

Pockets of Pleasure Episode 2

Hello and welcome to Pockets of Pleasure.

I'm Techla, also known as The Sensory Coach and it's my pleasure to be your host on these little audio adventures.

In last week's episode we explored the inspiration for pockets of pleasure and what they are, how comfort zones and balance aren't necessarily our friends in the search for a good life, and how the thrill of anticipation of a planned experience can outweigh the experience itself.

Last week I promised you we would also explore why self compassion is the foundation upon which we can build a kinder world, but I've decided to leave that until next week otherwise the podcast will be too long and I won't be able to do the topic justice.

This week then, we're going to dig into why Pockets of Pleasure isn't an invitation to unrestrained hedonism, and how we can engage our inner senses in the search for these micro moments of joy and delight.

There's long been a school of thought that sees pleasure as being dangerous to our moral and spiritual health.

Hedonism is a life philosophy that sees pleasure as the ultimate aim in life. At the other end of the scale sits stoicism whose aim is to lead a life free of passionate indulgence. Stoicism is charged with having influenced the development of christian morality which is presumably why the pursuit of pleasure often gets such bad wrap.

Here in the UK the ethics of the puritans and Oliver Cromwell have cast a long shadow. Pleasure and frivolity were seen as ungodly debauchery with dancing, singing and even Christmas banned at various times. This is probably why we still have an inbuilt suspicion of pleasure; why else do we talk about 'guilty pleasures', and being 'naughty' when we've indulged in something enjoyable? So often we seek to punish or deny ourselves if we feel we've transgressed the self imposed boundaries of acceptable levels of enjoyment.

Of course unrestrained hedonism such as was practised by the Libertines, inevitably leads to the pain they sought to avoid. But that isn't what seeking out pockets of pleasure is encouraging.

There's a place for elements of both stoicism and hedonism - they may be opposite ends of the

pleasure pain scale, but there's no reason why we can't embrace aspects of both philosophies.

I'm very much an advocate of the pick n mix theory - take the bits that work for you and leave the rest - making sure to review regularly and adding or subtracting things accordingly. Seeking pockets of pleasure is part of that review process.

Coming back to this idea that pleasure is somehow immoral, I think it's important to acknowledge that the very notion that we need to look for mere pockets of pleasure tells us that life is generally filled with far more pain, discomfort and boredom than it is pleasure.

Looking for those micro moments of joy is a self-sustaining activity that gives us the momentum to keep going through the challenges of life.

My experience has been that, when you're prone to low moods, or your life is a bundle of problematic issues, the habit of looking for pockets of pleasure can help to keep you from sinking altogether. When you have a collection of tools to draw on in moments of misery, they can be the difference between going under and keeping your head above water long enough to catch another breath.

In a beautiful period of life, pockets of pleasure can increase your sense of wonder and appreciation.

In a difficult period of life they can remind you that the hard parts aren't all there is to life, there is still joy, wonder and delight to be found among the rubble. Being able to spot and capture those fleeting moments builds resilience and can be life-saving. They can act as anchors.

So no, I don't subscribe to the notion that pleasure is bad for our souls. I believe that pleasure is a golden thread that runs through the tapestry of our lives, adding richness, contrast and a strength to our spirit that can sustain us in good times and bad.

If you listened to last week's podcast you'll remember that I'm not an advocate of balance - that centre point of the seesaw where nothing much happens - I much prefer taking turns with the ups and downs, stepping into the comfort zone from time to time to regroup, reassess, relax and ready ourselves to feel the stretch of returning back to the ups and downs, refreshed, recharged and ready to explore what else life has to show us.

As far as I'm concerned, being a fully alive and appreciative human requires that we experience a range of what life has to offer - the good, the bad, the ugly and the beautiful. The bad and the ugly are only too happy to shove themselves in our faces, the good and the beautiful are a little

more shy, which is why I champion the search for pockets of pleasure!

Ok, that was a pretty heavy section so we're going to take a little break with some relaxing sound therapy now. When we come back we'll get into how to engage our inner senses. See you in a minute.

MUSIC

Welcome back, let's dive straight into the inner senses:

Whenever people are asked how many senses they have, they usually say 5. If that's your answer it might surprise you to learn that some scientists think we may have as many as 33 senses, though it's generally currently accepted that we have 8.

We have the 5 external senses that we all know - sight, sound, taste, touch and smell plus we have the internal senses which are: interoception - this is the sense that detects things like Hunger, thirst, needing the toilet, the speed of our heart etc

proprioception - this is our sense of knowing where our bodies are in time and space - it's this sense that weighted blankets appeal to

and then there's equilibrioception - this is our sense of balance which uses our eyes and our inner ears and acts as a kind of spirit level.

