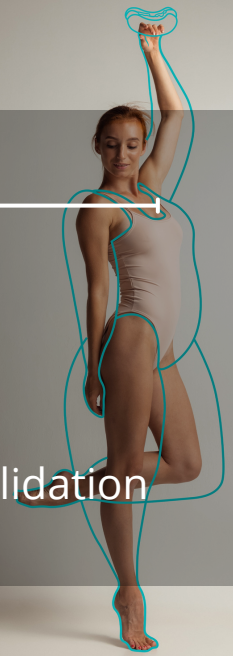


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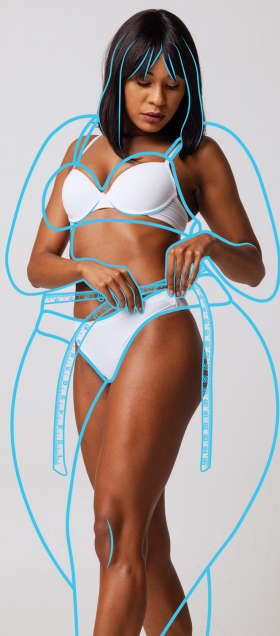
MODULE 4

Temptation and Self Validation



VALIDATION

Seeking validation is an innate need within every human. As emotional and intellectual beings, we want nothing more than a connection with others. Through connection, we feel that as individuals we are not only seen and heard by others but that we are also accepted by others and therefore accept ourselves. When we do not feel validated, we are left feeling isolated, feel like a failure, and believe we are unworthy of others' approval and acceptance. This sends a clear message to our inner self that we are not the same and therefore cannot satisfy or justify our primal need for connection. To belong, having others to want to connect with me. Because I am enough. That is why we all seek validation.



It's tempting to see perfectionism as a desirable or positive quality. You get things right, you've got your stuff together, and all is well. How do we define perfectionism? It is a set of self-defeating thought patterns that push you to achieve unrealistic goals. Striving to achieve perfectionism can annihilate any self-esteem you have. Here is what I know about perfectionism... Perfectionism is not the same thing as striving for excellence, it is not about healthy achievement and growth. Perfectionism is a defensive move. It's the belief that if we do things perfectly, we can minimise or avoid the pain of blame, judgment, and shame. We think perfectionism will protect us from the hurt and trauma that come with being human. It is not self-improvement. At the very root of striving to be perfect is actually a need to earn approval. Somehow we have adopted this debilitating belief "I am what I accomplish and how well I accomplish it". In simpler terms an identity is formed in "what you do, is who you are". When in fact this is not the case at all. Perfectionism is not the key to success, it actually correlates with depression and anxiety. The fear of failing, making a mistake, not meeting people's expectations, or fear of being criticised. Perfectionism is a self-destructive and addictive belief system, it's harmful simply because it does not exist. It is an unattainable goal. Perfectionism is more about perception than internal motivation, and there is no way you can control what others think of you, no matter how much time and energy you spend trying to. For some women perfectionism may only emerge when they are feeling vulnerable, for others perfectionism is a compulsive, chronic, and debilitating addiction. Regardless of where you are on this continuum, if you want freedom from perfectionism you will have to journey from "what will people think?" to "I am enough".

Internal vs external validation is a fundamental part of having healthy self-esteem and confidence. Often in the pursuit of perfection to validate our worthiness we compare many aspects of ourselves and our lives to those of others. External validation is the action where we seek to determine our worth based on feedback from external forces. Modern advances, especially in the world of social media, TV and advertising, constantly represent the wonderful prototype of what life should be. The ideal. We are bombarded daily with images telling us what the 'norm' is and how we ought to look, behave, think, exist, and perform. It is a constant reminder to us of what we don't have and what we apparently need. Sadly, the norms portrayed are actually quite extreme and veer towards unrealistic perfection. When we compare our lives to others, we always discover we are lacking something. Inevitably, there will always be other people who appear to be having a better time or are more successful, even happier than you, have smarter kids, have a better marriage, an endless list. Comparing yourself to others is a powerful way of reinforcing self-loathing or self-criticism. The story in your head will encourage you to compare your own achievements, qualities, and situation to other people's success, their beauty, their status, or in fact anything you perceive yourself to be lacking in. It's well documented that many people report a lower mood state after browsing social media, even for a short period of time. Further research has shown social media to be highly addictive, so the constant exposure to the 'perfect' Instagram life is a deep reinforcer, cementing the internal beliefs of your own inadequacy.

The reality is no one's life is perfect. If you believe it is, you are comparing yourself to an illusion that is not the truth and neither achievable. It is a complete lie. When you doubt yourself (through comparison) in any way, what normally follows is giving yourself a hard time, you will seek out evidence to prove that your doubts are warranted. For example, if you are telling yourself that you are not good enough or can't do something, then an easy way to gather evidence for that claim would be to compare yourself with others who are succeeding or appear perfect. Seeking validation for our own worthiness from the outside world is almost always going to result in dissatisfaction, self-doubt and self-sabotage. Not to even mention the internal dialogue it solidifies in your mind through toxic thinking, and ends up with emotional eating to soothe the discomfort. I hope you can still remember the learning from module one. Comparing your value to what others "portray" as valuable is never going to bring you joy, or even motivate you to do something about getting to that "perfect" anything. True happiness, joy and healthy self-esteem come only from internal validation. Turning inwards for satisfaction. Before we get to that part, I must add this, external validation to women who struggle with weight can become an obsession with the number on the scale. If I reach 60kgs (watch your language IF...not WHEN, you already believe you can't) then I will be happy and perfect. I hate to burst your bubble but I'm going to. Life will not feel better when you are earning more, when you are living somewhere better, when you have the perfect relationship, or when you are in a better place emotionally. You cannot feel happy if you go through life comparing yourself to others or telling yourself you will be happier when certain conditions are fulfilled in the future. Be careful of your need for that number on the scale, when you get there, will you maybe still feel empty? If you are satisfied with your internal world, then you would not be comparing your life to others or be on the prowl for more of whatever temporarily validates you. With that in mind, the solution seems clear. When you find your satisfaction, peace, happiness or whatever you want to call it inside yourself, then you are not reliant on external forces to make you happy. External validation no longer applies. Your worth will no more be measured externally, it is within you that you find true happiness. You learn to accept what is, what you aspire to is not 'societal norms,' you seek your own potential, and strive for your own measures of success and personal growth. How do you move from external validation to internal validation, gratitude. What is known from the world of psychology and neuroscience is that when we are grateful for what we have, we are happier. Scientifically proven, gratitude wakes up the part of the brain called the hypothalamus and this improves grey matter on the righthand side of the brain. People with increased grey matter are likely to practice gratitude more, and people who practice gratitude have increased levels of serotonin and dopamine. In short, it's an interconnected process with positive beliefs you hold about yourself and about the external world and others.

This contributes to an overall state of wellness but also helps you gain a sense of perspective. Gratitude, I promise, will make you feel happier but it is something that often goes forgotten as our default setting is to look for the negative.

Turning inwards has the amazing potential to lead you to a place of clarity. It is learning to listen more to the voice within. It's letting go, and being okay with yourself, even if you made a mistake, and have weaknesses. Which we all do.