

The background features a soft, artistic composition of watercolor splashes in shades of light blue and lavender, primarily concentrated on the right side. Scattered across the entire white background are numerous circles of varying sizes and colors, including pink, purple, blue, and orange, creating a bokeh-like effect.

Las Traumadas

#5

Identify, Analyze, Realize: what does it look like to identify your feelings, recognize them for what they are, and discern *why* you feel the way that you do?

In previous issues of *Las Traumadas*, we covered *old pain* and outlined several ways to listen to your body when coping mechanisms kick in. Old pain is a reality for all of us and feels different for everyone. Various survival tactics helped us make it through the hard sh*! in our lives and were incredibly valuable in the time and place we learned them, but can lead us to negative coping mechanisms and unhealthy patterns.

Here's where we are in our journey of healing from *old pain*:

1. LISTEN to yourself: when do you feel pain, emptiness, anger, anxiety, etc.?
2. IDENTIFY the cause of the feeling: what about your past experiences causes you to feel this thing when you feel it?
3. VALIDATE the feeling: everything you are feeling is okay and understandable.
4. LET GO: with this deeper understanding of yourself, you can move forward.

In Issue 4 we learned how important it is to be intentional with this process, which means being an active participant in your own life! How exciting! This looks like keeping track of your observations: recording your bodily sensations, your thoughts, and your habits (look back to Issue 4 for more on this). And practicing *metacognition*, or

thinking about thinking. This is an operation provided by our handy-dandy prefrontal cortexes, which improves the way your brain makes decisions.

Everybody on board? Great, grab a drink of water, take a bathroom break, then buckle in- now that we understand how to LISTEN, it's time to talk about *identifying our feelings and discerning WHY THE HECK we feel the way we do.*

It's one thing to identify how our body is reacting, it's another thing entirely to determine why. Don't despair! It can be done, and all on your own timeline. The key is to never give up. Identifying old pain takes time. When we take the time to observe our habits, we can analyze existing patterns and identify the cause of our feelings. In Step 1 we LISTEN, or observe and keep track of habits; in Step 2 we have to do the metacognitive work to IDENTIFY why we feel a certain thing when we feel it.

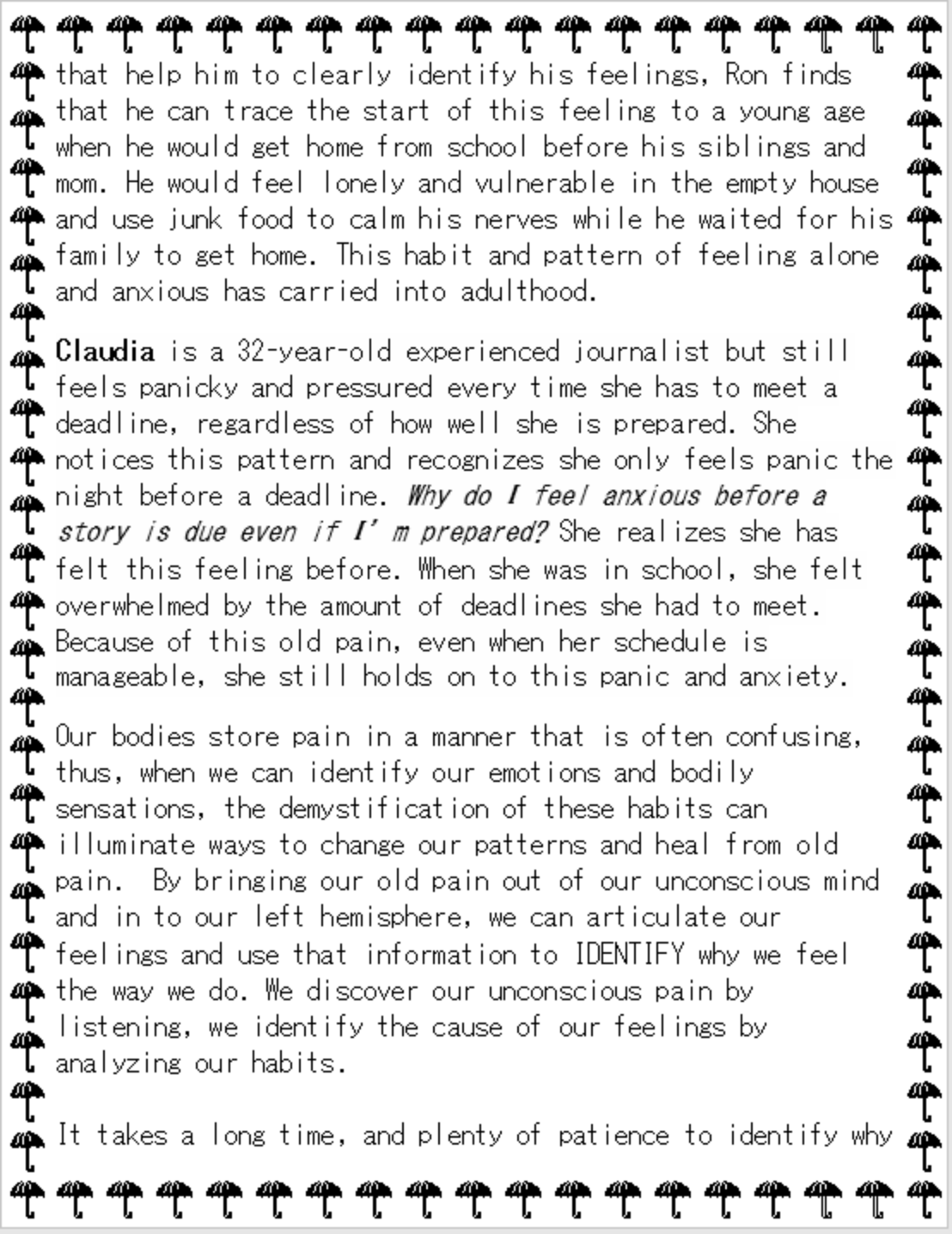
Using our tools from Issue 4 (the process of listening and practicing metacognition), let's get into our bodies. What this means is that it is *vitaly important for healing to get in touch with exactly what your body is trying to tell you* in order to name your emotion and ultimately get to the cause of it. According to author Daniel Leven,* "People have a bottom-up way of processing emotional information, which originates largely in our visceral body (our guts, heart, and lungs) and percolates upward into the brainstem, limbic brain, and finally our cortical brain, where we find words for what we feel." For example, you might notice jitters and butterflies in your stomach, a heavy heart,

