

Mindsight

A Dialogue with Dr. Dan Siegel and Acharya Fleet Maull

[0:00:08.1] Fleet: Hi, welcome to day two of the Shambhala Mountain Center Science of Meditation program, today is focused on insight and embodiment and we're here today with Doctor Dan Siegel. Welcome, Doctor Siegel.

[0:00:22.0] Dan: Thanks Fleet, please call me Dan if that's ok with you.

[0:00:25.2] Fleet: That's perfectly fine and I'm happy to, so welcome Dan, really happy to be here with you today.

[0:00:30.5] Dan: An honour for me to be here with you.

[0:00:32.4] Fleet: I want to, many of our audience will probably be familiar with you, but I want to just kind of highlight your bio a bit and let people know that right below the video you're watching, Doctor Siegel's full bio is available to find out more about Dan's work. But Dan trained at both Harvard and UCLA, he's a medical doctor and trained in psychiatry, Doctor Siegel is the author of many many many professional articles and books, but very well known for his book, Mindsight, and I'm sure we'll be covering some of that territory during our conversation today, and you have a new book out that's I think coming out right now.

[0:01:12.9] Dan: Yeah, that's right, called Mind, A Journey to the Heart of Being Human. Very exciting to have that one coming out at this very moment.

[0:01:22.1] Fleet: Yeah, well I'm really eager to read it, looking forward to that. So I think we'll just jump right in, you know the number of different topics we're going to cover today is certainly you being a pioneer in this kind of world of intersubjective resonance and intersubjective or inter neural biology and all that will certainly be a theme. Overall today's theme for the day is insight embodiment, and yeah, your work has a lot to do with the world of inner thoughts and feelings and emotions, and the things that really give meaning to our lives, a really good colour and vividness to our lives as well as some challenges some time, so maybe if we can start by if you could explain to us why our kind of our internal world matters so much.

[0:02:21.3] Dan: Yeah, well that's a really great question, the idea of insight and embodiment is a great topic. I used to run a <inaudible 0:02:30.4> they call the Centre for Culture, Brain and Development, we were looking for ways in which you can look for universal findings across lots of different disciplines and explore how intersubjective life and being aware of it, insight, actually was a gateway toward not only self-understanding and self-awareness of course, but also a gateway for self-regulation and achieving equanimity. So insight is not just an intellectual understanding, it's the capacity to create calmness from inside out really. And then, my colleagues that used to allay in other institutions have found that the more awareness you have of your body's signals, this is the embodiment part, the more self-awareness you had and emotion regulation. But the more empathy you had for other people, and richer and deeper and more flexible your connections were with others, so this is kind of an intriguing thing because a lot of people think that insight is a "selfish act" or reflection is kind of some personal you know preoccupation you have but ironically and neurologically it's not even ironically, it is a way in which we can show the neurological mechanisms whereby the awareness of the inner aura of the body is actually a direct way in which we become more aware of the inner world of another person. So instead of being selfish it's actually one of the most giving things you can do, to take the time to reflect inwardly. So whether it was the Centre for Culture, Brain and Development or the Mindfulness Research Centre, these findings that I was exploring in research centres at UCLA really were the underpinnings for forming our Mindsight institute and this mindsight

term you bring up was basically a word that I made up when I dropped out of medical school, before I came back. I realised that my professors were not seeing the mind of their patients for example, the mind being your subjective inner life, not mind as intellect but using the word mind as the wholeness of our subjective core of experience. So when I went back to school I made up this word for something that differed from physical sight, like what you see with your eyes or hear with your ears, you could actually see the inner life of someone else. So mindsight at first was simply a perceptual ability but then it turned out to be something more because it was a skill you could learn and a skill you could teach to promote something called integration, and we can talk more about that, but overall, what became really clear in the last twenty five years from a science point of view is that the more you have an awareness and capacity to the rest of your subjective experience, the better the health is, the better the health of other people is and the more connected you feel, the more meaning you have in life, so this just gets to the direct concern a lot of people raise of why should I take the time to look inwardly and develop this awareness of myself, isn't that selfish? Well, it's the exact opposite actually, in its deepest way of course people can be selfish with anything but in its mechanism self-awareness is at the heart of empathy for others and compassion for others as well.

[0:05:56.7] Fleet: That's encouraging, to say the least. And I apologise, I failed to mention in highlighting your bio the Mindsight Institute, so I would really encourage the audience to check out the Mindsight Institute and the rich array of offerings that you have there that really bring the insights of modern science and the intersection with our traditional contemplative wisdom out in really practical and useful ways. So maybe you could talk a little, I know... Maybe talk a little bit more about this term mindsight, and I also know that you've taken a very interdisciplinary approach to further developing the work of the Mindsight Institute and this idea of interpersonal neural biology and it's as much interpersonal as it is interdisciplinary.

