

Episode Transcript

TAOLC EP: 026 - Unlock Your True Self: Master the Internal Family Systems Framework

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Welcome to the Art of Living Consciously podcast, a show designed for out-of-the-box thinkers and mindset shifters who are looking for new ways to evolve. This is an intimate container designed to uplift, inspire and motivate you on your own growth journey. I'm your host, Dannie Reeve. As a certified BNE or Bio-Neuro-Emotion practitioner, I empower men and women to turn their conflicts into stepping stones for growth, because when you question your own beliefs and perceptions and take responsibility for your life, everything else follows. If you ask me, earth is a place where souls are sent to evolve and in this podcast, we will discuss the best tools for our evolution.

01:01

Hello and welcome to episode 26. Today, I want to talk about authentic expression and, more importantly, about what is getting in the way of you being authentically yourself, and by authentic expression I mean really allowing yourself to act and behave in a way that is completely coherent and true to who you are. The problem is that oftentimes we think that we're being authentic and true to ourselves, but actually we're not. We are reacting from core wounds and we are overriding our authentic needs in order to protect ourselves. A way to see where that is happening is to look at what you desire and the results that you're getting. For example, somebody might desire to be in a committed relationship, but they are unable to sustain a long-term relationship or always find partners who are somehow committed to someone else or unavailable. That means there is a part of them who is overriding their authentic desire and is making them act in ways that are pushing them further from their core essence and their true desires. So, in order to understand this further, we're going to delve into the world of parts today. This is going to be a very useful episode where I'm going to teach you some tools so you can start to establish a more healthy, compassionate dialogue with yourself and truly move towards your more authentic expression. So I would advise you to stick around to the end so you can benefit from all the questions and tools and, without further ado, let's delve in.

02:47

If you've listened to the two last interviews that I published, the one with coach Nicole Brennan episode 23 And the one with ex-elite gymnast and 400 meter hurdler also head of gymnasts for change claire Heafford episode 25 you will have picked up on the part work that they both use in order to help people to overcome their blocks. If you haven't listened yet, I highly recommend that you do listen, because they both bring helpful perspectives on self-trust and overcoming fear. But moving back to what I was referring to when I was talking about the parts that they mention, the idea is that I is not static.

03:38

You and I are made up of many, many, many different parts or, if you prefer, many sub-personalities. These sub-personalities were formed at different periods of our lives. They are linked to different experiences. They harbour different qualities, their own wounds and their own perspectives on life. I like the bus analogy that Nicole used. It's like as you move through life, especially during your formative years, different sub-personalities get to jump on the bus. As you move through experiences, you get to gain new personalities. These could be the inner child, the inner teenager, the inner critic, the inner perfectionist, the inner judge, the inner distractor, the inner sexual goddess, and the list goes on and on and on.

04:40

In the 1980s, Richard Schwartz developed a model called internal family systems, and this model basically divides these sub personalities into three big groups: the managers, the firefighters and the exiles. Learning about this system has been so helpful for my own growth journey and, without going into too much detail, basically the two first groups are all the coping mechanisms that we resort to in order to protect our consciousness by preventing the exiles from coming into awareness. The exiles represent psychological trauma, often from childhood. They are the painful parts you've relegated to your shadow. So, for example, if as a child I formed the belief that I wasn't good enough and I had painful experiences that made me come to that conclusion then as an adult my inner protectors, the firefighters and the managers, will do everything in their power so I don't get to feel that feeling of not being good enough. So to compensate for that feeling of not being good enough, I might develop a sub-personality, often a very harsh inner critic, which will lead me to want to do everything perfectly, a rigid sub-personality who will do everything in their power so I don't get to experience rejection. And if that doesn't work and my uncomfortable feelings or the child's uncomfortable feelings start to creep up, then the firefighters come to rescue and this can come in the form of a sub personality who likes to distract, who likes to scroll on social media, or who likes to go out and party a lot, or becomes a workaholic or loves to shop and distract that way.

06:49

What is important to understand is that these two groups - the managers and the firefighters - They're just trying to prevent you from feeling that pain. They're trying to protect those exiles which are your wounded inner child and your shadow aspects, that's to say, parts of yourself that you have suppressed. They are just trying to protect. All these parts make up your internal family system, and healing happens when we are able to create dialogue between all these different parts and finally access the wounded parts so we can bring them to consciousness and heal them. So how do all these sub-personalities come into play when it comes to preventing you from expressing your truest and authentic self?

