

[Transcript] The Diary Of A CEO with Steven Bartlett / Moment 116 - The ONE Type Of Trauma You Cannot Heal From: Professor Steven Peters

What role does trauma play? Like early childhood trauma play in how we respond in situations? Well, now we're really getting deep. It depends on, again, I'm being black and white. If someone has a really bad trauma at childhood, it can have repercussions throughout life, because now the circuits in your brain are developing. So if you have a really traumatic event, and not necessarily how what we would define as traumatic, it's what the child defines. So I'm being a bit facetious here. For example, if it's got its favorite sweets and somebody steals them, that could be a traumatic childhood event. At that moment in time, the impact was so significant that it has repercussions. It's damaging the circuits. It might, for example, perceive that as nothing in life is safe. Anything I have can be removed. However, most children get over it in seconds, you know, but it depends on the

child and what stage they're at and what the circumstances are at that point. Somebody else might have child abuse, for example, which is much more likely to have repercussions throughout life.

But we still get children who get child abuse and have no repercussions. So it isn't a definite black and white. It's probabilities. The way that I've come to understand it is almost like we're wearing our own sunglasses, which is a metaphor for like interpretation. So me and my brother, we could be identical twins. We go through the same experience, but we're wearing different sunglasses. So we interpret that experience differently. We deposit evidence about what that experience means into our computer. You're absolutely right. And it all hangs on, for example, somebody like your parent might suddenly say, oh, you're just an idiot, you know, but something might have happened just before that where you've gone to school and you've got one out of 10 and you were bottom of the spelling test and you've come home and then your father, you've done something

at home and made a mistake. And he says, you're an idiot. And the two together get emotionally tangled. And that then damages the circuits. Whereas normally, if you come home, you just got nine out of 10 for the spelling, come talk about a class. And he says, you're an idiot, you just bat it off and think, well, I got nine out of 10. So therefore, the brain doesn't pick it up. So again, I'm trying to give examples of it. So complicated. What I would say is it's hard to find these because they happen often very young in life. And the emotional aspects and our memories emotionally

and how we formulate things have about a three year start on the human circuit, which doesn't come in for three years, approximately. So that's why we have no memories of childhood. We can't remember

before the age of two, because it's not working. So our emotional memory begins in fetal life. So before we're even born, the emotional memory is starting to work out what trauma is and react to that trauma. So we act to the mother's heartbeat, for example. And again, every fetus is different on the spectrum. And then we follow that through. And therefore, the machine can be damaged early in life. It can be damaged at any point. And then we have something which I've then tried to give a terminology of gremlin to. So gremlin is a belief or an experience you can process and actually get rid of. Whereas a goblin is something which is really damaged the circuits. So you get people often who are very low self esteem. And that's going to continue throughout life. Now, I'm certainly not saying we shouldn't try and get rid of that. Generally, we can. But it could be they always have moments of low self esteem. And what they need to do is accept

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that they're always going to appear, but I'm going to have a way of dealing with them and then going back on to a much more positive footing. So sometimes we have beliefs within us that are just too hard

to remove. And they may have come from traumatic experiences. What I'm saying is I'm not rolling over and saying, oh, well, this is damaged goods. I'm saying, let's learn if they do raise their heads. Let's learn how to put them in a box, stop them from having impact in my life today, and then work forward from that. And again, that's a skill to do. And it just needs people to learn how to do that. So we can take down gremlins, but we can't.

Goblins you have to accept. The reason I brought that terminology is, sadly, I've seen over the years when I've been in an educational role as a doctor, I've trained doctors and clinical psychologists, nursing staff to how we deal with emotions. And what I've seen distressed is when you get well-meaning therapists of any kind, and they're trying to change something

that can't be changed. And you have to see, you know, the circuits damaged. And rather than try and change it, let's learn to deal with it in a very constructive way, but not put that pressure on the person to do something which we're probably never going to achieve. So I'd always say try. I'd always say let's try and process an event, and let's try moving on. So they remove it.

