

Condensation of *Mindsight* by Dr. Daniel Siegel.

By Barbara Moon

I am focusing here on the main points of Dr. Siegel's ideas and the exercises that he shares in this book. Note that he does not talk about Jesus, so as you study this, realize how we fit Jesus into it. If words are in parentheses, it's a note of how we say it. **Some Definitions:**

The Triangle of Well Being: Relationships are how energy and information is shared as we connect and communicate with one another. The Brain is the physical mechanism for energy and information to flow. The Mind is a process that regulates the flow.

Mindsight is a process that allows us to monitor and modify the flow. We sense the flow in ourselves and with others.

Integration is the linkage of differentiated parts of a system. **Differentiated** is individuality/ each doing his own thing. (Can be like individuation) **Linkage** is connecting the different parts together in harmony. (The Choir Illustration.) We can learn to detect when integration is absent and develop effective states to promote differentiation and linkage by cultivating mindsight (p64)

Characteristics of an integrated flow are **Flexible, Adaptive, Coherent, Energized, and Stable.**

The River of Integration is the central channel where the FACES flows. On either side are two banks—Chaos and Rigidity. If one of these is the state we are in, these show that it is not integrated, not in harmony. Symptoms are rage or terror, paralysis or emptiness in life.

We can use the intentional **focus of our awareness** to direct the flow toward integration in both Brain and Relationships. In relationships we attune with people and honor their differences and link together to become a "we." (In the brain it is what we call synchronization of the brain.)

We can change the brain by focus of attention. When a brain is highly integrated, relationships are filled with love.

We focus attention on the mind itself through **Openness, Observation, and Objectivity.** This makes a strong mindsight lens. This will change the brain.

Window of Tolerance is what we call capacity that keeps us from melting down. A wide window has an integrated, harmonic flow. When the window narrows our lives become chaotic or rigid. We can monitor the harmonious FACES flow as we **SIFT** the mind—track **Sensations, Images, Feelings, and Thoughts.** We can learn to monitor and modify our internal state. Ultimately we can change not only our present *state*, but our long term *traits*.

The Wheel of Awareness is a visual metaphor of the mind. We can learn to stay in the Hub to sense mental activities coming from the Rim without being overwhelmed by them. A strong Hub widens the window of tolerance as we become more Observant, Objective, and Open. We have more resilience. Mindsight harnesses this capacity to remain reactive and monitor the internal world. We can then more

easily modify our inner world and relationships as integration moves us towards compassion, wellbeing and health.

Siegel's definitions and how we say it. What is lost in a meltdown? Bodily regulation—sympathetic and parasympathetic on at the same time (brakes and accelerator); Attuned communication—synchronizing; emotional balance—suffer well; response flexibility—able to pause, notice RCs are off; Fear modulation—letting L4 calm L2; Empathy—create mindsight images of other people's minds; Insight—able to perceive my own mind and another's and see beneath their behavior; Moral awareness—not be reactive and self-centered; Intuition—know what is going on in my body, not logic, but relational. Make wise decisions.

Recognize we have had a meltdown, taken the low road and repair the lost mindsight so we can repair the rupture. Recognize there may be a trigger.

We repair by **reflection**, the heart of mindsight. We reflect on who we are and what is really going on. These three Os are the components of reflection: Openness (not quick to judge but accepting and receptive to the other), Observation (Just be quiet and listen to the other), and Objectivity (realize when I want to defend that this is just an activity of my mind and not who I am). These enable a powerful source of healing to repair.

Chapter 2-- The brain has neuroplasticity. We can change the patterns of firing by directing our attention. Choose the focus of attention using mindsight. (This is how appreciation changes our brain.)

What fires together wires together. We strengthen a synapse by repetition, emotional arousal (feeling it), novelty, and careful focus of attention. This is how we learn from experience. Early positive experiences reinforce the quality of emotional resilience (Joy). The opposite diminishes resilience. Mindsight enables us to voluntarily change a firing pattern by using the power of awareness. Focusing attention in specific ways determines patterns. (We retrain the Fast Track.)