[0:06:46.2] Dan: Yeah, exactly. Well, I mean what happened to me was when I went back to medical school I realised that you know the medical field wasn't seeing the inner life of their patients, so I would be very careful in trying to observe how sensing the inner life of a patient with a medical illness actually had an impact on what I could do as a medical student and I noticed that my medical teachers who had the ability had patients who seemed to do better and teachers who didn't had patients who seemed to struggle. And when I went into paediatrics I noticed that families that had mindsight did better and you could teach mindsight to people. So when I went into psychiatry it became a skill you could actually learn and so mind sight, when I left the university setting and we formed our own school for the institute, the Mindsight Institute it became like the ground of our work. And it was later actually that I learned about this field called mindfulness, I had been so deeply into my different explorations of science and there wasn't much science of meditation at the time or in yoga or tai chi or anything like that, so this was in the late eighties, early nineties and when I wrote a book called the Developing Mind it was really about how being aware of this inner life is what a parent brings to a parenting experience that can be shown to be what promotes resilience and wellbeing equanimity in a child. This was the late nineties and that was the decade of the burning that I really spent a lot of time and energy trying to clarify with colleagues you know what's the connection between the mind and brain, for example, because a lot of people in academics were saying, not just then in the nineties but in the last hundred and twenty five years, people were saying the mind is just brain activity, that Hippocrates, I review this in the Mind Book, Hippocrates said this twenty five hundred years ago. So what I do in the new Mind Book and what we've been trying at the Mindsight Institute is saying you know something, that may not be the whole story, and let's not just assume because people have been saying this for well literally thousands of years, that it's necessarily true, and I got a lot of pushback which is why I left the university setting, because it wasn't a very supportive environment, and what I did was say well, what if we found the

common findings across all disciplines of science, let's say we took anthropology that studies culture, sociology that studies groups, linguistics that study how we connect to each other with language, psychology which studies emotions and memory and thought, stuff like that, biology which studies life forms, chemistry which studies molecular mechanisms and enzymes and stuff, that's what I was trained in, biochemistry, physics which studies the universal principles of reality, and mathematics which kind of maps those out in equations, what if we took everything from math and anthropology and made it one framework? So this was in the nineties, it was early 1992, I was kind of working on this sort of project. When I left the academic world I just couldn't get this project out of my skin, so the first book I wrote, *The Developing Mind*, was a proposal that we could have one framework that I would later learn, would use a process called Consilience that E.O. Wilson was writing right around the same time, which means the idea of finding universal principles across independent disciplines and then combining those universal findings into one framework. So interpersonal neurobiology was born back then, and we might call these we publish now, I'm the editor of the series, over fifty textbooks in this field, which take tens of thousands of scientific articles, synthesise them together and for me during that journey was amazing because I was always trying to articulate why embodiment, which you're talking about in your process here, was so important that the mind was certainly more than what happens in your head, it was not just in the skull, it was fully embodied, and then you could use the mind which was not just something that happened in your brain but happens throughout your whole body, it even happens in relationships, to use this mindsight ability, this insight and empathy, to actually create more integration so what was startling from the early nineties when the proposal of what the mind might be considered as, defined as, because it turns out no field has a definition of the mind, not psychology, not psychiatry, not even the field of philosophy and mind doesn't define the mind, in fact they say you shouldn't, so when I tried to explore the Mind Book and all sort of developing mind textbooks is what if we define the mind in the following way? Where would it get us? This is from 1992, the definition, but I'll give you what the statement since then, I guess that's almost a quarter of a century ago, that the mind can be seen as this embodied relational process. So when you talk about embodiment, for us we go yes, because you know the whole body is involved in energy and information flow and energy and information flow also happens between us, so the system is energy and information flow. It's embodied, not just enskulled, and it's relational, not just in the body. So it's one system and it looks like it's two places right? But it's not two places, its one system and skull and skin don't limit it. So that's the first statement and you say well what kind of process is this? Well, we see it as an emerging property that is called self-organisation and self-organisation is this amazing mathematical property of complex systems which are open, so it influences from outside of themselves our environmental lives, it's capable of being chaotic, it can be randomly distributed and it is non-linear which means a small input leads to a large and unpredictable or difficult to predict really outcome. So self-organisation turns out, if we define the mind that way, needs the criteria for all of these different fields, so in this group I ran, a long time ago, this is what we accepted as a working starting place of a definition, the self-organising emergent, embodied and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information in your whole body and in your relationships with other people and even the planet. Then you can ask the question, what is optimal self-organisation based on? And amazingly math says it's based on differentiating and linking and in common language we would call that integration, keeping things different and unique and then linking them together. So you may notice for example I'm walking, I have a walking desk, I'm walking around here, and so my right leg steps my left steps my right leg steps, but if I were just not to differentiate them I would go like this, so walking is a good example of an integrated act, you use your left and your right side of your brain and your mind. You and I can be differentiated, Philipe, but then we link together in our communication. So integration it turns out is what optimises self-organisation and when you're not doing that

you need to chaos your rigidity, which explains basically every symptom of every psychiatric syndrome and when you look at it that way, the proposal back in 1992 was; could integration be the basis of good health? So that when you were integrated you avoided long periods of chaos or rigidity and your optimal flow is the feeling of harmony, which has these five qualities that rearranged spell the word FACES. Flexible, Adapted, Coherent - which is a math term for holding well together over time or resilient- , Energised, Stable. So this FACES flow is what integration creates and that's kind of the overview of the field of interpersonal neurobiology and I'm sort of downloading all this to you because when we talk about contemplation we'll see, I didn't even know about this back then, but we'll see that mindful awareness can be thought of as a profoundly integrative process and we can talk about what that means if you want.

[0:15:25.4] Fleet: Yeah, we'll talk about that in just a moment. I'd like to go back to something you said at the beginning, that focusing on integrating greater self-awareness and embodiment and mindsight could seem like a selfish endeavour but it actually relates in our being more relational and more connected and all kinds of positive benefits for ourselves and others in the world. And so when you think about being more aware and being able to better sense what's going on with others, which is part of emotional intelligence and being able to be skilful with others, you might think externally, like I have to hear them and I have to see them and of course there are all kinds of visual cues and auditory queues that will be part of it, but also what I think I hear you saying is there's kind of an intersubjective awareness within ourselves that we're cultivating that allows for a kind of intersubjective awareness and tuning into others which might not be only external or only represented in the external senses, but it's almost, there is that place where we're not limited by the skull and the scanner and there is some way that we're tuning in, and our capacity to do that is directly related to our level of internal awareness and embodiment. Is that correct?