07:45

You could think about the bus as a round table as well. I don't know if you're aware of King Arthur's round table, and he created this table where he wanted all the knights around the table to be equal and to have equal say. That's why the table was round, and at the head of the table was King Arthur himself. Right, and you could say King Arthur is your higher self, your CEO. He has, like a bird's eye view of everything that is happening.

08:17

The parts or sub personalities who are sitting around the table don't have that same bird's eye view. They have their own perspective, often blindsided by experiences that have happened, and oftentimes traumatic ones. So, although these different sub-personalities have their qualities and positive intents I mean you know you could take, for example, if you have an overthinker the overthinker sometimes can come in handy right when you're trying to assess danger. It's good to have critical thinking and to be able to forecast what might go wrong. Same thing goes with that part of you who likes to party and is a little less serious. Sometimes you need that, sometimes you need to disconnect and distract.

09:15

The problem occurs when one or a few of these sub-personalities start taking up too much space and start speaking much more than all the other ones. There's no equality around the table and all the protagonism goes to that one personality. And that happens because they are reacting to a core wound and to something that is very painful. They have become polarised into protection and over protection, and true connection and authenticity can't go hand in hand. When you focus all of your energy into protecting, you are living in survival mode, which kills authenticity and creativity. You can't come up with creative responses when you are overridden by the parts of you who are trying to protect you from pain.

10:17

Let's, for example, take somebody who has just met someone new. They started dating and everything is going really well. They're very attracted to that person, they have a lot in common and this person is making all the right moves. And actually I'm going to use a personal story for this one. This actually happened to me a while ago. I met this guy who I really liked. I met him actually at an event and my core wound is that I always think people are going to leave me.

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When I was a child, my dad had to travel a lot for work and we would literally take him to the airport and that was when I was around two years old even earlier than that and my mom would always say that I would sit at the back of the car when we were coming back from the airport and we left him there and I would sing: Mummy Dannie Daddy gone. And, that was me trying to make sense of the fact that my father was not there. And years down the line I realised how much it affected me that my parents travelled a lot for the first few years of my life. Both of them travelled actually and they used to take turns looking after me, so it would either be my mom or my dad or my aunt. So in those formative years, in the first years of my life, what I experienced was that the people who were meant to be my stability I never knew when they were going to be there and when they were not going to be there. And there's a part of me, my inner child, who felt abandoned and suffered greatly because of that. Of course, my parents didn't abandon me and they did the best they could within the circumstances they had to give me the best care, but that's how I experienced the fact that they were not there as an abandonment, and that created a wound in me.

12:21

So now that I've given you a bit of context, I want to take you to this one particular moment in my adult life. With this man I had just met, where we were getting to know each other and we hadn't started going out. Actually, we'd sat together to eat lunch with some other people and I was outside sitting on a bench and we were both sitting there eating our sandwiches and I hadn't finished mine and he got up and he said oh, I'm really sorry, I have to go because I need to make a call. I need to call my father. He said again I'm sorry I would wait, but you know it's an important call and I need to make that call before we go back into the event. So immediately I had a part of me, probably a manager who jumped to the occasion and was like, oh, he's not interested in you. Who do you think you are? He obviously has no interest whatsoever in you, because if he had, he would have sat and waited for you to finish your sandwich.

13:29

And that part of me, the overthinker, started going on and on about all the worst case scenarios and the voice in my head was like you know, just give up on this, right. So this is an example of a sub personality taking on protagonism. So the exile, the inner child, doesn't feel the pain of being rejected. It's better to talk about the worst case scenarios and lead you to reject the other person rather than suffering that pain that I felt as a child again. So you see how these sub parts only have a blinded vision of what is truly going on. Right, it's like my whole perception is focused on detecting and avoiding rejection. It leads me to shut down, because in that part's world, if I shut down, then I avoid feeling the possibility of rejection, abandonment and disappointment. So the response that this part is eliciting me to do is to distance, when actually my authentic self wanted to connect.