Chapter 3 -- Lack of mindsight makes life deadened, stuck in the physical, blind to internal reality of our hearts, blind to emotions and relationship. Let's define the mind: The human mind is a relational and embodied process that regulates the flow of energy and information. It is real. Energy is the ability to do stuff; information is anything that symbolizes something other than itself. We can represent an emotional reaction to ourselves, to give it a name, and a meaning, to help us respond more effectively. Monitor and modify illustration: Driving a car. Hands on wheel eyes shut you can make it move but not driving. In back seat, you can monitor but not modify the motion. The mind monitors and modifies the flow across time of energy and information. We do this uniquely and share with other minds. We can learn to shape these patterns, to alter our mind and brain. This all happens within relationships.

Chapter 4-- The choir. If no variety in life, emotions, etc. it's rigid and boring. If no linkage, it's chaos. Harmony comes from the middle, the flow of independent voices linked together in harmony that maximize both complexity and vitality. That is the essence of integration. Mindsight permits us to direct the flow of energy and information toward integration. (Think harmony). Rigid or chaos is a sign of bad mindsight.

Chapter5 -- Jonathan, a teen who was full of rage and wanted to change. (He is chaotic) Focused conscious attention to sense then alter the wild flow of energy and information that plagues our lives. Pay attention to the present moment without being swept away. Train the mind to focus on moment by moment experience. Become aware of awareness itself. It requires paying attention to the present moment from a stance that is non judgmental and nonreactive. It is self observation. We need attunement internally and with others (joy-filled relationship) to do this.

EXERCISE: The Hub. Take attention from center of the room to the wall. Back and forth, close and far. Notice how attention can go to very different places. The Rim is all kinds of things that come into our mind. We can be aware of our awareness and minds of others. We have a choice where we can send our attention. Notice your breathing. If you drift, go back to the breathing. The point is to notice the distractions and then refocus on the breath. It helps be aware of awareness and attention to intention.

The Hub will grow. We can notice things without judging. Noticing the breath brings peace. The Hub is always available. When you drift, just go back to the breath. The Hub is Observant, Objective, and Open.

EXERCISE: BODY SCAN Directing attention to a different part of the Rim. Helps distinguish the quality of awareness from the object of the intention. Focus attention on the body part that facilitator mentions. If attention strays, note the distraction, let it go, refocus. Move from toes to nose and notice the sensations in each region. Now attention is on the body instead of the breath.

EXERCISE, WALKING: Twenty slow paces across the room focusing on the soles of the feet and lower legs. If stray, go back to the target. This works on Objectivity.

Next step Openness: Stop being a slave to an inner voice of 'should.' Trying to change by ordering ourselves to change is useless. Open awareness is about accepting what is and not being swept up by the judging activities. Instead of saying, 'no don't do that,' embrace what is and notice what happens. Attune to what is and be kind and supportive to ourselves, being receptive rather than reactive. **NOTICE** the harsh self criticisms and label them—for example, judging. Then go back to the breath. **Name it to tame it.** We learn to accept ourselves and our experiences. We find a way to calm the storm. Learn to just let the feeling be there. The feeling is not me. Look directly at the feeling and not run. Can learn to move toward instead of avoid. The feelings are not who I am. Learn to notice the body and relax. Paying attention to feelings changes what they do to me. Accept what was there and let it be until the mind calms.

CHAPTER 6-- Stuart, a 92 year old man who lived in his left brain and did not feel emotions. Raised in a home where emotional warmth was absent. (He is rigid) In this chapter a bunch about left brain vs. right brain. Right mode creates an AND stance. Left brain creates an OR stance. Right sees possibilities, left sees my way is the only way. When one dominates for a long time becomes rigid (No feelings) or chaotic (overrun by feelings).