[0:16:43.8] Dan: Beautifully said, absolutely. And you know to build on what you're saying to me, it's so beautiful what you're saying, is if we start with the idea that you're describing a just being aware of what's happening in your body, literally, what do I feel as I breathe in and out, what do I feel when I focus on my heart? What are the signals of my muscles and bones telling me? What is my gut telling me? What is my whole respiratory system telling me? These signals, and we can talk about the brain if you want, but the bottom line is what you're doing is you're using attention which is the focus of energy and information, the directing of it, to bring into awareness, and awareness is different from attention, but we're using attention to stream energy and information flow, into awareness which can simply be defined as a sense of knowing, and as you allow awareness to be filled with intention, now here's the key thing, your intention is I will be aware of my body's signals, so I direct attention, fill awareness, with intention, it's three things, they're all the same, but when I do that I'm becoming more stabilised in my ability to monitor energy and information flow. This is really crucial because when you train your mind to stabilise the capacity to monitor energy and information flow, then that monitoring capacity is half of what regulation is, regulation is monitoring and modifying. So now what I've done is I've stabilised this kind of lens, we call it a mindsight lens, to sense energy information flow in my body we're talking about, so now what I see is more focused, it's more detailed, it has more depth and richness to it, before was all a blur and it was shaky right, like if I were running down here I'd be shaky, so this capacity to stabilise monitoring is a fundamental way of strengthening your mind and starting with the body is just a gateway because when you've stabilised monitoring for the self's bodily experience, the self's relational experience, because the self is equally relational, also becomes stabilised. Literally, you feel somethings weak, I can tell you the mechanisms if you want to know the details, but I can tell you exactly what we now believe is the mechanism where I can give you a non-verbal signal and even neurolinguistics statements, I bring them into myself, I'm going to actually map out in a certain

area of my brain what I sense is your intention, so I'm literally mapping your intention, I'm actually able to share your attention and as I do that I'm literally beginning to resonate with you where my heart will change, my respiration would change, my intestinal response would change, my body's signals will change in resonance with what I'm picking up from you, that will then go up, back, up through an area called labium one, layer one of my spinal cord and up through my tenth cranial nerve, the vagus nerve, it's going to come up into different regions including something very well-known these days the intern insula. That's going to communicate especially in the right side of my brain to the answer cingulate and I will make a map of what's happening inside of me. So if I haven't done your job of embodiment, all these signals will become lost, but if I had done that, the first step of me emphatically understanding you is to be introspectively, introspection is perception of my interior, when I develop this monitoring of introspection, I can then take that first step of projecting up literally into my cortex, oh, I'm feeling lightness and joy right here in my chest, then I move over just slightly into a different area in my cortex, this area behind the forehead actually, and I go, oh, Philippe must be filled with joy, and then if I've worked on it I can actually have what is called a phatic joy, I can join in your joy, I can feel pride in your success. So whatever mechanisms of modern society make us compete with each other and have greed and envy and all this kind of stuff, this interceptive process is not just awareness, it actually strengthens my ability to realise your feelings can be my feelings and your joy can be my joy. And think of what a different world that is in the standard modern life view of "Oh, my God, you have something I don't have, I envy it, I want to take it away from you, I'm jealous of it you know it's making me feel really bad that you're so happy." Which is kind of like how we grow kids up in schools, I'm supposed to get the better grade, I'm going to get into the better school, I'm going to get into the better graveyard, you know, so this is like... it's nuts, it's absolutely nuts. So embodiment is the first phase of monitoring more strength, and then you can modify toward wellbeing, which is to modify toward integration which is I honour that we're different, but then we link together with empathic joy, or if you're suffering, we link together with compassion.

[0:21:56.7] Fleet: Just so many connecting points here and you know I train and work with teachers and councillors and people that do facilitation and leadership and we often talk about we're training ourselves how to track our own field, in a sense. It's introspection, it's self-awareness, it's embodiment, all of those things, and that is sort of developing the receiver if you will through that which we're able to track in the group field, when we're working with groups or one on one pioneer actions or something, and there really is that overall development of the ability to either you're going back and forth or simultaneously tracking both your own field and the group field and it begins to be a synergy in that. Even when we talk about emotional intelligence, there's a simple math of the four quadrants you know, it looks like self-awareness and self-awareness are actually very much connected, as well as the ability to self-regulate, and the ability to be affected in relationships, they're all connecting in the way that you're talking about it, very directly, not just conceptually but in reality.

