

Jonathan: Hey, what's going on, everybody? Jonathan Bailor and Master SANE-Certified Coach, Wednesday Vail. Am I Wednesday Vail? I am not sure. She is. I can tell you definitively. We are here talking about SANE psychology, which is a hugely important and often not discussed aspect of taking back control of our health and weight and wellbeing in general. What do we have on the agenda today?

Wednesday: Today we're talking about loving support and loving support networks.

Jonathan: Right.

Wednesday: One of my favorite things about my own support network - I have a couple of different support networks - is that I know for a fact that I can go to anyone in my support network with a problem/issue. I will not meet judgment. It won't feed my want to feel shame.

Jonathan: Yes.

Wednesday: How is a non-judgmental space really crucial to healing and transforming inside and out?

Jonathan: The healing aspect is what I really want to focus on because we often don't think, when it comes to lifestyle change, of support as actively healing in the same way we would think of maybe exercise. I can see how that could heal you. Food is medicine. I have heard that term kicked around a little bit.

Wednesday: Just a little.

Jonathan: Just a little. The concept of actual literally hardcore science showing that connection with other human beings, whether it be physical or emotional or both, literally triggers a dose-dependent - and this is what I talk about like science - dose-dependent means you take more of this active ingredient; you get more of an effect. The more of certain hormones and neurotransmitters released in your body that help with healing and that reduce certain hormone levels and that literally help your body to heal.

Why is judgment-free support important? It's important interestingly for the same reasons that eating is important and for the same reason that exercise is important because it is a master switch for the internal state of our body. There is as much influence when it comes to your level of emotional connection. There is as much influence for that on your set point as there is for what you're eating and for the way you're moving your body. Most people are just - what?

I've tried counting calories; I've tried obsessively exercising; but I've never taken a step back and said, "Well, what about the relationships in my life? What about my emotional state?" That is as important as those other two areas for the exact same reason those other two areas are important. They are levers that allow you to change the way your body works inside.

Wednesday: Humans are such social creatures. We see babies that are in the NICU. They have people come in and touch the babies. It helps with their healing.

Jonathan: Yes, absolutely.

Wednesday: As humans, we need that contact with other human beings.

Jonathan: It's essential. There's actually then been studies - these are longitudinal studies so that we can't really see cause and effect - but having X number of strong social relationships is better for you than quitting smoking. It's just phenomenally powerful stuff.

Wednesday: Yes. Yay, love. I love everything we've talked about. What I don't love -

Jonathan: Good segue.

Wednesday: What I don't love, we all have encountered somebody or more than one somebody in our life that just rubs us the wrong way.

Jonathan: Yes.

Wednesday: Our personalities don't jive; there's just something that just kind of irks us, gets our eye twitching. If you are a member of a loving

support group with people from all around and you encounter this kind of personality, what is the best way to handle this?

Jonathan: One technique would be to, if you can, in that support community, avoid that. If it's an in-person meeting, maybe you can say, "Hey, you come on Tuesdays and Thursdays so I'm going to go on Mondays and Wednesdays." If you have an online community, it's a bit easier because sometimes you can just block that person or not follow them. A third thing is, you should probably let someone in the community know what's going on.

Usually a good loving scientifically-based community will have moderators and coaches, like our community does. If there's something going on, we need to be made aware of it because we want to help out with it. The final thing is, I know for me at least, this is something that's been helpful in my life, is sometimes when someone irks us, it's because that person is manifesting something that we don't like about ourselves.

Wednesday: Yes.

Jonathan: And that could be an interesting – it could be another added benefit of the support community because you can – just like we have talked about in our other videos – truly right down – Steven – what is it about Steven that bothers me? Literally, write it down. That's helpful. Then you might see that it has to do somewhat with you as an individual.

The other thing that has been helpful for me – because I had some interesting aspects to my upbringing in terms of certain interpersonal dynamics. If you have a big professional challenge, let's say, or if you have a big event that's happening and you prepare yourself for it, you say, "Now, this is a great opportunity. When I accomplish this, I'm going to feel such a great sense of pride because I'm going to develop new skills" and so on and so forth.

Dealing with human beings is arguably the most important skill we could ever have, ever. If there is someone that kind of irks you or rubs you the wrong way, to just avoid that person, which I realize

is something I said like five minutes ago, is in some ways doing yourself a disservice because -

Wednesday: Yes.

Jonathan: Now, if someone is physically abusive or emotionally abusive to you, that's a totally different situation. But if it's just like, this person kind of rubs me the wrong way, if you can figure out what's going on there and actually flip that somehow, that's just a skill that you have in your tool set. Now, again, this is a support group so you're here to get supported and to not go through all this rigmarole so, honestly, chatting with the moderators and chatting with the coaches to figure out what's going on here, I think, is super important. Avoid them because they're always opportunities for growth. Sometimes there's too many opportunities for growth so we just need to take a break.