tightness in your chest, a deep sense in your gut, prickles on the back of your neck. This is your right hemisphere (your body) trying to tell your left hemisphere (your cognitive processing systems) that something is not quite right: "... before our left hemisphere can accurately find the words to describe or name what we feel, we actually need a moment to hang out in the right hemisphere and feel what we feel."

Some helpful questions to ask yourself might be: How does this feeling relate to my larger story? Does it remind me of feelings I've had before? Is it a new experience? Is it in competition with some ideas I have about myself or how the world works?

In order to discern why you feel something, you must interrogate your habits. Soothe yourself and ask: what are my emotional and physical patterns trying to communicate to my conscious brain? Analyzing your recorded patterns and habits will allow you to identify the cause of your feelings, or in other words, identify the old pain affecting you in a present moment.

Ron gets fidgety, restless, and anxious around every afternoon and notices after journaling for several weeks that he unconsciously reaches for food to comfort and numb his jitters. After observing the time of day, his mood, and the types of foods he eats. Ron can begin to analyze his feelings during the late afternoon and asks himself: *Why do I feel anxious and in need of simple comforts everyday around 4pm?* By analyzing this habit and asking questions



that help him to clearly identify his feelings, Ron finds that he can trace the start of this feeling to a young age when he would get home from school before his siblings and mom. He would feel lonely and vulnerable in the empty house and use junk food to calm his nerves while he waited for his family to get home. This habit and pattern of feeling alone and anxious has carried into adulthood.

Claudia is a 32-year-old experienced journalist but still feels panicky and pressured every time she has to meet a deadline, regardless of how well she is prepared. She notices this pattern and recognizes she only feels panic the night before a deadline. *Why do I feel anxious before a story is due even if I'm prepared?* She realizes she has felt this feeling before. When she was in school, she felt overwhelmed by the amount of deadlines she had to meet. Because of this old pain, even when her schedule is manageable, she still holds on to this panic and anxiety.

Our bodies store pain in a manner that is often confusing, thus, when we can identify our emotions and bodily sensations, the demystification of these habits can illuminate ways to change our patterns and heal from old pain. By bringing our old pain out of our unconscious mind and in to our left hemisphere, we can articulate our feelings and use that information to IDENTIFY why we feel the way we do. We discover our unconscious pain by listening, we identify the cause of our feelings by analyzing our habits.

It takes a long time, and plenty of patience to identify why

we are feeling old pain, and sometimes there may never be a satisfying reason for it.