So great if you can get rid of low self-esteem. But if it keeps raising its head, let's say, stop putting pressure on that person, and work with it. You still try and remove it. But there's a point you say to them, look, let's accept it, but let's not let it take over. Let's learn how to put it in a box. So it's a bit like a virus in a computer system, exactly the same. We accept it's damaged, but we can box it in. And if it does raise its head, we mop it up again.

It's interesting because I, from doing this podcast, I used to believe that your traumas, you know, there's early experiences that define you and the evidence it creates could be, all of them could be eradicated with like some form of therapy or treatment. The more I've done this podcast and sat with exceptional people who have, you know, have exceptional stories, and some in many cases have exceptional traumas, I've gone the other way and realised that even if they've had all the therapy, they've gone and done ayahuasca, they've had whatever they've had, it's still the, some traumas, some of the deeper, earlier traumas never seem to disappear.

And so my stance has changed. And in recent podcasts, I've been saying that there are instances where some things just, it seems like people just can't overcome certain things. Is there a age group where goblins, the traumas that we can't seem to overcome the evidence or whatever it is, the damage to the circuitry, does it tend to happen earlier?

Yeah. The younger we are when we're developing the brain, the brain keeps developing up to the age of around 30. So it's young to me at my age is anyone under 30.

Okay, so I'm 30 now?

Right, you're just about done. Some people finish, we know that mature is the final sort of like bits to the brain mature, which is actually the rationality of the brain. It matures around 25 to 30, but there are quite a lot of particularly more men who keep going to around 32, but by then you're out of the oven. So wherever you've got, you're finished.

I agree with what you're saying is then you accept this is the way my system is.

So let me manage my system instead of trying to make my system do something it can't do.

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So I hope I'm not coming across saying death roll over. I'm not saying that. But the reason that I did it was it's they're also the therapists. It's really hard for the doctor, the nurse, the psychologist. It's really hard to see them struggling to try and change something or help someone and it's not working. And that can damage them to think what's wrong with me. I've seen it. Yeah, all right.

I've got a friend that's a therapist and I've seen her crying because she couldn't change something in all of her patients. And that's why I brought this out and said to the therapist, look, stop, you know, let's you review what you're doing. There are the one professionals, but as someone who tries to teach therapists and people are working in this field, to say neuroscientifically, there are damages to the circuit. So rather than say, we're going to change it, you've tried and you've probably done a great job because again, most people are really good. Most therapists I've worked alongside have been excellent, you know, whatever the profession is. But don't beat yourself up if you're struggling with someone. It may be you are hitting the nail on the head, but exactly what you've just said, we're not going to move this person. So stop worrying about it and say, let's try managing it first, whatever's raising its head. And then if we manage it, then we might still try processing, but now we're not defeated.

I have to say that that's that's great advice for therapists, but it's also just great advice for someone in a family unit or in a relationship who has a partner or a loved one who is struggling with something where the circuitry might be irreparably damaged. And they're destroying the relationship with that person because they're trying to change them.

Exactly. And the devil is in the detail again, because there are other elements to this, because another factor is time. We know that the brain will try and repair itself, even of emotional scars, it will try and do that. So there can sometimes just be time. So we know like in grief reactions, you have to allow the brain time and the brain will process things in its own time. And that's a piece of string generally in a serious loss or change of job or relationship gone, or you've lost someone because they passed on.

It usually we say around three months is intense, then the 12 months is still bad.

But some people it can be 10 years and there is no normal grief. There's just normal grief for you. And then if it gets stuck, then again, this where the clinicians will come in, if you have pathological grief. And this can be due to anything. It's often a belief system again in the computer that's stopping you being able to process something.

My girlfriend came upstairs yesterday when I was having a shower and she said to me that she tried the Heal Protein Shake, which lives on my fridge over there. And she said, it's amazing. Low calories,

you get your 20 odd grams of protein, you get your 26 vitamins and minerals and it's nutritionally complete. If you haven't tried the Heal Protein product, do give it a try. The salted caramel one, if you put some ice cubes in it and you put it in a blender and you try it is as good as pretty much any milkshake on the market.