[0:23:04.8] Dan: Absolutely and just to build on what you're saying, the idea of tracking you see is not a casual thing, so you can be immersed let's say in social interaction, you have one person who's trained in embodiment and introspection and awareness, they've learnt to track, right, they've trained tracking, that person will then have a different set of literally brain processes where they can hold the energy information flow, you say field, to me it's a field literally of energy and information. And when you define what you're saying to me about the field that way, then you realise energy information flows not just in your head, it flows throughout your whole body so embodiment is crucial for the interior mind, but the relational mind amazingly is also energy information flow, right, it's what connects us in our relationships, our patterns of communication are all based on energy and information flow. Why other academics don't talk

about it like this I am baffled, but it's what links relationships literally to what happens in the body, including the brain. So here's the exciting thing about your idea of tracking, once you've tracked the interior, you're able to resonate then and then, with intention, link to the other person and transform your relationship in a number of ways, for example we may have some deep neural processes that make us want to keep from being connected or want to make us feel selfish or maybe we feel threatened, so an awakened mind has learnt to track this embodiment, and transform, it's using insight and embodiment, so that you're going to move yourself toward a more integrated state in the face of brain propensities that may keep you from doing those things, so here's a wild and amazing and now science proven reality, you can intentionally use your attention to fill awareness, with the following simple thing to remember, where attention goes, neural firing flows, and neural connection grows. So you, learning insight embodiment can actually intentionally go in contrast to what your brain would do naturally and grow it, you can strengthen it like a muscle, and as you do that you're actually using your mind to transform your brain. And when I first started saying that years ago people thought that I was like really goofy, because they'd all say you have the causal directionality wrong Dan, I'd say what do you mean? They'd go, everybody knows, this is what they would say in quotes, everybody knows that the brain creates the mind, you've got it wrong. I said well, maybe it's wrong, but actually maybe its part of a bigger story. They'd go what do you mean? I'd say we'll maybe the mind isn't just brain activity, and maybe you can use your mind with its intention and attention and awareness, to actually get the brain to do something it doesn't actually naturally ever could conceive do. They'd go, no that makes no sense. So what's been so remarkable about by accident learning about this whole field of mindfulness is with Richie Davidson's leadership and many other beautiful, wonderful researchers that I'm bringing it all together for our March interpersonal neural biology meeting, it can scale like, what has now been proven to be true, is that yes, without a doubt, you can use your mind with an intention and attention and awareness, these are all mental processes, to change the physical connections, the anatomy and therefore the function of that stuff in your head that everyone's so interested in, the brain, but the mind is not just the mind is not just the head brain, there's a heart brain, there's an intestinal brain, there's all sorts of things and there's a relational mind that we have in addition to inner body mind, so when people say whoa, how can you talk about the brain and relationships all in one sentence? So when people get very upset about that I say look, if you're talking about energy information flow, relationships are sharing energy and information flow, the brain in the whole body, the embodied brain is the body mechanism, so what's the problem? They go no, it's like apples and oranges. I say well, I know its apples and oranges, one feeds energy and information flow and once you realise that you go oh, and the skull doesn't limit it, does it? And the skin doesn't limit it, does it? So then people go I seem to get it, so the reason I wrote this book Mind, was just to focus on this one thing, like what is that word? What does it mean? Why does no-one define it? When I had these interns I said find one person that defines it beyond just saying its brain activity, and then the whole book is filled with these questions like; what is going on here that we have this belief that the phrase brain activity and the word mind are synonyms? What if that statement from twenty five hundred years ago is just not the whole story, what would the whole story be? And you know what you're doing is inviting people to experience that.

[0:28:42.8] Fleet: Yeah, that's absolutely wonderful I mean from these, mindfulness primarily, it comes from many directions but one of the sources have been Eastern contemplative traditions and of course it's a simplification but in many ways the Eastern traditions say be more aligned with the idea that the brain and the body are an epiphenomenon of the mind, and that the mind even precedes death, <inaudible 0:29:06.8> organism where Western science has been completely on the other side and <inaudible 0:29:09.8> these fields of, you know in the nineties as this brain science was evolving, and I know some of these researchers were meditators,

<inaudible 0:29:17.6> had the opportunity to ask them well, where do you stand on this? You know it was pretty dangerous for people like you speaking in academia ten years ago, maybe you can slow the day?

[0:29:27.7] Dan: Well it's true, it's true, I just spoke at a conference this weekend, so funny, and there was a pretty renowned neuroscientist there, he spoke after me you know, so I didn't... he was literally immediately after me and I gave this talk about you know the mind's not just the brain and all that stuff and all of the different amazing research findings that show that integration, if you look at the international human connectome project, integrated brains are the most robust <inaudible 0:29:56.4> of wellbeing, and mindfulness is one proven way to integrate your brain. Anyway so I give the talk and I just say you know all that stuff, so then he gets to talk about the brain and he goes, well, I'm going to be very careful now to use the word mind in my talk, given what Dan just said, and when he finished his talk he comes by me and he leans over and he goes "I believe in everything you said", it was so sweet and what's so exciting about it is I think even if you just start with a simple thing and say you know "I think my mental life of feelings and thoughts and memories are shaped by my brain." You go, is that true? Of course that's true. "I think my feelings, thoughts and memories are shaped by what happens in my body like if I get drunk and I get a hangover that affects my whole body." Well that's true, but you can't distinguish that so easily, body from brain. Then you go, what about your relationships? You know if you get in a big fight with someone you love, someone you love doesn't treat you well or they die or some painful thing happens, does that affect your thoughts and feelings and memories? Of course it does, so you know we have this thing to say that relationships are not icing on the cake of something that just influences the mind, like social neuroscience which is different from interpersonal neurobiology, the leaders of that field that I interviewed you know they will say their view of mind is that it's brain activity related to feelings, thoughts and behaviour. These are social neuroscientists, I say well, big aren't you a social neuroscientist, shouldn't you say the mind is relational, they're like not really, the mind is just brain activity and the brain is sensitive to social signals like the brain is sensitive to light and sound. So interpersonal neurobiology actually takes a different view and it's not a branch of neuroscience, it's this interdisciplinary conciliatory approach, so our view in fact is that the mind is not just shaped by relationships, it is created within them. And one of those relationships is the relationship you had with yourself, your inner self, and what's so interesting is we have a meditation called wheel awareness, now when people do it, we did it this weekend and it happened yet again, when people do it, this opportunity when you integrate your consciousness, what it does it integrates and links moments of consciousness, people get this expanded sense of self which makes them realise in a deep way from an experiential point of view, not just what they're being told, that they are a part of something much larger than what their skin encased bodies used to make them feel was their identity. So it's not just that they have a connection to other people, it's they realise other people are a part of who they are. And when you get an opening like that there's this deep sense of joy and love that arises and I think part of what happens, because I've now done the study with ten thousand people using the wheel, so I've recorded the results, I think part of why people feel this expanded sense of joy is because it's closer to the truth than what modern society tells us, you know when you were a boy they said little Philippe this and that, when I was a boy they said oh little Danny this and that. Well, Danny doesn't just live in this skin encased body that I get about a hundred years to live in, Danny is actually related and connected deeply to other people I encounter, to other people I won't encounter, to the world all around me and the world that will exist after this body's gone and the world that existed before this body was here.