14:44

Fortunately, because we were at an event that made a big emphasis on perception and coping mechanisms, I was able to see what was going on and course correct. I actually was vulnerable and allowed myself to connect and, funnily enough, I told him about my vision of what had happened that day and he was like what? That was not at all. Of course, I was so interested in you. I just had to make an important call. I just really had to call my father, and I ended up going out with him. In fact, the time I spent with him ended up being very meaningful to my growth and helped me to start to see the ways in which some of these paths were acting out and to this day, I'm so grateful our paths crossed.

15:37

But I wanted to give you this example so you can see what happens when you are acting from a wounded place and that thwarts your authentic response, your authentic desire, and that's why it's so important to start to cultivate the awareness and the tools to be able to create a better dialogue between these parts and to choose different and more authentic responses as a result. Now the first step, and something that can be very helpful when you are coming across these behaviours that you keep, you know, repeating over and over again. It could be a behaviour like I've just told you, where you distance yourself from people, or it could be, you know, you're overthinking and you always start projects but don't finish them, start projects but don't finish them. Or maybe you have trouble voicing what you really think and feel. Even in a work meeting, you have all these great ideas, but, you know, you always end up quieting those ideas and letting other people speak up. I mean, there are so many examples and, as humans, we all have these patterns. So, as I've been speaking, you're probably starting to think about the things that come up in your life and the patterns that you have.

17:00

So the first step is always to ask yourself when you are becoming aware of how you're reacting the same way, is to think who is that part of me who is acting in the way that it's acting right now? Who is that part that's making me overthink or that's making me silence my opinion or that's making me so anxious when my partner doesn't return my text immediately and gets me maybe to lash out and to reach out compulsively to him or her until I get an answer. Just get curious and explore. It could be interesting to sort of note the thoughts that you have and what they're saying. You can even give them a voice and just start getting curious about this member of your internal family.

17:49

Ask yourself, what do they need? If I take the example that I gave you earlier on my inner critic, my overthinker, what they need is to feel in control and that gives them a sense of safety and they can forecast anything that might go wrong. You're trying to put yourselves in their shoes and in their perspective, and that allows you to understand their role and their positive intent, which is to protect that wounded child. What is that part's positive intent? What is it avoiding? By acting the way they are acting in my example, the overthinker, or inner critic, is trying to prevent me from feeling the pain that she experienced as a child, from feeling the pain of abandonment.

18:35

Let me give you another example, maybe an example that is quite relatable, because one of the biggest fears for humans nowadays is public speaking. So let's say that you're a therapist or you have some kind of expertise that you're really good at. You're really good at your job, and one day a friend reaches out to you and they happen to be a teacher at a university and they say look, I'm putting together this course and I would really love you to help me. And you get excited by the opportunity to help your friend out, to do something different, and you ask her so what do you want me to do? She says well, you know what I was thinking. It would be a really good idea that you gave a presentation about what you do to my students. We could do it in an amphitheatre. There's around 200 of them and I think it would be such a great experience for everybody.

19:34

And then you freeze and you think, oh my God, I wasn't thinking I had to do that. I was thinking more along the lines of creating a curriculum or something along those lines, something a little bit safer. And immediately there's a part of you who is going to react to that, who is going to try and prevent you from feeling the pain of failing, from feeling the pain of being left out, whatever it might be. And again, it's your opportunity to get curious about that part and be like who is that part? What do they want? What do they need? Maybe that part is your inner critic and they are just going to go and give you all the reasons why you shouldn't do that thing. They'll tell you that you're not prepared enough, you don't have enough experience. Who are you to think that you can give a talk in front of 200 people? And I mean, who is your friend? Who does she think she is? And yada, yada, yada. We all have an inner critic and, quite frankly, I think all of our inner critics have the same kind of dialogues and discourses. So you can relate to this and if you get curious and observe their dialogue, you might come to the conclusion that, again, what they need is a sense of safety, a sense of control, and that that they're doing that to protect you, to protect another part of you, an exiled part of you, from feeling feelings that they don't want to feel.

