

Syllabus

The Mindsight Approach to Well-Being: A Comprehensive Course in Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB)

Teacher: Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

MH-300

Overview of the Six Segments

If you are interested in learning how to cultivate resilience and well-being—be it in your personal life, your professional pursuits, or in your connections with other people and the planet—this comprehensive dive into the field of interpersonal neurobiology will provide a solid, science-based foundation of both knowledge and skills.

Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) brings the various fields of science into one framework by integrating the findings from these different disciplines into one foundation of knowledge. A fundamental perspective from IPNB is that integration, the linkage of differentiated parts, is the basis of resilience and well-being. In this course, we will be exploring 9 domains of integration and how they can be understood and useful in our everyday lives to promote health.

Using the IPNB framework, you will be able to deal with the challenges of our modern world in effective ways. Together, we will explore how this scientific approach can help you support yourself and others in facing uncertainty and move our lives toward a stronger, more harmonious way of living.

Segment 1 – Mind, Brain and Relationships in the Cultivation of Well-Being

Description:

This first dive into the IPNB framework provides you with the conceptual foundation and practical approaches to understand the mind and its connection to our embodied and our relational experiences. Once we provide a working definition of the mind, we will explore a view of what a healthy mind means in practical ways. This first segment of our journey lays the foundation to build a solid exploration of all that is to follow.

In this thorough, 8 ½ hour introduction to IPNB, we will dive into the fascinating framework for understanding the mind and mental health, as Dr. Siegel highlights the structure and function of the embodied brain and the bodily systems that shape our mental lives. You will be offered practical tools, such as the “Hand Model of the Brain,” case examples, and detailed descriptions of how the material can support transformation, including ways to plan and implement integrative interventions for individuals, couples, and families. Integration, the linkage of differentiated parts of a system, is the deep mechanism underlying well-being. With this first segment, you’ll be introduced to integrative systems thinking that can aid in creating shifts within and between ourselves and others that comprise our life experiences. For example, you will be provided insights to help integrate the nervous system across its many components with the social world in order to live with meaning, connection, and emotional balance. Furthering this synthesis of the inner and the inter aspects of life, you will learn how to apply the science of relationships, from romantic to familial and friendships, and discover how to support healthy interpersonal connections.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define what the mind is from an IPNB perspective
2. Explain how energy and information flow is regulated and forms the mind
3. Differentiate the concepts of consciousness, subjective experience, and information processing
4. Outline how integration—the linkage of differentiated parts of a system—leads to optimal self-organization experienced as flexibility, adaptability, coherence (resilience across time), energy, and stability
5. Identify the role that mindsight—insight, empathy, and integration—plays in well-being and healthy relationships
6. Form a better understanding and experience of challenging emotions
7. Highlight how the brain develops and changes through relationships, consciousness, and neuroplasticity
8. Demonstrate how to use the Hand Model of the Brain to support emotional regulation
9. Distinguish among the seven nonverbal aspects of communication and their role in connecting with others
10. Analyze how presence, attunement, and resonance foster trusting relationships – the *PART* we play in close relationships, including psychotherapy, education and the workplace
11. Model reflective dialogue and communication

Segment 2 – Attachment and How Close Relationships Shape Who We Are

Description:

In our second segment, we will explore interpersonal connections by building on the view of the mind as being both embodied and relational. Two of the questions we will explore are: How and why are relationships so fundamental to our mental health? And, what makes a relationship integrative and supportive of well-being? Addressing these foundational questions through the lens of IPNB provides both conceptual insights and practical tools for cultivating well-being.

You will learn how interactive experiences and reflection support the cultivation of integration in close relationships. As with the learning throughout this course, in order to make the material your own, you'll be invited to explore your direct experience along with the concepts and scientific findings we'll be reviewing throughout our journey.

