Shared Moments**

- Consider “titrating” closeness in manageable chunks
- Too much too quickly can further overwhelm the nervous system, sending them further into shutdown

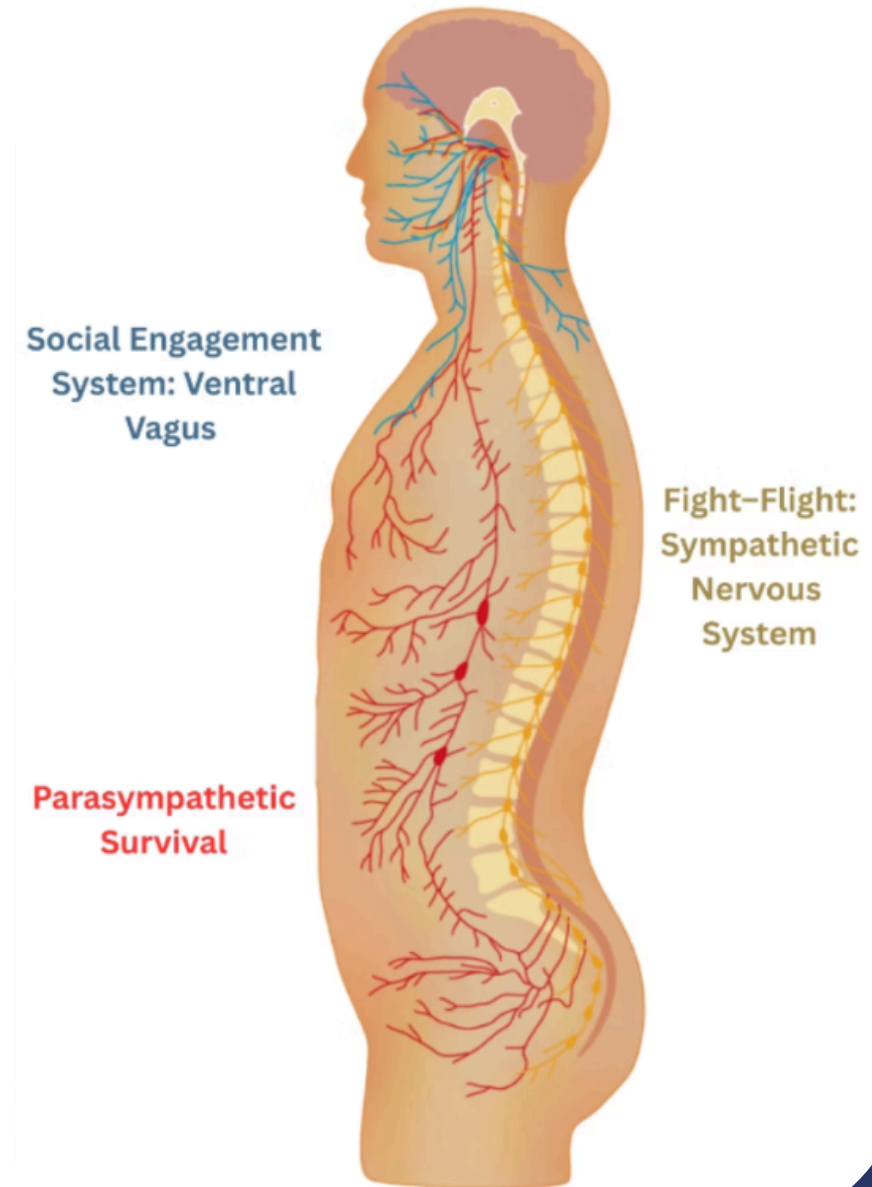
- **Patience is Key**

- The body has its own time and shutdown moves slowly
- Best if you can recognize the person reaching out from shutdown and be supportive

The Polyvagal Theory

The Science of Emotional Safety

- ▶ Polyvagal theory explains how our nervous system responds to emotional challenges
- ▶ Describes how shutdown is an automatic protective response rather than a conscious choice



Polyvagal Theory: The Science of Emotional Shutdown

Ventral Vagal (Safety)

Connection Mode

- ▶ When we feel safe, our nervous system supports social engagement, emotional availability, and authentic connection.
- ▶ In this state, we can be **vulnerable, emotionally present, and build meaningful relationships.**

Sympathetic (Fight/Flight)

Mobilization Mode

- ▶ When we sense danger, our system prepares us to fight or flee from threats.
- ▶ In this state, we may appear **angry, defensive, or reactive** as our body mobilizes energy for protection.