Wednesday: Slow down, slow down.

Jonathan: Slow down, slow down. But the key thing is, just please don't let it poison everything else.

Wednesday: Yes.

Jonathan: Because it's usually a lot more good than there is bad but the bad tends to overshadow the good, just based on the way that our brains work.

Wednesday: Yes, so just checking in with other people in the group, checking in with yourself, and then I like perspective shift. They're going through stuff too. Some people are really unpleasant when they're first starting out or examining their own feelings. Just keep hope that you'll be there for them; they'll be there for you; and things will change.

Jonathan: Yes. And I really want to highlight what you just said because I think that's a huge - understand the parabola that Stephen Covey says in "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" of a paradigm shift or a perspective shift, where he's on a subway and there's a gentleman sitting there and his kids are just running around. They're like bumping people; people are spilling their coffee.

The late Stephen Covey says to himself, he's thinking in his head, he's like, "This guy is such an irresponsible parent. What is he doing? Oh my gosh. All right, whatever. I'm just going to keep to myself." Finally the kids are just so running amok that he says, "Sir, I'm sorry. Do you think you can control your children?" And the guy says, "Oh, I'm so sorry. We just got back from the hospital and their mother died."

Wednesday: Oh.

Jonathan: Stephen Covey went in one second from being like, "You jerk bad parent" to saying, "How can I help you?"

Wednesday: Yes, oh my gosh.

Jonathan: How often do we learn - I mean, wow, if this person's spouse just left him, we have no concept of that. Some of these ideas of compassion look almost Pollyanna-ish. We don't know enough to be judgmental. Some of the things, when you learn -

We have such superficial relationships nowadays. Everyone's happy and everyone's good in Facebook. The amount of garbage that every human being has to go through just to get through life is phenomenal. If someone is being lame, if you can respond with love, it's a lot of really smart people - like Jesus, for example, or Martin Luther King, Jr. or Gandhi or Mother Theresa have said the same kind of thing. If someone comes at you with anger and you come back at them with love, it usually works out pretty well. But I'll get off my soapbox here.

Wednesday: One little aside to that. This doesn't have to do with support groups. When I'm driving in the car and someone cuts me off, I'm like, "Ooh, he must really have to use the bathroom." You don't know.

Jonathan: That's true, very true. And you can't distract away, as we were talking about previously -

Wednesday: No, don't close your eyes.

Jonathan: Don't close your eyes.

Wednesday: One cool thing that comes from support groups is accountability. It's very hard to keep ourselves accountable. There is that excuse, rationalization, "I'll do it tomorrow." But sometimes the idea of accountability brings to mind drill sergeants, taskmasters, head honchos, that sort of thing. What does healthy supportive accountability look like within the context of your loving support group and network?

Jonathan: An individual that can show you how - I'm trying to think of the best way to put this. The words that I have in my mind but I cannot form a sentence around right now are, "You deserve better." What I mean by that is to tell somebody, "Oh, you eat trash. You're a bad person." It's very different than "It sounds like eating that trash made you feel really really bad. You deserve better than that and I am here to remind you that you deserve better than that. You're here. You've taken the steps. You deserve better than to feel this sense of shame. You deserve better than to poison your body with these substances that have literally been engineered to rob you of your health and vitality."

6

Can accountability also be the person who reminds you -? They're the anti-shame. They're like the antidote to shame. They're the person - there's a Hallmark card that my parents sent me when I was in college and was going through a tough time and there was a line in the card which said something along the lines of "Just for a moment, take a step back from all the noise, all the doubts, and see yourself as I do." To this day, that gives me chills.

"See yourself as I do" - I mean, so many of us who have any one person in our lives who just, we feel like "You complete me"; it's like even an accountability partner, it's not a drill sergeant; it's someone who's the opposite of that. It's someone who sees the life that you deserve and helps you to say, like, "You deserve better than this. We together can help you live that life that you deserve." That is one hundred percent accountability but it is doing it from a place of love rather than a place of fear.

Wednesday: It's kind of cool how you personify shame. That person not saying, "You did bad."; "You failed."; "You ate too much."; whatever. That's like a physical being is being your shame. Then the other,

the loving support, they're being that voice that strengthens your voice to say, "Shame, go away. You're lying."

Jonathan: Yes. I don't know if we should go here but there is a – for people for whom religion is very helpful, there are certain religious texts which are like, "You are a child of God. You have the divinity within you." To tell somebody, "Thou shall not steal because if you do, you're going to hell" is very different than "Thou shall not steal because you deserve better than to be a criminal; because you have a divine spark inside of you." Regardless of your religious beliefs, understanding that the fact that you are here today is a miracle.

Wednesday: Yes.