Learning Objectives:

1. Outline how relational connection influences the growth of connections in the brain
2. Describe the science of kindness, empathy, compassion, and forgiveness
3. Define and identify the role self-compassion plays in integration and well-being
4. Outline how relational integration is the basis of neural integration, which is crucial for healthy relationships
5. Identify the foundations of optimal parent-child relationships called secure attachment
6. Differentiate among secure, ambivalent, avoidant, and disorganized attachment categories
7. Implement findings from the Adult Attachment Interview into self-understanding as well as clinical assessment and treatment
8. Outline how to create a coherent narrative and earned secure attachment pattern

Segment 3 – The First Domain of Integration: Consciousness and Dr. Siegel's Reflective Practice, "The Wheel of Awareness"

Description:

Two foundational and consilient ideas are brought together in this third segment of our journey: Integration is the basis of well-being and consciousness is needed for intentional change. Here we'll see what "integrating consciousness" gives

rise to by doing the Wheel of Awareness, a practice and metaphor for the mind's awareness in the hub and that which we are aware of represented on the rim. With a singular spoke of attention differentiating these knowns along the rim from the knowing of the hub, we'll see how we not only achieve new vistas into the nature of mind and consciousness, but also how to cultivate well-being and resilience in our lives. We will also dive into integrating consciousness by discussing the results of a 10,000-person survey.

We will begin to examine the key elements of integration, as well as the differentiation and linkage of parts of a system by focusing on the first domain, consciousness, and how it applies to IPNB. By exploring detailed descriptions of the science, case examples, and clinical summaries, you will acquire the ability to incorporate what you are learning into your practice, workplace, and personal life.

Learning Objectives:

1. Outline the scientific underpinnings of the view that integration is the basis of health and resilience
2. Define the 9 domains of integration
3. Reframe mental health challenges as impediments to integration in the form of chaos and rigidity
4. Identify the process of change toward well-being as opportunities for growing integration
5. Implement conceptualizations of the 9 domains of integration into self-understanding as well as the understanding of others (and diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention if you are a clinician)
6. Embody the 9 domains of integration by using the integrative movement series, a mindfulness practice that symbolizes each of the domains
7. Outline the steps of the Wheel of Awareness practice to integrate consciousness and support well-being
8. Describe the 3-P diagram and interpret integration of consciousness through the model of the plane of possibility

Segment 4 – The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Domains of Integration: Linking the Two Sides of the Brain, the Embodied Brain and Memory

Description:

In our fourth segment, the notion that mind is an emergent property of energy flow will be highlighted and explored by examining three aspects in which that flow occurs. One aspect is the distinct functions of the right and left sides of the brain. Another is how the brain is intricately interconnected to the body as a whole, receiving input by way of the tenth cranial nerve (the vagus) as well as the spinal cord in input from the blood stream. A third aspect of neural interconnecting happens across time with how our memory systems embed our past experiences with not only how we perceive in the present, but how we anticipate and plan for the future.

We will dive deeply into the second, third, and fourth domains of Bilateral, Vertical, and Memory Integration as illuminated by the IPNB framework:

Bilateral integration reveals the distinct neural structures and functions on the left and right sides of the brain, supported by decades of extensive scientific research. Controversies about bilaterality are addressed, and clinical examples of the utility of approaching this asymmetry are explored. This is helpful because the distinct modes of information processing on each side of the brain each play an important role in our day-to-day lives.

Vertical integration refers to the ways in which cortically mediated consciousness, at the anatomic “top” of the body, are then linked to the differentiated processes from below the cortex, as in the limbic, brainstem, and internal organs of the torso. This interoceptive process of being aware enables the energy and information flow from beneath the cortex to become a part of a reflective process on emotion and intuition. Vertical integration enables us to feel more fully, connect with others more deeply, and become more flexible in our lives.

Memory integration refers to the two “layers” of encoding that can be disconnected with stressful experiences, such as trauma. Pure implicit memory, for example, may be retrieved as bodily sensations, emotions, perceptions, and behaviors without a sense that something from the past is entering consciousness. The clinical harnessing of awareness and the activation of the hippocampus can weave these implicit elements into their more flexible forms in the explicit factual and autobiographical memory layers. The healing of trauma may often involve work at each of these three domains of integration.