Dorsal Vagal (Freeze/Collapse)

Shutdown Mode

- ▶ When emotional overwhelm becomes too intense, our system initiates shutdown to protect us.
- ▶ This is common in emotional withdrawal - not a choice, but a protective response that requires gentle engagement and patience to resolve.

The Myth of Strength

False Appearances

- Men often appear calm or neutral in emotionally intense situations
- In reality, this is often a shutdown response rather than genuine emotional stability

Societal Reinforcement

- Society mistakes this calmness for strength, leading to expectations that men should be emotionally steady

Emotional Unavailability

- Partners may seek emotional support from the calm partner, only to find they are emotionally unavailable
- This reinforces frustration and disappointment and deepens the cycle of disconnection.





Help Them Help You

Compassion is not the same as self-abandonment.

- Understanding is not enabling
- You don't have to carry the emotional load
- Understand how the shutdown works will help to stop reactivating it
- This helps you act from your center—not from emotional reactions or pain

Vulnerable Child vs. Internalized Father



The diagram consists of two light blue rounded rectangular boxes connected by a horizontal line. The left box is titled 'Vulnerable Child' and lists needs and desires. The right box is titled 'Internalized Father' and lists demands and behaviors. A horizontal line connects the two boxes, symbolizing the internal conflict.

Vulnerable Child

Needs nurturing, acceptance,
and emotional safety

- Desires connection and love
- Feels emotions deeply
- Seeks comfort and reassurance

Internalized Father

Demands strength, stoicism,
and emotional control

- Criticizes vulnerability
- Enforces rigid standards
- Prioritizes performance over feeling

This internal division creates a profound emotional conflict that shapes their responses to vulnerability and keeps men from **fully engaging emotionally** in relationships. The critical father voice often **shames the vulnerable child**, leading to emotional repression and shutdown in adulthood, making authentic connection difficult to achieve.

What is your relationship like with your father?

Unseen Mother Wounds

▸ Emotional Surrogate

- Boys become mother's emotional stand-ins when fathers are absent
- Rewarded for calm support instead of experiencing childhood

▸ Conditional Love

- Affection tied to success or achievement
- Boys suppress needs to maintain connection

▸ Emotional Neglect

- Mother physically present but emotionally absent.
- Unanswered emotional bids create avoidant attachment patterns.

▸ Intrusion and Enmeshment

- Mother lacks boundaries—oversharing or “flooding”
- Closeness becomes overwhelming rather than nourishing

▸ Selective Mirroring

- Only strength or stoicism reflected back
- Vulnerability is ignored or shamed, fragmenting emotional self



Why Men Often Heal Backward

Progress isn't linear. Returning from shutdown involves cycles of opening and retreating that can feel confusing but are essential to healing.

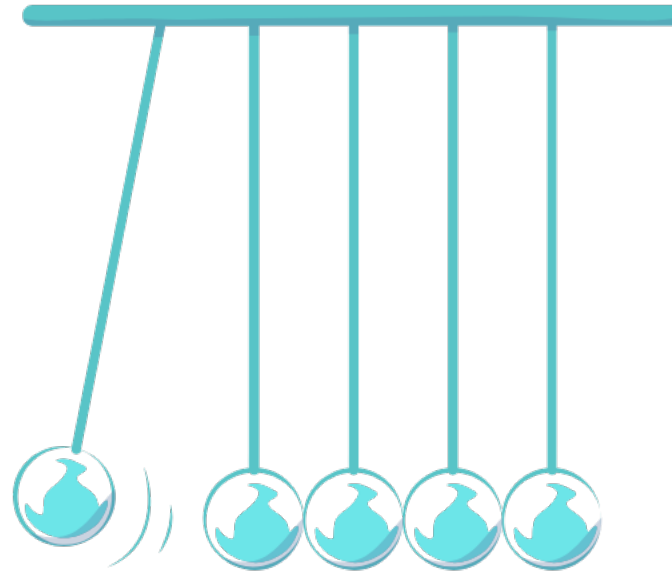
- **Messiness precedes mastery:** Initial healing looks chaotic as long-suppressed emotions surface for the first time
- **Emotional thawing:** Anger, grief, and fear emerge unpredictably as the nervous system reactivates
- **Strategic retreats:** Returns to shutdown aren't failures but protective responses to overwhelming vulnerability
- **Success anxiety:** Many men unconsciously sabotage emotional progress when connection feels too exposing
- **Building capacity:** True healing means developing comfort with emotional visibility after years of hiding



Inflation / Deflation

Deflation (Shutdown)

- Emotional collapse with numbness and withdrawal.
- Invisible and disconnected.



