

# Mindsight and Interpersonal Neurobiology

**What's Mindsight?** "Mindsight" is a term coined by [Dr. Dan Siegel](#) to describe our human capacity to perceive the mind of the self and others. It is a powerful lens through which we can understand our inner lives with more clarity, integrate the brain, and enhance our relationships with others. Mindsight is a kind of focused attention that allows us to see the internal workings of our own minds. It helps us get ourselves off of the autopilot of ingrained behaviors and habitual responses. It lets us “name and tame” the emotions we are experiencing, rather than being overwhelmed by them.

**"I am sad" vs. "I feel sad"** Mindsight is the difference between saying “I am sad” and “I feel sad.” Similar as those two statements may seem, they are profoundly different. “I am sad” is a kind of limited self-definition. “I feel sad” suggests the ability to recognize and acknowledge a feeling, without being consumed by it. The focusing skills that are part of mindsight make it possible to see what is inside, to accept it, and in the accepting to let it go, and finally, to transform it.

**Mindsight: A Skill that Can Change Your Brain** Mindsight is a learnable skill. It is the basic skill that underlies what we mean when we speak of having emotional and social intelligence. When we develop the skill of mindsight, we actually change the physical structure of the brain. This revelation is based on one of the most exciting scientific discoveries of the last twenty years: How we focus our attention shapes the structure of the brain. Neuroscience has also definitively shown that we can grow these new connections throughout our lives, not just in childhood.

**What's Interpersonal Neurobiology?** [Interpersonal neurobiology](#), a term coined by Dr. Siegel in *The Developing Mind*, 1999, is an interdisciplinary field which seeks to understand the mind and mental health. This field is based on science but is not constrained by science. What this means is that we attempt to construct a picture of the “whole elephant” of human reality. We build on the research of different disciplines to reveal the details of individual components, while also assembling these pieces to create a coherent view of the whole.

**The Mindsight Approach Exists Within the Field of Interpersonal Neurobiology** Under the umbrella of [interpersonal neurobiology](#), Dr. Siegel’s mindsight approach applies the emerging principles of [interpersonal neurobiology](#) to promote compassion, kindness, resilience, and well-being in our personal lives, our relationships, and our communities. At the heart of both [interpersonal neurobiology](#) and the mindsight approach is the concept of “integration” which entails the linkage of different aspects of a system—whether they exist within a single person or a collection of individuals. Integration is seen as the essential mechanism of health as it promotes a flexible and adaptive way of being that is filled with vitality and creativity. The ultimate outcome of integration is harmony. The absence of integration leads to chaos and rigidity—a finding that enables us to re-envision our understanding of mental disorders and how we can work together in the fields of mental health, education, and other disciplines, to create a healthier, more integrated world.

**The Mindsight Institute** Through the [Mindsight Institute](#), Dr. Siegel offers a scientifically-based way of understanding human development. The [Mindsight Institute](#) serves as the organization from which [interpersonal neurobiology](#) first developed and it continues to be a key source for learning in this area. The [Mindsight Institute](#) links science, clinical practice, education, the arts, and contemplation, serving as an educational hub from which these various domains of knowing and practice can enrich their individual efforts.

**Want to Know More?** For further reading, see [Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation](#) and Dr. Siegel’s [other books](#), including *The Mindful Brain* and *The Mindful Therapist*. And please visit our website for [upcoming events](#) and [classes](#), including our [Mindsight Online Courses](#)