I Am Not My Gremlin!™ Step 2 Video Transcript

Note: Please take care of yourself. While this information is intended for general educational purpose and is not therapy, some of this content may or may not be triggering for you. If that occurs please feel free to pause the material, walk away, and/or seek support. Some support resources can be found here.

Step 2 Video: Naming your Gremlin
The Short & Sweet: Name it

Welcome back! This second I Am Not My Gremlin!™ video is focused on helping you to name your Gremlin, and start to get clarity about what it's saying, and how it's affecting you.

In our first I Am Not My Gremlin!™ video we zeroed in on helping you begin to consider that who you are is separate from and greater than your inner negative voice that we're calling the Gremlin. Your Gremlin is the negative voice inside you that criticizes you or makes you feel bad or shameful. It can also be the voice of a mental health challenge you're dealing with, like anxiety, depression, addiction, an eating disorder, or a range of others.

Let's try something to help you start to become familiar with your mind and your thoughts. Take a moment and imagine yourself pulling up a chair in front of a TV. This is a special TV that lets you scroll through and watch the contents of your mind, your thoughts, the way you might watch Netflix on your TV. Let's call it Mindflix.

What kind of thoughts would you see in your "continue watching" list? What kind of thoughts have you "watched" recently? And what kind of thoughts would be ready for you to resume "watching"? What kind of thoughts would you see in your "my list" of thoughts you are interested in? What kind of thoughts would you see in your "suggestions because you watched" list? Thoughts your mind keeps offering up because of the last "thought" you watched?

Do you notice any themes? Are the types of thoughts on the your lists "comedies"? Are they romances? Are they tragedies? Are they about dread or things that go bump in the night? Are they apocalyptic and in the future?
full of abandonment or lost love? Alienation or isolation? Or are they a mix of more than one type? What do you see on the Mindflix screen of your mind? How do you feel about the biggest categories or most frequently viewed thoughts? Is it what you expected? Is it what you want?

Here's what I noticed about the TV screen on my mind. Now Netflix wasn't around in the dark ages of the internet when I was an undergrad but when as a undergrad student about to fail I caught glimpses of my collection of thoughts in highest rotation, what I saw was a mind that was consumed with a desire for freedom from an oppressive force which I didn't understand. Thoughts in highest rotation were those involving apocalyptic future events that were out of control, tragedies and racing against time, and tear jerkers involving rejection and isolation .

Let me share with you a little bit about why I was in to these thoughts. I grew up the oldest of four children. Responsible, attuned and sensitive to the world and others. During my childhood my family was undergoing tremendous upheaval and changes that involved inter-continental immigration, stress, isolation, and adjustment. My family was dealing with a lot. And I took it upon myself to make my family's lives easier. That meant learning to anticipate and read what my family needed from me. Overtime this developed into an ability to read with uncanny accuracy what others expected of me. Unfortunately as time passed, however, I started to feel that if I didn't meet those expectations I was letting others down,
and that felt out of control, and activated anxiety. I had come to believe that my role and my acceptance in the family was built on my ability to anticipate the needs of others.

With my gaze firmly fixed outward, I stopped paying attention to what I felt, needed, wanted or desired, as the tension just created inner anxious discomfort. Over time the voice in my head, what I was eventually to understand as my gremlin, turned this into some pretty powerful beliefs about me, others, and the world, such as 'you're not accepted for who you are', 'who you are is not lovable', 'others only value you when you meet their expectations', 'the rules are you must prioritize others wellbeing and needs over your own', 'you're not good enough', and 'there must be something wrong with you'.

So fast forward to me as an undergraduate student and I had completely lost touch with myself, my feelings, and what I wanted and needed. My identity was completely defined by what I could do for others. I was exhausted, anxious, avoidant, and hopeless and depressed that anything would ever change.

Do you remember our mousehole experiment from our first video? I was not the cat. I was not the present watchful still observer watching the mousehole of my mind with curiosity and detachment. I was bouncing between the pain of the past and the anticipated terrors of the future caught up in one or the other and oblivious to my present. I had completely confused my mouse thoughts with myself! And not surprisingly, because of this, I often felt very much the way mice do.

Mice don't have very large brains. And unlike us humans they don't have the more evolved parts of our brain that allow us to plan for the future, reflect on the consequences of our behaviour, hold abstract concepts, control our impulses and make sacrifices in the short term to achieve things that are important to us that take a while to develop. Mice just don't have these parts. They have a brain that's much more like what our brains used to look like millions of years ago. For our purposes we'll call it the primal brain.