EXERCISE to develop Stuart's right side. Started with the body so less threatening as he did not feel emotions. Facilitator alternated asking him to feel first his right foot(from left brain side) then left foot to go to right side of brain. But when asked to feel both at same time, he could not. Could not feel his

body organs. Practice would help. **NON VERBAL EXERCISE:** Make facial expressions of emotions and had him name them. Then asked to imitate. Hard at first. Had him watch TV without the sound. Right side practice to increase non-verbal perception. Had him recall his breakfast the morning before. He had to just notice what was in his awareness, not just explain, I had cereal and milk. Describe the bowl, the sounds, all the senses, details. Describe all kinds of scenes. He would explain, not describe. Left explains, Right describes. Helped him put feelings into words. Notice not only thoughts but sensations, images, and a feeling that came into his awareness. He began reflecting on his internal world. Those with overactive feelings can name it to tame it. This links left and right and have a balance. When Dr. S remembered something Stuart had told him early on, Stuart was touched and their minds connected relationally and with emotion. After focusing on bodily sensational, reflection, journaling, awareness of feelings, and imagery, strengthened his non verbal ability. He started to connect with others and himself.

CHAPTER 7-- Anne, who was disconnected from her body. She had shut down her feelings. She had great loss and rejection as a child. She eliminated both bad and good feelings. (Made an inner vow). When we block our awareness of feelings, they continue to affect us anyway. (They Leak)

We pick up signals by becoming aware of our breathing, heart rate, etc. Need the body. Part of the flight or fight or freeze. 'Gut' and 'heartfelt feelings' come from this awareness when we can read our body. Might feel it and not know why. Dr. had to open her up to feelings, more than the Big Six. More richness. They are more subtle. Parents need to notice and synchronize with all kinds of emotions. Learn to track our internal states. Sensing this internal flow of energy and information is the essence of mindsight. Supposed to learn as a child to pay attention to it. Anne learned to live a life devoid of meaning. Integration requires openness to allow the many layers of our inner world to enter our awareness without rigid restrictions. (p. 130) Without validation and comfort, the child, Anne, could not allow herself to feel the pain of loss and humiliation. We can use our left brain logic to minimize awareness of our feelings. We build a fence around our awareness so we don't feel.

EXERCISES--Dr. used the power of attention to teach Anne new habits that changed her brain. He tells the physical involved on page 133. He did the **BODY SCAN**. She was not able to do all of it at first as it triggered her. So he asked her to simply notice the movement of her fingers as she slowly opened and closed her palms. He did the **WALKING** exercise.

A SAFE PLACE—Dr. taught Anne to make an image in her mind of a safe place where she could go when she felt uncomfortable feelings arise. He asked her to sit with the image (a beach cove she had been to) and just NOTICE her body and how it felt. This was different than what he did with Stuart. This was to connect her mental image with the body sensations so she could experience and articulate what her body was feeling.

EXERCISE—systematically tense and release individual muscle groups of the body from feet to head, Listen to alternating sounds or gently tap on the left side and right side of the body. As she practiced, Anne was able to go from reactive to receptive in her own mind. He also used colored glasses to help her feel how the body changed with the colors. He was just helping her notice her internal shifts.

As we develop mindsight, the Window of Tolerance widens (capacity grows thus keeping RCs on better) Less likely to be thrown into rigidity (depression, cutoffs, avoidance) or chaos (agitation, anxiety, rage). If we move through life without mindsight the Window of Tolerance narrows (our RCs go off easier or stay off) around a specific emotion or issue.

The presence of a caring, trusted other person who is attuned to our inner world is often the initial key to widening our window. (page 138) We need to “feel felt” by another. Need to feel safe enough to feel the feelings. Moment by moment face to face interaction helps us grow and change the synapses in the brain.

Dr. went back to the BODY SCAN, used her noticing breath and her safe place to walk her back through where she had been triggered/upset before. Slowly he took her back there and she could satyr with the sensations and wait for them to change and become less overwhelming. That’s the strange thing about panic—when we lean into it, it loosens its grip on us. The power of reflection allows us to approach rather than withdraw from whatever life brings. When we learn to stay with a feeling, to give it its time in awareness, then we discover that feelings, eve strong and threatening feelings arise then dissipate, like waves on a shore. Panic is just another feeling, neural firings in our brain. Learning to stay open and present to it, is not easy, but is an essential step to move through the fence of defense. (page 140) Finally after a while, slowly but surely, Anne got in touch with the memory that had shut her off and she began to cry. Over time she learned to stay with the feelings. Her grief took its natural course.

CHAPTER 9—Here I am going to put in a few things about attachment to add to what we already have.