21:04

So Claire Hefford, in the interview we did together, said something that I really liked. She said it's about creating a dialogue between the fear that's trying to keep you safe and the desire to do this new thing that's going to take you out of your comfort zone. And when you re-establish a dialogue between those different parts, instead of having one taking over the whole protagonism, you are making room for a more creative and authentic response. You can do that with somebody who's going to have a more objective view. That person is going to be a little bit like your CEO, or help you access the CEO view right, the higher self view, if you will. And that could be a coach that could be a bio-neuro-emotion practitioner like me that can help you see the different parts and help you to have a more cohesive and creative response. And there are also ways that you can start to do that yourself right, because the wisdom is really within, and what I want to talk about today is I want to add the inner nurturers into the mix.

22:29

So far, we've talked about maybe the parts that can become very dysregulated and that are reacting to fear or to trauma. And we also have parts of ourselves who are more regulated and parts that have been mirrored back to us by people who really helped us, nurtured us or meant a lot to us at a moment in our lives. It could be past, it could be present, these could be, you know, a teacher that you really liked when you were a kid, or maybe a parent. Maybe it was a relative, maybe it was a really good friend, maybe it was somebody you looked up to in the public sphere. It could be an influencer, it could be a public speaker, anybody that really has had an impact on your life and has maybe said or done something that really helped you, you know or inspired you. And because nothing exists outside of us anyway, it doesn't exist outside of us according to our perception, right, these people, by their example, have become part of you. By the way they influenced your life, they left a mark within you. You have access to those qualities anytime you want and actually, if you admire something in somebody, it means it is yours to further develop. These inner nurturers can come in so handy when it comes to balancing that perspective and sort of accessing a different vision to the one of the parts that are trying to protect you. So, first of all, I want you to think about those people who really had an impact on your life.

24:38

I did a whole other episode on inner mentors that could be really helpful to go back to. I think I did a really detailed exercise there that you can use in order to access their wisdom and apply them to specific blocks that you have. So if you want to do that, you can go and check it out. It's episode 15 and it's called How to Recognize Your Inner Assets. For now, I invite you to think about up to three people who fit the criteria of that inner mentor, that inner nurturer, people who have had an impact on your life, who you admire, whose advice has helped you, and you can even write them down. Just jot down the three people who come to mind and if you want to pause this episode to do so, please do.

25:23

For example, for Claire, it was her coach, who just celebrated his 100th birthday, who had a great impact on her life in the way that he used to say to her don't stand on ceremony right. And he taught her that life was full of obstacles and it was about overcoming the obstacles in order to keep moving forward. She was a 400-meter hurdler. While they were running along the track and trying to overcome these hurdles, he used to purposefully run on the track himself and try to distract them, and he kind of taught them

that life was about getting over one obstacle at a time and not allowing distractions to get in the way, and that's a teaching and a philosophy that became part of her for the rest of her life. What she loved about him is that he was gentle and kind. She also loved that he was constantly there for her. He was somebody that she could count on. He had that stability. And then she had other athletes who she admired, who trained with her, and she admired their fortitude. She admired their warrior characters.

26:36

So as I'm talking about this, you might be getting more clear and a lot more detailed about those mentors that you picked, and it's a good idea to even journal about these people and really reflect on who they were and who they are. If you are having trouble connecting with who these people are, you can also just close your eyes for a moment and set the intention for them to come to you. Don't try to think your way in this, just allow the images to appear. When I did that exercise, I was really surprised with myself because I went back to a really early period of my life and we had a cleaner who used to come once a week to help my mom with, you know, the cleaning in the house and whatnot. And I used to love her because she was so caring. She used to even make my dolly's bed up and I just, I just loved how it felt in her presence. She had that warmth and the energy that was really nurturing and I lacked in my life at that time and she really gave that to me and if I hadn't taken the time to really reflect on this, I probably never would have really thought about her, to be quite honest.

27:59

So here is how you're going to use the power of your inner nurturers when you start to examine those situations where you feel that you're overreacting and that you're always having the same responses that, therefore, are not authentic. Right, let's go back to the example that I gave you, with the boyfriend and me distancing. If I had taken the time to reflect upon that part of me who was reacting that way and getting curious of who is that part and what do they need? What are they trying to protect me from? I could then invite them to have a dialogue with my inner nurturer. So this is what I would say to them.