There are several mindfulness techniques that use interoception, one which seems quite popular is body scanning where you lie down somewhere comfortable and work your way up your body, noticing any sensations that come up. This can be a great exercise, but for many people with trauma it can create anxiety, panic attacks and a retraumatizing experience.

I'm not going to suggest body scanning for this reason.

It's important to get to know your inner sensory experiences and the best way to do this is to gently notice what's going on.

This can be more difficult than you might think - you might only notice what your body is telling you once it gets to the point at which you need to take immediate action! But if you start making it a habit to regularly check in with yourself to see if you're hungry, thirsty, need the loo, are hot or cold etc you'll begin to detect those needs much earlier and be able to deal with them accordingly. Whilst this kind of noticing might not seem terribly pleasurable to you, it's part of

the bigger picture of pleasure, and, let's face it, there's nothing remotely pleasurable about realising you need the loo at the point at which you have to do the cross legged shuffle to avoid a puddle!

I've started searching for proprioception pockets of pleasure (try saying that quickly!) and one I noticed this week was filling the water jug. We have quite a large water filter and what I usually do - whether filling it or taking out a jug of water - is to rest the jug on the sink as the water flows in. This week I noticed this and decided to see what it was like to fully experience holding the jug as it filled up. It was an entirely different experience - I could feel my muscles having to work harder the more the jug filled, I noticed the slight shake of my hand when the jug was full, there were also sensations in my hands from the vibrations of the water entering the jug - these were different depending on whether I was filling the jug from the mains tap or the filter tap due to the differing water pressure.

Feeling all of this gave me a much greater sense of connection to this mundane task that I carry out multiple times a day, it connected me back to my body (I'm usually in my head, daydreaming when I do this task)

It's this noticing that our modern lives have separated us from. Most of us go through our days on auto pilot, filling our pockets of pleasure requires us to switch to manual and reacquaint ourselves with our sensory instruments AND how fluctuations in the ambient conditions feel in our bodies.

Once we start The Noticing we begin to- recalibrate our inner instruments, making us more perceptive to subtle changes in our surroundings.

Last week I read you the quote from Michael Scott's *The Alchemist* that has informed my approach to my work as the sensory coach - at the risk of repeating myself, I'm going to read it again because it really speaks to THE NOTICING and guides us towards the path that will make our days more magical.

Magic is really only the utilization of the entire spectrum of the senses. Humans have cut themselves off from their senses. Now they see only a tiny portion of the visible spectrum, hear only the loudest of sounds, their sense of smell is shockingly poor and they can only distinguish the sweetest and sourest of tastes.

Searching out these pockets of pleasure can reattune our senses, it can re-sensitise us to our surroundings. You may find that, after a little while of hunting for small pleasures, you experience the world in much more vivid hues. As you train your brain to notice the tiniest of

pleasures, it will start to seek them out for you. At this point you may find your life begins to change - whether that's a good thing is something you will have to decide for yourself. For me, I think having more people who are alive to the noticing can only be a good thing.

Ok time for another little musical break - when we come back it'll be time for this week's Pocket Challenge.

MUSIC

Welcome back

Pocket Challenge

How did you get on with last week's challenge? Did you give it a try or did you put it off?

If you put it off, now is your chance to take action - all you need to do is set an alarm to go off 2 or 3 times over the course of the day, stop what you're doing and notice what your external senses are picking up.

If you did the challenge, maybe make a few notes in a journal about what you learned about yourself from the experience.

Now for this week's challenge you're going to do the same thing except this week you're going to pay attention to your internal senses. If you struggle with this due to trauma, then be sure to do it gently and only explore the inner sensations that you're comfortable with. This is one area where comfort zones need to be carefully managed - it's certainly good to stretch beyond the boundaries our trauma has created for us, but it's important to do so in ways that don't retraumatise us. If this is too uncomfortable for you, stick to last week's exercise.

These daily alarms can become anchors - anchoring is an NLP technique whereby we create certain associations that can act as a trigger for accessing a desirable state. You might decide to create an anchor around that alarm, so when you hear it go off you automatically stop, take a deep breath and notice - this can become a part of your day that you look forward to as a moment of relaxation, and then the sound of the alarm anchors the feeling of relaxation. I'm not an NLP practitioner so that explanation may not be quite right, but that's my understanding of it, and I know that it works for me! Kind of like word association for your emotions!

Next week will be about the importance of self compassion, why it's the foundation upon which we can build a kinder world, how we can cultivate more of it in our daily lives and what its place is in the pockets of pleasure philosophy.

Thanks so much for taking time out of your day to listen to this episode of Pockets of pleasure, please do let me know how you get on with the challenge in the comments or over on instagram @thesensorycoach and don't forget to checkout the show notes over at thesensorycoach.com/shownotes for some extra musical treats along with transcript and some reading suggestions.

May your week have many pockets of pleasure!