Inflation (Activation)

- Nervous system activation creates overcompensation
- Grandiosity, overpromising, and false confidence

This pendulum swing isn't a flaw but the nervous system seeking stability after repression. Recognizing this pattern helps normalize the instability experienced during early emotional healing.

Healthy Masculinity

We need healthy models of masculinity that encourage vulnerability, emotionally-engaged strength, and emotional availability.

- Presence
- Strength through vulnerability
- Emotional intelligence
- Emotional availability
- Relational attunement
- Honesty
- Self-awareness
- Connection without fear of judgment or rejection



Finding A New Model of Healthy Masculinity

What does masculinity mean to you?

Authentic Connection

Deep, meaningful relationships
built on emotional honesty



Emotional Intelligence

Understanding and managing
emotions effectively

Self-Awareness

Honest recognition of
one's emotions and needs

Vulnerable Strength

Courage to be seen in both
power and vulnerability

Who is the version of self that can show up emotionally? Work to embody that self.

Push With Love

The nervous system doesn't heal through force—it heals through safety.

- **Safety First:** Secure attachment and embodiment
- **Titrate:** Use Affirmation-Boundary Sandwich
- **Time Limits:** More exposure = more overwhelm
- **Pacing:** Shutdown people don't need pressure, they need pacing, as they navigate coming out of life inside a protective shell.



What Partners Can Do

Partners can begin the healing process by learning how to care for their own emotions, while inviting their partner back into emotional connection.

- ▶ **Identify and Express Needs Clearly**
 - ▶ Communicate without blame or judgment
- ▶ **Practice Containment**
 - ▶ Maintain emotional balance without rescuing
 - ▶ Get needs met from close friends, therapy, support groups
- ▶ **Share Your Truth**
 - ▶ Consistently and skillfully express feelings about unmet needs
 - ▶ Unlearning deep patterns takes times and requires retraining
 - ▶ Sharing your truth organically helps your partner stay motivated and you stay sane!



Healing Shutdown is Possible

- ✓ Rewiring the nervous system takes time
- ✓ Be kind to yourself
- ✓ Feeling lost, frustrated, angry, overwhelmed, at a loss... is very common
- ✓ You are not alone!
- ✓ The nervous system desires healing and genuine connection
- ✓ Get out of your own way
- ✓ Support your natural healing mechanisms





Daniel Vose MA, SEP

All-New Training is **NOW OPEN!**

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- + **Real-World Tools for Emotional Reconnection** including communication strategies, somatic practices, and step-by-step frameworks to help men—and those who love them—navigate emotional shutdown with clarity and care.
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Session 1: June 11, 2025

Understanding Emotional Shutdown

Session 2: June 18, 2025

The Male Cycle of Repression

Session 3: June 25, 2025

Sustainable Connection and
Healthy Masculinity

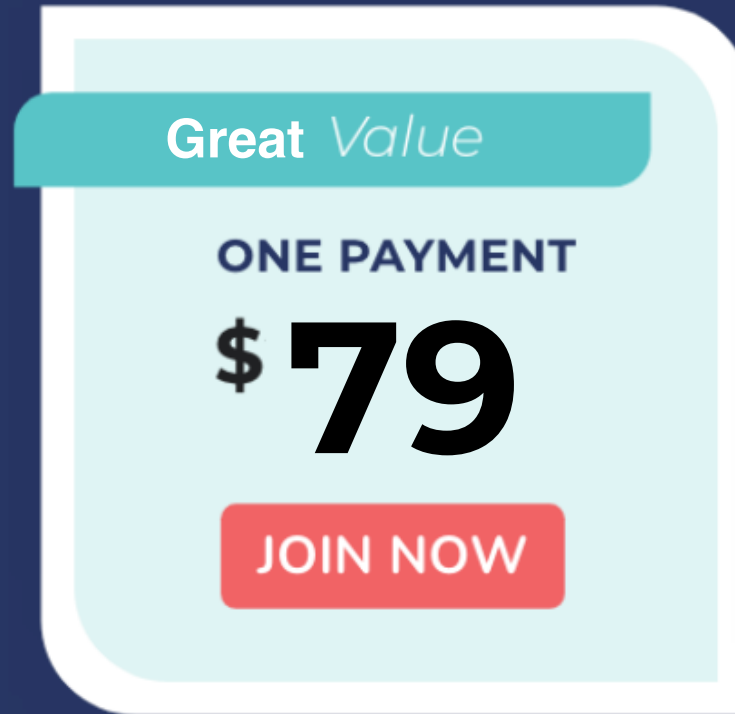
All 3 LIVE sessions meet online for
90 minutes from 6 pm - 7:30 pm MT
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