28:45

Hey, I just want you to know how grateful I am for you for trying to protect me. I know you have the best intention, but would you be willing to have somebody else come on board? Would you be willing to listen to one of my inner nurturers? I want you to know that they have my inner child's best interests at heart and that they will help us to have a better vision and help us to find a better solution. Are you willing to listen to their perspective? And obviously this is self-reflection, but it's also embracing that idea that I is not static and that you have this whole family and that you just want them to be able to communicate better together.

29:29

Right, this takes a lot of heat out of things. It makes things more malleable because, instead of judging yourself because you're this way and you're doing this for this way, you're starting to understand that there's all these different parts at play and that they're trying to do their best. And now you, as the CEO of this roundtable, you are going to find a creative solution together, and you can do this journaling, or you can close your eyes and just have that inner dialogue with yourself and then picture the inner nurturer, the first person that comes to mind and just listen to what they have to say to you. You know

what would they say, what would be the advice that they would give to you, what would they do and have them dialogue with that part who is trying to protect you.

30:21

You know, if I were maybe to bring into the mix the cleaning lady, whose actual name was Francine I can remember now if I had asked for her perspective in that situation on the bench with the sandwich, she probably would have showed me that I was lovable, that there was nothing to be worried about, and she would have invited me to be warm, to be soft, because that allows people to open up more. She would have invited my inner critic and overthinker to be more understanding of the other person's perspective and situation. And then you can establish a dialogue with the overthinker and say, hey, do you know these times in our lives where we've decided to listen to our hearts and not be so rational, you know, there's been these experiences that Dannie has really enjoyed and just trying to bring on that perspective, that other perspective of that other person who is actually another part of you, that perspective of warmth, that perspective of vulnerability in my case. And once you start to establish that dialogue between the different parts, then you can come to a creative solution and that part of you who's overthinking maybe softens and realises that, yeah, it's okay, it's okay, the little Dannie that I'm trying to protect is not going to get hurt if I trust that inner nurturer, because I have seen how this worked for that person, for example, how Francine was open and warm and the responses that that elicited in Dani and how that made her feel. Or in the case of the example with the public speaking, maybe an inner nurturer comes to mind, somebody who says to you hey, you know, know, like when you fail, you learn and you grow and it's okay to fail. Maybe that's the voice that comes to your mind and then you're able to see that this person achieved everything they achieved because they were able to fail. I'm just giving you some examples, but this is actually a very creative process and it allows you to re-establish some sense of balance and harmony between all these different members of the round table. And if you start to get curious about this internal family that you have and start being creative with the dialogue that you start to establish between these different parts, you will see that you will really come to some different solutions and that will lead you to being a more authentically expressed person.

33:16

Okay, so let's recap real quick. You need to know that I is not static and that you actually have a big family of your own, and it's important that you establish a good dialogue between all the different parts so they get to interact in a way that becomes creative and potentiates your expression and your authenticity. The way you do that is by getting curious. Once you notice a certain pattern you have or a response that doesn't feel authentic, but more of a activation or a trigger pause Remember, there is magic in a pause, and I did an episode on ways in which you can help regulate yourself if you are too activated, and that was episode 24, I believe. So you can go back to that and listen to that if you, if you need that.

34:16

But then, once you've paused, get curious about the part of you who's acting out, ask yourself who is that part, what are they saying, what are they doing, what do they need and perhaps, what are they trying to protect me from. Once you've got clear with that, start to dialogue with them and tell them hey, I understand you, I know that you're trying to protect me, but would you be willing to get the

perspective of one of my inner nurturers? They just want the best for us and they're going to help us to solve this and I assure you that they're not here to hurt any other part of the family, especially little me and then bring that person to mind and start to get creative about what they would say, what they would do in that situation and how they would speak to that part of you who is afraid or acting out. That will help you to reach a more creative and authentically expressed response, helping you to ultimately act differently and get different results. And, last but not least, during the process of all of this, remember to have compassion for yourself.

35:38

This takes time. This inner work is always a working process and it's just taking little steps to then achieve bigger results. And as long as you're alive, you will always have opportunities to flex that muscle. So there you have it for today, guys. I hope you enjoyed this episode. If you did enjoy it, I would love you to share it with somebody that you feel will benefit from it. You know, these are the little ways that we can make a person's day better, and it also helps the show to reach more people. Thank you so much for listening. I truly, truly appreciate you and I wish you the most flawsome of flawsomest days.