The narrative of the dismissive is ‘I am alone and on my own.’ Childhood is rather blank. Relationship doesn’t matter, the past doesn’t influence the present, they don’t need others. Yet the needs are still intact. The attachment light is off. Stuart had dismissive bond.

Greg who had distracted bond slips into the present when trying to answer about childhood. Inconsistent parental attunement coupled with parental intrusiveness; mirror is distorted by parent’s preoccupations. There is emotional entanglement, not differentiated from parent (individuated). Mother’s confusing responses from her own anxieties disrupt the balance of differentiation and linkage necessary for integration. Can’t see the other person in a relationship because only worry about what their behavior says about them. (They need healing and to grow and integrate brain.) Light is on all the time.

EXERCISES for Greg, **Distracted**. The Hub exercise with Wheel of Awareness. Calm himself with focusing on breath and visualizing a safe place. Resting in the Hub (levels 4 and 5 on)he could distance himself from the intrusive feelings, body sensations. Rather than being swept up into insecurity he could discern them as just feelings on the Rim of the wheel. His right hemisphere was flooding his left and unable to cope. He learned to just ‘notice’ what his body was feeling, honor without being terrified or suppressing them, he got better vertical integration. He named the leftover feelings from his intrusive mother who favored his brother, so he named the feeling to tame it. (We would also go to Immanuel). He could recognize being triggered from the past.

DISORGANIZED—Julie. A lot of her memories were not accessible. She lived in her left brain. She grew up with a father who came home drunk and raged and worse. Her toddler was triggering her when angry and defiant. In her past her survival circuits were screaming, 'Get away from the source of terror, you are in danger.' Her attachment circuits were crying out, "Go toward your attachment figure for safety and soothing." This was an unsolvable situation. The child's sense of self becomes fragmented. It is characterized by unresolved states of trauma and loss and by dissociation. Julie did not know how to repair when she lost it with her child. The past was intruding on the present. She was stuck on the Rim of her mind's Wheel of Awareness and out of contact with the mindful presence of the Hub.

Therapy widened Julie's window of tolerance, to balance her terrifying right hemisphere images into relationship with her left brain's ability to understand them. She also gained an external source of safety, a protected space (his office) and a personal connection with someone, the Dr. His goal was to help her see her mind without distortions from the past. Then she had a support group outside. The courage to approach and not avoid her past trauma allowed her to become free of its implicit grip on her mind. (She faced them. We would also take to Immanuel.)

When we see the mind of another we bring into the present--curiosity, openness, and acceptance--The essence of love. We can have an earned secure attachment when we feel we are inside the heart of another. Wonderful things happen when people feel felt, when they sense that their minds are held with another's, mind. (Joy and synchronization.)

CHAPTER 11-- Receptive versus Reactive

EXERCISE: (With couples) Notice what it feels like in the body when they hear these words. No, seven times. Yes, seven times. Ask the couple how they felt. They can then see the difference in receptive and reactive. When the nervous system is reactive it's in flight, fight, or freeze mode. It is not possible to connect with another person. We can't open up to hear the other's words. We can distort what we hear. Receptive is feeling safe and seen. Just begin to notice which state. If reactive, take a break and calm down. (RCs are off. Get back on, skill 9 and Practicing the Pause.) If they noticed reactive, stop and focus on the breath. Admit messed up, Forgive. (Rupture and Repair with RCs on.)

TIPS FOR COUPLES: Know the kind of bond you have. Learn to regulate emotions or become more connected depending on your bond. Learn how to be a "we." Heal triggers. Some brains respond more to negativity. Some respond less to smiles. See the differences as a brain thing. Learn to connect to your body. Each be a 'me' and then a 'we.' Become an expert in sensing and respecting the others' mind. Curiosity, openness and acceptance can create love. Be the advocate of the internal world of the other. Be receptive. Soak in the signals. (Synchronize and not fix.) Squirt GABA-goo from(Level 4 to Level 2) Distracted give more space to other, Dismissive be open to closeness, vulnerability. 'We' is the essence of mindsight. We look inward to know our own inner world and then we can map clearly the internal mind of the other.

That is all I am annotating. Please pardon the incomplete sentences. This is tiring.