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LDS MISSION PODCAST

Episode 32 - Mirroring Emotions

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Hey, what's up everyone? It's Jenny, the LDS mission coach and you are listening to the LDS mission Podcast, episode number 32, mirroring emotions. I'm Jenny, the LDS mission coach. And whether you're preparing to serve a mission, currently serving a returned missionary or a missionary mama like me, I created this podcast just for you. Are you searching for epic confidence? Ready to love yourself and to learn the how of doing hard things? Then let's go. I will help you step powerfully into your potential and never question your purpose. Again. It's time to embrace yourself. Embrace your mission. Embrace your life, and embrace what's next. Hey, everyone, welcome to the podcast. Thanks so much for being with me today. as I record this podcast, I've got one of those. It's like, Have you ever seen those bags that are sewn and then they have corn in them, not like popcorn, but like a fabric bag that you can throw in the microwave, and heat up. And then it's like a heating pad. Anyway, I've got one of those on my lap. Because it feels like in January and February could never get warm. It's also very cold outside still. I just went to lunch with a couple other of my coach friends right here in the town where I live. And it felt like the whole parking lot was a sheet of ice. I was lucky that I did not fall down and bust my head open. Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to record this podcast right now. Also, this morning, I was trying to get my youngest daughter out of bed, which is hard to do when it's dark outside still. And so I just did a little rendition of Hamilton. Wait for it. I'm Erin birdsong wait for it. Yes, I actually PS was the lead in my high school musical, my senior year of high school. So I do have a few skills like that other fun fact, I actually have sung in Carnegie Hall. That was a couple summers ago before COVID. Not just as a solo, but with a group I belong to. So I do have a few little hidden talents that you may not know about me. My youngest daughter, who's done mostly just giggled and rolled her eyes at me, but man, I love me some Hamilton that is good stuff. So today I want to talk to you about mirroring emotions. And I want to teach you a few things about this. Because I think if you understand this tool, it can be very useful for you in a lot of different situations. This particular tool of understanding mirroring, will help moms and missionaries it will help moms of college students this will help missionaries themselves. This will help you with your roommates. This one tool has the ability to really change the way that you show up in different situations and give you a little bit of emotional power back. Meaning that you get to be a little bit more in charge of your emotions, then letting other people be in charge of your emotions. Because you're the best one, we want you in charge of your emotions. So let me tell you what mirroring actually is. It's an actual phenomenon, a social and psychological phenomenon that occurs with the human brain. wherein we, as humans living on this planet tend to mimic other people's behavior, or their body language, or

their emotions. Have you ever noticed when you're talking to someone and they have their arms crossed is that all of a sudden you notice maybe you have your arms crossed too. Or if you are talking to someone and they kind of seem a little nervous, maybe we start to feel a little nervous too. So the other thing is, is they've actually done studies and they know now that in the brain we have what are called mirroring neurons. And this is a way for our lower brain to feel like we are connecting to someone. It's kind of where our empathy comes from, where we try to relate to someone and we try to understand what they are feeling. So picture. If I came up to you and I was like, Oh my gosh, and my hands were in the air and I was like excited. I was like oh my gosh, I won the lottery. I was jumping up and down. Notice how you would automatically probably match that emotion you would mirror my excitement with excitement.

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On the other hand, if I came up to you and I was looking kind of solemn, maybe I had my face was kind of down, my posture was a little bit different, my, my head was hanging down a little bit. And I was feeling sad, your emotional energy would likely mirror or match my emotional energy. Now mirroring can be useful, like I said, it can actually create a feeling of empathy, it can create a feeling of compassion, it makes our brain think that we are connecting people and that we're relating to people. But sometimes mirroring if it's left kind of unchecked, and we just let that mirroring just run on autopilot. Sometimes it can do more harm than it can good. So because remember, what I teach is that our emotions are like fuel in a car. And if we put in one kind of fuel, let's say we put in stress, that fuel of stress is going to drive one set of actions and get us one result. And if we were to put a different fuel in our car like competence, that fuel is going to drive a different set of actions, and give us a different result. So notice that if someone is behaving and exhibiting a certain emotion, and it's not a positive emotion, or not an emotion, that feels very good, sometimes we can get sucked into that mirroring, without even realizing it. And then all of a sudden, someone who we come upon that's anxious, all of a sudden, we notice that we are now anxious about their anxiety. Now we have two people that are anxious, and that anxiousness maybe is not the best fuel that we want, driving our actions. So let me give you a couple of examples. One thing that I see pretty regularly is parents mirror their child's behavior. In fact, I was just coaching someone last night and another program that I work in be bold, but God Mark and I was talking to a woman who said that she was with her child who wanted Oreos, her child was six years old, and this child wanted Oreos. The woman said, No, you can't have Oreos, I'm sorry, you've already had three. And then the child who's six got very upset that she couldn't have Oreos, and then all of a sudden, the mom, this woman I was talking to was upset that her daughter was upset. So there is an example of mirroring. And we do this oftentimes with our children who are on the mission to sometimes we are worried about our children who are worried. Or maybe we're just a missionary, I was talking to one currently serving missionary who said that her zone leader was just so stressed and full of anxiety about getting the certain goal or the certain number or getting more contacts. And so this missionary I was talking to started feeling anxious about her zone leaders anxiety. Or I was talking to another return missionary, whose parents were kind of frustrated. And my client didn't think that his parents should be frustrated. So then he is mirroring because he's frustrated about their frustration. Okay, do you see how this kind of works, we mirror the emotion. But what this is sort of like as if we have our zone leader that swimming in a swimming pool full of anxiety, okay? And we just decide, unconsciously without being aware, our brain just decides, oh, let's match that energy. Now, we're anxious about their anxiety. Now we're in the pool to the pool of anxiety, which it's possible what could have been way more useful, then jumping into the pool of anxiety would be on the outside of that pool of anxiety, not being anxious at all. We don't want two people or three people or four people drowning in the pool of anxiety that no one is using useful fuel to drive the actions to give you the result that you want. So I have a few steps that we can use to break this cycle of mirroring. Number one Slow things down.