Jonathan: And if you don't want to use a "miracle", it is scientifically beyond all probability that you exist. There is no calculation. If you think of the number of events that had to happen, the number of people who had to mate throughout the course from the very first species to you existing, the fact that you exist is not scientifically explainable. It is the closest thing to a miracle that we can say. Because of that, you deserve better.

Wednesday: Yes.

Jonathan: If you can use that – that love, that spark of improbability or divinity that's inside you – to motivate you to live the life that you deserve, then things like starvation, shame, and stress almost become just – why would I even bother with that? Why would I even subject myself to that?

Wednesday: Yes. We're made of the same atoms as a table.

Jonathan: Exactly. And we're capable of much more than a table.

Wednesday: Yes. All right, last question. For the shy people or perhaps introverts, putting themselves out there can be a big deal.

Jonathan: Yes.

Wednesday: For people that are less prone to sharing or being socially active, how can they still get the benefits of the support group while not freaking out?

Jonathan: It will surprise you but I am a radical introvert.

Wednesday: No way. Get out.

Jonathan: The definition of introvert versus extrovert – most people don't know this – is "introvert" means that you derive your energy from not being around people and "extrovert" means that you derive energy from being around people.

Wednesday: I'm an extrovert.

Jonathan: Yes, so people who, if they have a stressful day, are like, "Let's go out in public", those are extroverts.

Wednesday: Okay.

Jonathan: Introverts are, "I would like to just drink some tea and read a book and I need my time alone." Then there's a concept of "ambivert" which is someone who can do both but has a preference. For example, if there are people who, if you go to a conference, they get a lot of energy because "I'm around all these people" – extrovert. People who like to live in cities often are more extroverted because there's a lot of stimulus; whereas people who are like, "I have to go to a conference, whatever. I can do it." It doesn't mean I don't like it; it just means it drains you of energy.

Wednesday: Maybe I'm the middle one.

Jonathan: Yes, so just because you're an introvert – introverts sometimes get a bad rap of saying they are not able to connect socially. They are; they usually just prefer fewer people to many. Introverts usually have one, two, three very close friends instead of fifty drinking buddies, by way of exaggeration, and they would much rather have a small dinner party than a big get-together. It doesn't mean they're loners; it just means fewer is better.

With a support group or with any kind of support network, that isn't – so I personally do not use Facebook for personal purposes



ever. It doesn't give me energy; it sucks energy from me. But our support group within the SANE Ignite Family gives me tremendous amount of energy because it's a curated group that is very much dialed in and it's not a bunch of sort of fluff.

Wednesday: It's nothing like Facebook.

Jonathan: It's meaningful connections on a deep emotional and intellectual level. This is not about – the reason I'm answering this the way I'm answering this is to equate a loving social support group with “going out to the club” or posting on Facebook. That is not at all what we're talking about. A deep loving close support group, be it in person or be it online, is something that is equally approachable to extroverts and introverts.

An introvert would probably not be reading everyone else's – for an online thing, they wouldn't be reading everyone else's stuff and you're like, “Good job. Great.” That's just not them. Whereas an extrovert would get energy from doing that; they love that. Whereas an introvert would likely have their journal, ask their questions, share fewer deeper posts, and then probably work more closely maybe with a coach or a small group within that community that they feel resonance with.

9

Wednesday: It's kind of cool though how all these people are available to you to know that you're part of something bigger. There are hundreds of people out there that are loving me and hugging me and I can also just choose to focus on checking in with this person or developing a closer relationship with this coach. You have those options.

Jonathan: Absolutely.

Wednesday: That is very empowering, whether you're an extrovert or an introvert.

Jonathan: It's extremely empowering. I think, please don't do yourself the disservice of, if you are an introvert, it is a fact – it is a scientific fact – that having – it's not about quantity; it's about quality. Having fifty low-quality relationships is not as good for your health

as having one incredible relationship. What we're after is having a group that can provide you with high-quality support.

If you're an introvert, please, please know that when you find the right group, it's not Facebook, it's not just "I'm with my drinking buddies. Let's all be social." It is much more about genuine intimate human connection. That is equally applicable to introverts as it is to extroverts.

Wednesday: I love it. Well, that was all our questions. We made it through.

Jonathan: All of our questions. We'll have to close. I really just want to encourage everybody. This is an area where I think – there's all these books about it. "Eat this, not that." "Exercise is great." Even some of this conscious living awareness, freeing oneself from shame – it doesn't get as much love as it should but it's starting to get more love. Especially in the social media era, there has almost been a –

Because of things like Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and YouTube, there has been almost a backlash when people have poured themselves out of certain social contexts. I think that, "Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water." Having meaningful social connections is as impactful to your long term health and happiness as eating is; as exercising is; as sleep is. Please, getting back to "You deserve better." You deserve better than trying to do this on your own so please, whether it's us or someone else, allow a loving evidence-based community to help you. It will absolutely be transformational, I think.

Hopefully, that was helpful. We'll see you again soon.