Learning Objectives:

1. Implement Bilateral, Vertical and Memory Domains of Integration into self-understanding (and for diagnosis, treatment planning, and intervention, if you are a clinician)
2. Embody these three domains of integration through active engagement (and, if you are a clinician, even by teaching clients the integrative movement series)
3. Identify the roles of and relationship between the left and right sides of the brain
4. Recognize impediments to bilateral integration which can lead to chaos or rigidity, and use practical techniques to support the growth of bilateral integration
5. Identify when there are challenges in vertical differentiation and/or linkage within the nervous system. Employ methods to support neuroplasticity, enabling greater neural integration and well-being
6. Evaluate impairment of integration in memory processes in everyday life and in traumatic experiences
7. Explain the role of implicit and explicit memory in trauma resolution and health

Segment 5 – The 5th and 6th Domains of Integration: Making Sense of Life through Our Narratives and States of Mind

Description:

In this fifth segment of our journey, our discussion delves into the fifth and sixth domains of integration: Narrative and State. Human beings are meaning-making creatures, and how life experience impacts the mind directly involves how an individual comes to make sense of events. Trauma and other stressful experiences can have their negative impact, in part, by how an event cannot be understood and then gets woven into the narrative of the individual’s life.

The brain has been called “an anticipation machine” as it learns from the past to get ready for what is happening next. Relationships shape the capacity to have “top-down” learning, altering what we perceive based on past experiences and the beliefs we carry to make sense of life. As story-telling beings, our self-narratives organize our ongoing experiences in life, preparing us for what’s next while sometimes trapping us in the stories of who we think we are. Building off of that, the state of our mind in the present moment is a combination of what we’ve experienced and what we anticipate happening next. Integration involves developing coherent narratives and embracing the reality of the many states of mind that shape our lives.

The mind also has many ways that it functions, some of which can be best understood to cluster into a “state” of mind. When such repeated state assemblies arise, they can be seen as “self-states” that define an individual’s identity. Some of the central needs of such states, such as a need for solitude or a need to be social, are in direct conflict with one another.

State integration can involve honoring different needs across states. We can link these needs not in one state, but by taking time for each need, such as making time to be social or to be in nature. Integration in this domain involves differentiating those needs and feeling empowered to cultivate ways to meet these needs in a health-promoting way.

Learning Objectives:

1. Assess the “coherency of narrative”—how we have come to make sense of our lives—and identify how to cultivate mental adaptability
2. Reframe “stress” from an IPNB lens in order to build resilience, grit, and a growth mindset
3. Differentiate the layers, aspects, or parts of the self
4. Identify the neurobiological processes, attachment patterns, and narrative characteristics that relate to unresolved, dismissing, or preoccupied attachment histories
5. Develop a coherent narrative and the sensemaking process of self-reflection
6. Outline how to identify unresolved trauma or loss within the narrative process
7. Describe the adaptive strategy of dissociation that emerges with disorganized attachment (and, if you are a clinician, learn ways to work with clients to integrate dissociated states)
8. Explore how an incoherence of narratives impacts the integration of states of mind

Segment 6 – The 7th, 8th and 9th Domains of Integration: Interpersonal Relationships, Dimensions of Time, and Facets of Identity

Description:

In our sixth and final segment, we will deepen our understanding of how the domain of relational integration shapes our well-being, drawing further on the science of attachment and our experience of close, connecting communication with others. How our inner self connects with others is the essence of interpersonal integration. We can feel seen and understood, “feeling felt” and having a sense of belonging, without losing our sense of internal integrity.

Integrating our lives across time involves examining essential aspects of our existence: longing for immortality, permanence, and certainty in the face of mortality, impermanence, and uncertainty. Embracing these contrasting experiences of longing and reality is the heart of temporal integration.

The ninth and final domain of integration refers to identity, addressing the fundamental experience of having an inner, familial, and cultural sense of self with the inherent evolutionary biases of “in-group” and “out-group” distinctions. We have an inner sense of life and who we are—experienced as a “me” or an “I”—and we also have a relational sense of “we” or “us.” As we have seen, integration involves linking differentiated elements but without losing the unique features of the differentiated, specialized aspects. In this way, an integrated identity can be seen as Me plus We, equaling “MWe.”

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the key components of feeling felt that highlight interpersonal integration
2. Outline how relational integration leads to neural integration
3. Differentiate the quantum and Newtonian classical physics aspects of experience from the viewpoint of IPNB
4. Evaluate issues of mortality, uncertainty, and transience as well as the experience of the Arrow of Time in support of temporal integration
5. Reframe the experience of identity from an IPNB lens
6. Assess the evolutionary, cultural, and familial aspects of identity
7. Discover how to support identity integration to bring more compassion and kindness into the world
8. Identify key features of secure attachment and how they relate to interpersonal relationships