

Recognize What's Holding You Back with Mind-Body Bridging

12/14/2025

Have you ever felt stuck? Maybe you've noticed a pattern of stress, self-doubt, or frustration that keeps you from feeling your best. You might blame external situations, like a tough project at work, a conflict with a loved one, or just the daily grind. But what if the source of that tension isn't the situation itself, but how your mind and body respond to it?

This is the first post in our series, "Unlocking Your Natural Resilience." We'll explore Mind-Body Bridging (MBB), a powerful approach that helps you understand and transform these internal patterns. MBB offers practical tools to move from a state of stress and limitation to one of clarity and strength, which we call Natural Functioning. Let's start by exploring what might be holding you back.

Understanding the "I-System"

At the core of Mind-Body Bridging is something called the I-System Model. Think of the I-System as part of your mind-body network that kicks into high gear when your sense of identity feels threatened. It's not a bad thing; it helps shape who you are. Problems start when it gets overactive. When that happens, you might notice "mind clutter" (racing, repetitive thoughts) and "body tension" (knots in your stomach, tight shoulders, a clenched jaw).

These signals are like your internal compass, letting you know when the I-System is running the show. When your I-System is overactive, it distorts how you see things, making you feel tense, anxious, and disconnected from your natural ability to handle challenges. This inner struggle can block your progress and adds more stress than you need.

So what triggers this overactivity? It comes down to three key parts of the I-System: Requirements, the Depressor, and the Fixer. Each of these plays a unique role in shaping how we think, feel, and respond to challenges. Understanding them is a critical step in learning how to shift from stress and struggle to clarity and resilience.

Requirements: The Unspoken Rules

Requirements are those rigid, sometimes unspoken rules and expectations you hold for yourself, other people, and the world. They often show up as "should" or "must" statements in your mind:

- "I **must** be perfect in my work."
- "My partner **should** always understand me."
- "Life **should** be fair."

These aren't just simple preferences; they're closely tied to your sense of self. When reality doesn't match up with these rules—which happens all the time—your I-System sees it as a threat. That's when mind clutter and body tension begin. For example, imagine you have a Requirement that you should always be on time, but you get stuck in traffic. You might feel a wave of panic and frustration that doesn't really fit the situation. It's not just about being late; it's that a core rule has been broken, and your I-System is setting off the alarm.

2

The Depressor: The Voice of Self-Criticism

When a Requirement is violated, the Depressor steps in. This part of your I-System spins negative thoughts into painful storylines. It takes a simple mistake and turns it into a story about your self-worth.

Imagine you get feedback that a report you wrote needs major revisions. The Depressor takes that single event and turns it into a storyline like, "I'm not good enough for this job. I always mess things up. I'll never succeed." These stories are often about feeling damaged, flawed, or inadequate. The Depressor holds this negativity in your body as tension, making you feel heavy and drained. It keeps you stuck in a loop of self-criticism, clouds your judgment, and makes it harder to move forward constructively.

3

The Fixer: The Unbalanced Drive to Act

When the Depressor stirs up painful feelings, the Fixer steps in to try to make things better. The Fixer's job is to resolve that sense of being broken or damaged. It quickly

comes up with urgent, action-focused ideas that seem like they will make everything okay.

If we keep going with that example, after the Depressor tells you you're a failure, the Fixer might jump in with something like, "I'll stay up all night and rewrite the entire report from scratch. I'll work all weekend to prove I'm not a failure."

On the surface, this might sound productive. But the Fixer's energy can be frantic and unbalanced. It pushes you to act out of a desperate need to calm the Depressor's criticism, not from a place of thoughtful, clear-headed problem-solving. This often leads to burnout, perfectionism, and even more stress. The Fixer focuses on quieting the internal pain instead of handling the real issue in a healthy way. That creates a draining cycle: the Depressor points out a flaw, and the Fixer goes into overdrive trying to fix it, which leaves you feeling exhausted.

From I-System Overload to Natural Functioning

This cycle—a violated Requirement that triggers the Depressor and then sets off the Fixer—is what keeps so many of us feeling stuck. We get trapped in a constant state of high alert, with minds that feel cluttered and bodies that stay tense.

Mind-Body Bridging offers a way out. Instead of trying to shut down or eliminate the I-System, it teaches you how to recognize its signals and return to Natural Functioning with greater ease and self-awareness.

Mind-Body Bridging gives you a way forward. The goal isn't to get rid of the I-System, but to notice its signals and learn how to shift back into a state of Natural Functioning with awareness and self-compassion.

Natural Functioning is the state your mind and body return to when the I-System settles. In this space, you're present, engaged, and able to access your own resourcefulness. You can meet challenges with clarity and resilience. Thoughts come and go without getting stuck, and your body remains relaxed. Mind-Body Bridging guides you toward spending more time in this optimal state, supporting you in responding with authenticity and confidence, no matter what comes your way.

By learning to spot your Requirements, label your Depressor storylines, and notice when your Fixer is in

overdrive, you can begin to ease their grip. This kind of awareness is the first step to choosing a new response. One that comes from your calm, centered, and naturally capable self.

What's Next?

Understanding the I-System is key to recognizing what's been holding you back. Once you start seeing these patterns, you have the power to make meaningful changes.

In our next post, we will explore one of the core practices in Mind-Body Bridging: the Mind-Body Map. This practical tool helps you lay out your I-System activity so you can see what's going on and begin to loosen its influence. Join us as we continue this journey together and discover more ways to unlock your natural resilience.