



The Process of Processing:

How to Actually Work Through What You Feel Instead of Staying Stuck

I cannot tell you how many times people say they are processing something, or they need to process an experience... I do it all the time. At one point I stopped myself and thought, "What the fuck am I talking about?" What is anyone talking about? What does it mean to "process" something?

The truth is that most people don't know how to process. They overfeel or spiral or overthink. Processing is none of that, so here is what processing ACTUALLY is:

The balance between feeling and thinking.

Processing is the ability to feel and understand what is happening, and then decide what to do with it.

There are two types of processing you need to understand:

- Micro Processing, which is how you handle a moment; and
- Macro Processing, which is how you change your life

You need both. One without the other keeps you stuck.

PART I: MICRO PROCESSING

How to Handle a Trigger in Real Time

Micro processing is what you do in the moment when something hits you emotionally like a comment, a tone, a memory, or a feeling you can't explain. Instead of reacting or shutting down you have to learn to process.

Step 1: Recognize the Trigger

Something shifts in you, and before you react you need awareness. Your body usually knows before your mind does, so look for tightness in your chest or stomach, sudden anxiety or anger, or a strong urge to react/defend/withdraw. This is your signal... not your enemy.

Step 2: Feel It...Without Judgment

Sit with the feeling before you do anything. This is the moment most fail. You might suppress, explode, or try explaining... but instead of doing any of this, just pause. Let the feeling exist without trying to fix it. Don't worry about being right, logical, or in control. You are simply allowing the emotion to move through you.

It is important to note that feelings are valid, but they are not always accurate.

Step 3: Identify the Emotion

What are you ACTUALLY feeling? Go deeper than surface emotions. Yes, you are mad or angry, but are you hurt? Do you feel rejected? Unseen? Scared? Most of your triggers are rooted in something deeper, so dive in to find it.

Step 4: Ask Why to Find the Root

In this step you work to actually identify where the emotion came from. This is the movement from feeling to thinking. You are trying to figure out what affected you and why so much? When have you felt this before? Is this feeling new or something older? Often, the intensity of your reaction isn't about the moment, rather your past. This is where patterns are revealed.

Step 5: Check Reality

Look at your feelings and compare them to the situation. Are they aligned? Was your feeling appropriate for the situation... honestly? Start to look at the facts beyond your immediate emotion and perception. Are you writing a narrative? Partially writing a narrative? Is the situation to blame or is it triggering an older trauma?

Discovering this allows you to properly go after the real problem and protects you from overreacting or misinterpreting.

Balance here is key. You don't want to dismiss your feelings, but don't blindly trust them either.

Step 6: Choose Your Response

Start assessing how you want to respond, and not just do what you feel like doing. You are exercising control over yourself... not controlling your emotions, rather controlling your expression of those emotions — there is a difference.

This becomes a moment of power. Instead of reacting automatically, you decide how to respond. This is where behavior change actually begins. Not in intention. In decision.

Again, you are not seeking to judge yourself. Let's say your response abandons yourself, like you say yes to something you did not want to do. OK, now ask yourself why you did that. No judgment. No shame. Just curiosity. The judgment and shame will hinder your healing. Curiosity and understand lead to healing.

Micro Processing Summary

1. Recognize the trigger
2. Feel without judgment
3. Identify the emotion
4. Find the root
5. Check reality

6. Choose your response

PART II: MACRO PROCESSING

How You Actually Change Over Time

Micro processing helps you survive moments. Macro processing helps you transform your life. This is the long-term work. It's not about one moment, rather about patterns.

Step 1: Identify the Pattern

Look for repeated behaviors like avoidance, anger, people-pleasing, dishonesty, or shutting down. Patterns are proof that something deeper hasn't been resolved.

Step 2: Connect It to the Root

This is where you connect behavior to history, similar to micro-processing. When did the behavior start? Who or what shaped the response? What are you trying to protect yourself from? Most behaviors were once coping mechanisms. They made sense then. They may not serve you now.

Step 3: Move Through the Six Stages

You will cycle through:

1. Grief
2. Victimization
3. Righteousness
4. Reality
5. Humility
6. Action

This is not optional. Skipping stages leads to stalling, regression, or fake growth. Real change requires full processing.

Step 4: Define Who You Want to Be

If you want to change, then what do you want to change into? Without direction, change doesn't stick. Define your values, purpose, and the behaviors you want. These are your non-negotiables. You don't just remove behavior, you have to replace it.

Step 5: Take Small, Consistent Actions

Change is proven through behavior. This is where identity shifts. Not through thinking or talking, but through doing. Focus on small wins and daily effort. You will fail, and that should be expected. Again, your goal is not perfection, rather returning to the process.

Step 6: Reflect and Adjust

Reflection keeps you honest. Ask yourself how you are improving, and where you are regressing. Be honest... why lie to yourself? Without reflection, you drift. With reflection, you refine.

The Integration: Micro + Macro

- Micro processing = handling the moment
- Macro processing = changing the pattern

If you only do micro you feel better temporarily, but don't change

If you only do macro you understand yourself, but still react poorly in real life

You need both.

Processing is not about feeling better immediately (this should never be the goal). Nor is it about being right or fixing everything quickly. It is about understanding yourself, facing reality, and choosing differently. Over and over again.