[0:33:40.0] Fleet: Many of our audience are mindfulness practitioners or maybe considering taking up a mindfulness practice or a contemplative practice of some kind and whether it be an

up-sitting practice or a kind of body movement practice, and I'm sure many of our audience will want to explore this wheel awareness practice and they can go to the Mindsight Institute and find out all about it. But if you are going to practice basic mindfulness practice, there are some ways that you can sort of approach that, that might enhance integration, like with mindfulness practice and even with <inaudible 0:34:13.5> there are some different nuance approaches, for one, when we talk about tracking people might think of observing or witnessing, which could be one way to track, but there's a more internal kind of sensing and one's a little more dualistic and one's a little more non-dual, <inaudible 0:34:31.1> if you take more of a direct sensing, direct feeling approach which is more embodied that that might more quickly lead to integration on this side? No, I'm asking a question, so how do we approach a practice? What enhanced integration and what exactly do you mean by integration in the brain?

[0:34:47.6] Dan: Right, ok wow, there's a lot of wonderful questions. So the first thing to say about mindful awareness is that from an academic point of view there are different perspectives on what that phrase actually means, people often quote John <inaudible 0:35:09.5> as the kind of awareness that's created with paying attention on purpose non-judgmentally to moment to moment experience and that's a beautiful definition. Other people like Shauna Shapiro called it hind-tention and Trudi Goodman Cornfield and Jeff Cornfield call it loving awareness. So for those latter people, they imbue mindfulness with a kind regard and a love that's connected to it. I'm new to mindfulness so I'm really an outsider, I'm not trained in any kind of spiritual or contemplative traditions, I'm just kind of new I use the word by accident, but my mom always likes to use an acronym that I use in my book A Mindful Brain, which is about a newbie, just getting into it which when I was as an outsider I said well, it seems like I'm an acronym addict for sure, but she always says you know because she learned mindfulness very recently and she says that that acronym helps her it's COAL; you come with curiosity, openness, acceptance and love, c-o-a-l. Now what do you do? It's exactly what you said, my experience doing mindfulness practice for the first time on a week-long retreat, exactly what you said, you don't... and this isn't the end of the story, it's just the beginning of the story, to distinguish sensation from observing, so there are meditation teachers who will use them interchangeably and I think that's a big mistake because Norman Forbe and <inaudible 0:36:47.2> and other researchers at Toronto have clearly demonstrated in a very important way that one of the things that you learn when you train in mindfulness is to make a distinction between a more lateralised set of sensing circuits, that are activated with mindfulness training, than the more centralised, observing circuits, now what's the difference? When you're observing, it's a gateway to witnessing and narrate it, which of course is another acronym, O-W-N and I'm sorry for all the acronyms, but this helps me remember these midline circuits which are part of <inaudible 0:37:24.2> that the default mode are where we get this inner chatter, so observing is where if I want to observe right now it would be ok, let's see Dan is talking to Philippe right now in a setting where other people will be listening, and there he is talking and looking at Philipes wonderful eyes and handsome face and there he is doing a... so I'm observing all of that, there's nothing wrong with it, in the end, mindfulness requires that that be developed, for sure, and in fact as you'll see the default mode becomes more integrated with mindfulness training, however, the beginning of mindfulness training requires, not just oh maybe you should do this, no it requires that you distinguish that chattering, observing, witnessing, narrating centralised circuit from the lateralised thing where let's say we're going to do the breath, I'm just sensing my breath, or I'm sensing that in my eyes you've moved away or I'm sensing you're sitting down or I'm sensing the feeling in my feet if I'm doing walking meditation, so I can go with the flow of sensation. One mistake people make, however, and I'm saying this very cautiously, is that they equate mindfulness with Mike <inaudible 0:38:49.4> view of flow, where you do lose self-observation and you do get lost in the flow of sensation like if I'm playing and you know I have Mike