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Okay, so let's say your son or daughter on the mission calls, and they're just super upset on their PD, maybe they're really struggling. Let's just slow it down, become aware, notice how our brain wants to mirror how upset they are. Notice how you want to be upset that they're upset. It's the first step is really to slow things down. Second step is acknowledge, even just in your mind, you can acknowledge and say, Oh, I see what's going on here, I'm mirroring. And then the third step is that maybe we can think something different. Instead, instead of just thinking thoughts, matching those thoughts, matching those emotions, we can choose to break the cycle of mirroring, and think something else instead. Let me give you a couple of examples of what you could maybe think, instead of thinking, my daughter shouldn't be worried. Instead, we could think my daughter can be worried. But listen, I'm not going to be. Or, instead of thinking, I wish my zone leader wasn't so anxious, we can think it's okay, if my zone leader feels anxious, I'm not anxious or worried about this at all. And then the trick is, is to really mean it. When you think those thoughts we can actually break the cycle of unproductive mirroring, when we understand that every single emotion is okay. It's okay if your zone leader feels anxious, it's okay. If your missionary son or daughter feels upset, it's okay that your parents are frustrated. Their emotions come from their thinking. And it's totally fine. People feel their feelings because of their thoughts. So we don't have to jump in the pool with them and drown with them. Now, many people will say, so what I'm just not supposed to care. I'm not supposed to mourn with those that mourn. And that's not what I'm saying at all. What I'm saying is that when you are anxious about your companions, anxiety, you're not of much use to them. What could be maybe more useful is if you generate a different emotion, like Curiosity, or maybe compassion? Or maybe love even? How much more effective Could you be as a missionary, if you showed up to a situation where your companion is feeling anxious, if you just decided to feel love? Instead of mirroring their anxiety? How much more problem solving and how much more confident and productive of a conversation could you have with your frustrated parents, if you showed up with a different emotion, like compassion, acceptance, love, or maybe even confidence. But when you're both frustrated, we don't get much done. Again, it doesn't drive a very good set of actions. So again, the three steps for breaking the cycle of mirroring are slowing things down, instead of just reacting become aware that you're doing it. Number two, acknowledge Oh, I see what's going on here. I'm mirroring. And then number three, think something different. The best thing about Mirroring is that it's a pretty quick tool to use. And one that if we just have awareness of really has the ability to make a big difference. A lot of the work that I do with my clients can take some time and we like look at beliefs and we look at thoughts and process thoughts of emotions. But when it comes to mirroring, which is just something your brain won't want to do on default, mirroring those emotions. It's pretty simple to just be aware, slow things down, acknowledge and then decide to think something different.

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It sounds like this. Listen, companion. I love you. You can be anxious, but I'm not going to be anxious, too. I'll just be here loving you, you will be as anxious as you need to, for as long as you need to. And I'll just be here, not being anxious. The last analogy that I want to share with you that I like to think about is, let's pretend we're going to a potluck. And the zone leaders bringing anxiety, and the district leaders bringing anxiety, and our companions bringing anxiety. What do we want to bring to the potluck? We get to decide, we could even decide beforehand, we know that maybe they're going to be anxious about the goals and about all the things they're trying to get done. Maybe we want to bring to that potluck calm. Maybe we want to bring certainty. Maybe we want to bring purpose, any of those emotions. And it's okay, if those if the people in the district meeting don't understand, you can

bring something else to the potluck. Now, just a word of warning. If you show up to that potluck, and you bring something like calm or peace or certainty, or contentment or confidence, it might throw people off. They might think, Whoa, What got into you, you're supposed to be anxious like us, but you don't have to be. You get to feel whatever you want to feel with the way that you choose to think. Just pay attention to when you're anxious about someone's anxiety, when you're frustrated that someone's frustrated when you're worried that someone's worried and go ahead and break that cycle of mirroring. Show up the way you want to show up without letting your brain just run on defaults. Okay, everyone have the most amazing week. So good to be with you. Take care. Thank you so much for listening to the podcast today. If you want to learn more about the mental and emotional tools I teach young adults so they can overcome worrying anxiety serve the successful missions they've always dreamed of, and navigate their post mission experience with confidence. Go to jennie.dildine.com. Or just come hang out with me on Instagram at Jennie dot, the LDS mission coach. And until then, remember, no matter which part of the mission experience that you are involved in Jennie, the LDS mission coach is thinking about you every single day