Our brains are designed to feel things. In fact, according to neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, Descarte's greatest error was "I think therefore I am" versus "I feel therefore I am." In short- humans need emotions to help us make informed decisions about the world. Feeling is your mind and body's way of helping you survive. You feel old pain because you needed those reactions to cope with whatever was happening in your life at the time the pain started. Our bodies don't shed old pain easily, and sometimes ever at all, so, in a sense, you feel old pain because your body needs you to.

The best one can do is stay pristinely present with oneself, (journaling, breathing exercises, meditation, metacognition.) and if there is a "why", then with a lil TLC it will soon become recognizable, identifiable, and ready to analyze.

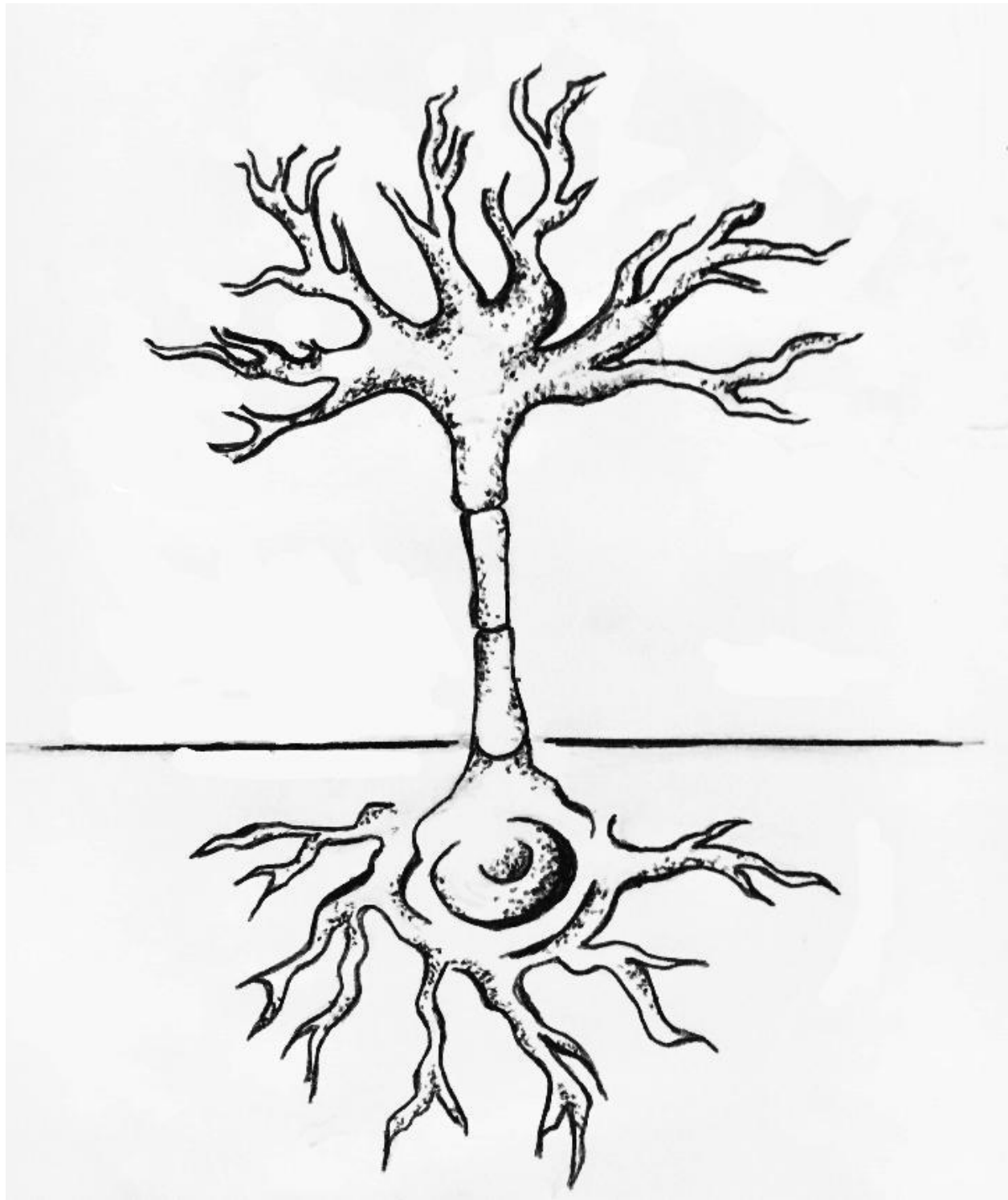
These first two steps can be emotionally heavy and take a lot of work. Digging up old pain ain't always fun! Step 3 and 4, VALIDATE and LET GO, will offer us time to reflect on the progress we've made and create space to mend and restore. Stay tuned.

Thanks for being here,

Las Traumadas



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