The primal brain cares only about survival. It's focused on what we call the 5 F's – food, flee, fight, freeze, and let's say 'procreate'. It's all about self-preservation. And it doesn't give a fig about happiness. Mice are completely motivated by this part of the brain responsible for instinct, survival and drive. But it turns out that when we humans feel threatened (either by something real or imagined) our more evolved brain goes offline and we revert back to the basic software we used to have. We become like mice.

And that's what I had become. I was one with the mice. Driven by powerful impulses originating from my primal brain while my more evolved brain had gone offline. I was scurrying, fleeing, freezing, and using any means of surviving the anxiety that threatened to consume me.

The worst advisors ever, my mice were busy scurrying around with these gems:
- Don't tackle this, you're not good enough to succeed at it
- Don't try this and fail, better to fail because you didn't try
- Don't reach out to people because then they'll reject you or you'll have to be who they want and expect
- Don't study the material because you don't know how to study and that feels uncomfortable
- Don't write that exam at all because what if you fail
- Don't think about what it is you want to study because then you'll have to pay attention to those wants and preferences you shut away
- Don't let down your family because then they won't accept you
- Don't screw this up because then they won't love you
- Oooh! Is that pizza!?

The types of thoughts that come together to form our gremlin are these basic types of thoughts. The ones the mice are very good at generating: fear, anger, alone-ness, not enough-ness, avoidance, and attraction. They have to do with the things that involve our most basic survival. Those are the types of thoughts that both became my gremlin and then grew and fed my gremlin, keeping it alive and strong. Very quickly my gremlin began to seeking out and notice only those thoughts that were aligned with it, that would feed it, sustain it, and allow it to grow. And that becomes a closed cycle. Self-creating. Self-fulfilling.

Perhaps it's no surprise then, that when the time came for me to think about what my gremlin reminded me of what was familiar to me about my inner negative critical voice was that it was oppressive, dark, demanding, threatening. The damage it had caused and the way it delighted in my pain, took over my body and mind, and eviscerated me leaving me emotionally depleted and flat - reminded me of a demon.

Now it's your chance to see what your thoughts consist of let's return once more to our mousehole experiment. I want you to again imagine that there is a mousehole that is the doorway to your mind. And that your thoughts are the mice that scurry in and out of and around that mousehole. I want you to again imagine that you are the cat. Silent. Still. Watchful. Observing the mousehole with all your concentration.

What types of thought mice do you notice scurrying out of your mind mousehole? What mice thoughts do you let run freely, unchecked? What mice thoughts do you take for granted as true? You might have thoughts about:
- your likeability or your love ability, or
- you might have thoughts about whether people accept you or not, or
- of your body size and shape, or
- of your attractiveness, or
- your intelligence, or
- your capability to handle something or everything, or
- you might have thoughts about a current relationship you have and what that person meant or did and what it means about you or their feelings about you
- you might have thoughts about your worth, or
- your value, or
- whether you're okay as you are or not, or
- about how your past has impacted you.

All of these are just some examples of the mice that may come together to form your gremlin.

As you reflect on these mice thoughts, begin to ask yourself 'is there anything familiar about these thoughts and/or this collection of thoughts'? What is the shape that they take? It might be someone that you know living or past. Perhaps it could be an animal, or a movie character, or mythical beast, or non-human being, or maybe something that takes you by surprise that you didn't expect.

Don't get too hung up on doing this right. Gremlins can shapeshift overtime, and allowing our imagination to take this first step simply allows us to deepen the process of separating it from ourselves and reinforce that by naming it in a way that really captures the essence of your gremlin, how it talks to you, how it shows up in your life. It allows you to feel like you've got a hook or some way of grabbing hold of that gremlin.

There is no one right way to think of your gremlin. Your gremlin is yours. And it may have traits in common with anyone or anything - real or fictional, alive or dead, past or present. What do you want to call it? There is no right answer here.
What matters is what resonates for you. That when you say it, you know it's *your* gremlin.

When I have done this work with hundreds of clients over the years I have always been surprised at what they share with me that their gremlin reminds them of:
- Gollum from Lord of the Rings
- Godzilla
- A domineering primary school teacher
- The Great Gazoo from the original flinstones
- Smaug the dragon from Lord of the Rings
- An unkind relative
- Ursula the wicked octopus witch from the little mermaid
- The dementors from harry potter

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Take some time to sit with this. If not now then later on. Or keep an open file folder on this in your head, and notice what pops up as you're doing other things.

At the end of engaging with this step you should have an idea of what your gremlin reminds you of, and a name for your gremlin, as well as a beginning understanding of how your gremlin may be affecting you, your choices, your relationships, your identity, your goals, and your life.

Join me in the next video in turning on the lights to see what your gremlin really looks like, and in the process moving towards creating and capturing an image of it.

See you there.