<inaudible 0:39:03.6> Send Me High on a stage at our interpersonal <inaudible 0:39:06.8> conference a couple of years ago, with Sharon Salzburg and I said Oh my god, what an opportunity this is, let's settle this once and for all, you're the expert in the study of flow, yes thank you thank you, and you're one of the experts in the study of mindfulness, yes thank you thank you, ok, let's go through it, is mindfulness flow? And it was very clear mindfulness can include flow, but it is absolutely not synonymous with flow and what mindfulness teachers tell us that there is the capacity to choose to be in flow if you are going swimming or making love or you know going for a beautiful sunset cruise or just want to absorb the sunset. Mindfulness can choose that as a subset of what's possible, but mindfulness also always has, immediately available to it, an observing capacity, so mindfulness requires that you also develop the differentiated midline circuit of observation and it amazingly is also connected to morality. So in mindfulness you act in kind, compassionate, empathic and moral ways, because you are developing an observing, witnessing, inheriting component that says I have a five year old kid, I shouldn't be hitting him, that's a bad thing to do, or even when you're alone you say I'm going to recycle, it will take me a few minutes longer to walk to the recycling bin, but I'm a part of this planet, I don't care if no-one's watching me, this is about the planet. So it's not only that you're trying to impress people, it's that you have a narrating part of your midline default mode circuit. So all that being said, both are important, it's important to distinguish them in many ways because when you distinguish them then you can say ah, there's a sensation of anger at this boy who took my block, I can see the sensation from a little bit of a distance. That distance gives me the space between impulse and action and even when I was writing the mind book, I put in the quote from Victor Frankle, you know, between impulse and action there's a space, within that space is the option to choose. But my copy editor said oh, that's nice, show me where he said that. So I went to look it up right because everybody quotes Victor Frankle, and he didn't say it, so I got in touch with his grandson and made a documentary about him and I said, Alex, you don't know me but I'm writing a book and I'm quoting your grandfather, everybody quotes him. He goes "Yeah, I know." So I ask, did he ever say that, he goes "No." And I said oh my god, so you'll see in the book I wrote this thing, I said I felt so much disappointment because it wasn't just him, one of my favourite sayings in addition to Victor Franke's non-saying, he never said that as far as we know, was Mahatma Ghandi's saying, be the change you want to see in the world. He never said that! So in the book I wrote oh my gosh, all these heroes of ours didn't say these things we say they said, what are we going to do with that? And I realised, some human being put those words together, go humanity! You know, who cares who said it, if the phrases work for us let's use them, so I had to make a little disclosure about that in the book, but I say that because that space between impulse and action that Victor Frankle always was meaning but never said apparently, you know, is exactly a pause that requires a bit of, as you're pointing out, a bit of duality, a bit of distance to say I am not my sensation and there is an I that has a choice beyond the impulse.

[0:42:59.7] Fleet: That's a really interesting questions <inaudible 0:43:03.8> sometimes the term mindfulness itself can seem a little thin I mean it's become the dominant language and it's wonderful, but traditionally we often talk about <inaudible 0:43:13.3> and vipassana, sometimes you can translate the Mata away but sometimes <inaudible 0:43:18.1> being associated more with mindfulness, vipassana more with awareness, but certainly the integration of mindfulness and awareness, the integration of attention and metacognition are key to this whole thing, but my question is when you were having your dialogue about flow, was there any question about whether there could be possibility of, and I'm not even sure what this would mean exactly but this points a little bit at some of the traditional contemplative traditions, that flow itself can be cognisant in some way?

[0:43:48.0] Dan: You know, it could be, but doesn't have to be, that's the key thing, so the example I gave to Mike <inaudible 0:43:55.7> was if I'm an expert marksman, and I'm really pissed off at someone, a neighbour or something like that and I get into the flow of my anger, is there anything about the definition of flow that wouldn't say ok, I have a challenge, this guy is a hundred feet away, I get out my gun and I love my gun, I'm at one with my gun and I'm at one with my anger and I shoot my neighbour. Is there anything in flow that would say I wouldn't do that? And he said no.

[0:44:25.8] Fleet: So flow, the name of this compartmentalisation and a lot of people use the action as well, a sniper is well trained in breath regulation, well trained in attention but has compartmentalised themselves out of that moral capacity, a witness capacity and then that's a deal with all the damage that results later from that, but you're saying you can possibly train yourself so that flow and self-cognition and metacognition became more integrated or unified in a way perhaps?

[0:44:57.7] Dan: Yeah I mean I think Amishi Jah's work with soldiers who have gone to Afghanistan was really telling, because people were concerned about her teaching soldiers but you know it's been reducing post-traumatic stress disorder but even more, one soldier came back and reported to her that because he did the mindfulness training, when his, he was the head of a group of soldiers who approached a village and the village was coming at them with stones and sticks, he told his men to get down and not to shoot the villagers. The villagers stopped and he said that it worked out fine, the soldiers went through, the villagers didn't do any more, no-one got hurt. He said to Amishi Jah, J.A. James, that had he not been trained by her in mindfulness, his own initial reaction to protect his soldiers, protect his men under his responsibility, would have had him shooting first and all of his soldiers would have shot all those people, those citizens down. So you know, it's a good example of how you know war is terrible and in the experience of war stuff happens and this was a good example of where mindfulness helped avoid unnecessary violence and death, so it's a really powerful example. I think the issue here is that mindfulness is integrated into that I think of it as evolving for different strands of awareness, here's hopefully my last acronym, but SOCK, if sensation's the observation of conceptualisation of knowing, S-O-C-K, this kind of knowing is more deep, wise, knowing that has ethics imbued in it. So you can have wisdom that's a part of mindfulness and ethical behaviour, you can have concepts like understanding for example that to be kind to others is healthy for everybody, that's a concept, you can even know that practicing your mindfulness meditation every day will integrate your brain in a way that I can describe in a moment, that's a concept, that's good. It's not really observing because you're not really observing but you have the concept of it, that's the c, we have an observing thing that says ok Dan, you're super busy, you've missed meditating two days in a row because of the demands at work, you need to take some time to meditate at night even though that's not what you usually do because you're really falling off the wagon when it comes to regular daily practice, so that's observant, right, and I can sense that I need to meditate or it can sense that I'm anxious and I need to go exercise or go for a swim, or go out with my dog to hike in the woods you know I need nature, those are sensations I have, so for me the SOCK is around the soul of mindfulness, you know, it's literally, it gives us permission to realise these are different streams, some are more like a conduit, like a hose that streams the sensations, observation is sort of both conduit and constructor, but the C and the K are definitely constructive elements of the mind. So the mind is both a constructor with empathy and wisdom and you know ethics, being built, constructive processes, they're important, they're part of mindfulness. Concept is a constructive idea of facts and knowledge. Observation is kind of a little bit construction, because there's a self there which is constructive, but a little bit of conduit where you're just letting something flow. But sensations are pure conduction, its pure being a conduit. So for me, realising that the mind is

both constructor and conduit, allows you to see that mindfulness is profoundly integrated from a mind point of view, because you are distinguishing conduit from constructor along these four levels, sensation, observation, concept and knowing and then what you're doing with that is you're integrating them. You're differentiating them and then you're integrating them together, and this is where it's important to realise integration is not blending, integration is not like a smoothie where you grind it up and make a homogeneous, integration is more like a fruit salad you know, you want to maintain the differences and this is where we get the phrase the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Mindfulness is a beautiful example of using the mind to integrate the mind's different components to differentiate them, sensation, observation, concept and knowing, and then to link them and there's lots of ways of doing it, the breath practice does that you know open awareness you're talking about the vipassana can help do that, yoga can help do that, tai chi, chi kung, centring prayer, you know the wheel of awareness, you know <inaudible 0:50:10.0> had dubbed that a mindfulness practice, it started as an integration of consciousness practice, and in fact I think in many ways integration of consciousness is exactly what all of these practices do in their various, wonderful ways. And the point is this, when you do a regular intentional practice, you're having where attention goes, neural fire and flows and neural connection grows. You're making a state that's created on purpose with a practice thirty minutes a day into a trait of your life because you've changed the synaptic connections, from the natural way we are in life, the busyness and external focus to this internal focus of integration and here's what the research shows, just to summarise it. When you do a regular mindfulness practice, your immune system improves, your cardiovascular profile, meaning your heart is functioning and your cholesterol level improves, you are increasing an enzyme <inaudible 0:51:16.5> to maintain and increase the ends of your chromosomes, you are optimising the area of your Geno to reduce autoimmune or inflammatory diseases, you are increasing the way your brain actually becomes able to approach and withdraw from challenges, it's called the <inaudible 0:51:39.6> Richard Davidson has shown that, and here is a quick summary, mindfulness practice takes the differentiating areas of the brain and links them, what is the meaning of link differentiating areas? It means you're integrating the brain, what am I talking about? The hippocampus, huge integrative region of the brain grows in mindfulness practice, the corpus coliseum that makes left and right differentiators to each other grows in mindfulness practice. The prefrontal cortex right behind your forehead that links <inaudible 0:52:19.7> the cortex, the limbic area, the brain stem, the body proper with the social world, so five sources of energy and information flow are differentiated and then linked through the prefrontal region and needing, human connectum project which shows even more subtle differentiators in how they're linked, connectum, connect with, these projects have now shown mindfulness increases the interconnectivity of the connectum. What does that mean in English? How differentiated areas of the brain are linked. What does that mean? They're more integrated, so in all those ways if you did a really quick brain summary when you're riding the elevator from floor two to floor three and someone says, oh, you're doing mindfulness, what does mindfulness do to the brain? It integrates the brain, and then you go who cares about that? Here's why you would care about that, the human connectum, the international human connectum project has shown a more interconnected connectum or integrated brain is the number one feature associated with wellbeing, purely, every factor of wellbeing they can measure, the interconnectum predicted that, number two, when my interns were writing developing mind, fifteen of them, I said to them find one example of regulation that does not depend on integration of the brain and they couldn't, whether you're regulating emotion, affect or mood, regulating thought, regulating attention, regulating behaviour, regulating morality, regulating relationships, all those are called self-regulation or executive functions, every single one of them depend on integration within the brain. So here's the amazing thing, mindfulness uses your mind to integrate energy and

information which gets your brain to be more integrated, which makes your experience of life more regulated.

[0:54:35.0] Fleet: Well, you know the amazing thing is that with the emergence of this mindfulness movement, it almost seems like a kind of runaway movement sometimes at this point, which is a wonderful thing but sometimes the danger people think it's some kind of panacea and obviously it's not a pill you pop, you have to do it. If it was a pill sufficing to say we'd be investing billions of dollars in it.

[0:55:04.5] Dan: Oh my god, you'd want to invest in it, you'd want to take it, you'd pay a lot of money for it, it wouldn't have a lot of side effects and you'd say oh my god I'd go for it, if it doesn't have a lot of side effects to it, it doesn't mean you have to do it, you know and it will make you happier, the big side effect is that it may make you fall in love with your self-experience and the world around you, with other people, with the planet, and oh my gosh what would we do if we had more love in the world, more kindness and compassion in the world.

[0:55:35.2] Fleet: Yeah, this has really been wonderful and I just want to throw a couple of things out there, maybe for people <inaudible 0:55:40.6> to think about who come from a more traditional orientation, a couple of things we already talked about like SOCK, the four conduits of consciousness, <inaudible 0:55:56.0> it sounds like the last four, so it's very much like you're awakening, <inaudible 0:56:01.7> like you're awakening these conduits of consciousness.

[0:56:04.3] Dan: Interesting.

[0:56:06.1] Fleet: When you're talking about Mindsight, you're talking about it similar to purifying the <inaudible 0:56:12.1> in a sense. Which is one way that perception is talked about in traditional terms, which allows us to see the interconnectedness of things, to see holistically and to perceive intersubjectively and so forth, so it just seems to be so much interconnectedness between what's been said for traditions, not only tradition but by kind of the yogic scientists, <inaudible 0:56:35.8>

[0:56:35.8] Dan: What's interesting is I've had zero training in any of that stuff, so I'm fascinated with the consilience of it, and it's thrilling I was once teaching in the northern Alaskan islands and I was showing this slide of the integrative outcome of prefrontal development that can happen with secure attachment and a woman who was the head of the Inuit tribes in the Northern Alaskan Islands came to me during the break and she said "Doctor Siebel, do you know what that list is?" I said yeah well it's a list of the prefrontal function blah blah blah. She goes "No no no, I know that you said that, but do you know what that list IS?" You know it's everything from like tuning into your body, the body that you're talking about, insight into yourself where you're talking about regulating your emotions, connecting to others, having insight into your past, present and future, being able to do all these things and you even have intuition, all those things. I said what's that list? She goes "This is what my people, in the tribe, for the last five thousand years have been teaching as the way of a wise and kind life, through the oral tradition." And soon after that I was teaching in the Midwest and someone from the Lakota tradition said the exact same thing. Then I was teaching in Tahiti, in the Polynesian tradition, then I got exposed to mindfulness and Buddhist practice and I was hearing it was a part of Buddhist views and then there was this whole experience of the Hindu tradition and then the Islamic tradition and the Christian tradition, the Jewish tradition. So I haven't had training in any of those things, so it was so thrilling to learn about them first of all, I love learning new things, but then to see wow, maybe this integration, even though they don't talk about integration <inaudible 0:58:24.4> but the outcome of integration is taught in all these traditions, so it's a really thrilling moment and I feel so grateful to you to have invited me to join

you on this exploration. I'll just say one more thing, that you know through all those different traditions, there has been a profound kind of shift, I think, in where we've come, as a human family, because I get to teach in all different places around the world, and I think people are beginning to express a lot of hope for a new way of living, and a new way of experiencing who we are as a humanity, and I think part of this is fuelled by incredible financial inequity that's getting worse and worse, part of it's fuelled by what we are doing, what Diane Ackerman calls in you know <inaudible 0:59:21.9> but she <inaudible 0:59:25.8> the human age. We're realising we humans are shaping the whole atmosphere of this planet in a not so good way, I think there's a longing and a hopefulness that we can change and I think the way that we could do that is not by scaring each other, by not just informing each other, by inviting people to transform and the transformation is really, I think, deeply a kind of identity where we realise that the skull that we have and the skin that we have are actually not the defining features of the self. That the self is actually not lodged in your body. People go "what do you mean?" Like I was in Hawaii a little while ago, and I was actually out there meeting <inaudible 1:00:16.4> you know and he said "What are you up to?" and I said well, I guess maybe the self isn't in your body, and his eyes get really wide, you know he's post stroke and everything, but he's really communicative non-verbally, and I said yeah, maybe we've made a mistake sticking the self in the body, that maybe the self is the system and these bodies we live in are just nodes of the system, I mean energy and information flow to be conduited and constructed and transformed, but the self in fact is the system and the node you get to live in for about a hundred years is just a part of the system, part of the self, and so if we could actually take this invitation I think that's coming from all walks of life from this planet, our human family that can think about these things and realise that other people are actually manifestations of you, and the planet is a manifestation, I don't mean this in some poetic sense, I mean literally, we can change those concepts and have this deep sense of knowing. In this book called Brainstorming <inaudible 1:01:25.7> for Adolescents, who are really on the cusp of literally inheriting a future that is dire, and so there's a lot of desperation in that age and people even who are older, so I say to them in that book I said, the task isn't to save the world, even though we know people find purpose in connecting with others and making things better, but if you say you have to save the world, you're going to feel helpless and overwhelmed. So think about it as serving others, and think about it this way, the self, yes, has a bodily component, you won't be aware of your body <inaudible 1:02:03.4> fantastic. Sleep well, exercise well, eat well, you know exercise your body and enjoy your body, all these things about a me, what we also have equally important of the self is a we, so if we integrated our humanity we would take the me and the we and combine them into one, and that would be moue. MOUE. So you know, lately what I'm just urging people to consider is a transformation in our collective personal identities instead of me, and not just letting go of that, can only say let's all be a we, no, let's try on a moue where you say I have a body to take care of and I have a relational self to take care of, and that together we can make this a kinder, more compassionate world. That's the message I think that comes amazingly from starting with inner reflection and you realise the inner is a part of a much more expansive self, it's not limited by skull or skin.

[1:03:04.3] Fleet: Well I think that's a great message to leave our audience with today, so thank you so much Dan, this has been really exciting, I can keep talking to you for hours on end and go in a million different directions, but hopefully our audience has been able to follow us today and I think the thread from self-awareness into what you were just talking about and the fact that there are things that we can do to move ourselves forward on maybe becoming a more awakened node in this whole system's view of life is fascinating and encouraging and very hopeful.

[1:03:36.2] Dan: Thank you and I can talk for hours with you too and thanks for inviting me, I feel very very honoured, thank you.