**Week 10 Practical Book Review**

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June 9th 2022, Spring 2022

**Summary**

In 1986 the rock band Toto released a song called “ I’ll be over you”, whose lyrics could be applied to Daniel Siegel’s “The Developing Mind” book and its content. Indeed if this book is capable to connect and integrate neuroscience, psychology, mathematics, spirituality and a global hopeful and positive social project until its very last pages, it is just like the lyrics, “heart breaking, anticipating” and “as soon as forever is through, I’ll be over you”, or over it in this case. The truth being it is impossible to overcome its reading as the content strikes you forever as a practitioner. From stating scientific facts such as the millions of connected neurons that could create an infinite amount of combined clusters of firing patterns during the repetitive 40Hz oscillation happening on the background, to how the anatomical structure is key in processing information (energy in formation) and emotions (energy in motion) through two distinct hemispheres and other areas (the left side a top down linear logical processing, the right a bottom up collecting a wider input to feel the context), the definition of the “brain’s hardware” (including all the connection that start and go to the brain, aka the entire body through the nervous system and neuronal connections) opens to the theories, methods and complex mechanisms on how this predicting / problem solving machine achieves optimal self-regulation through a complex and asymmetrical neural integration. A particular emphasis is given on how the brain is not only embodied and information embedded; the brain’s development is connected to the interactions with multiple social environment, defining and conditioning its growth and probabilities to create, use and maintain neural pathways. In that sense the clear focus on early experiences and attachment theory enriches the perspective that psychological outcomes are related to physical conditioning too: stress levels and saturation of cortisol levels in case of deep traumas have not only a negative attentional impact but are the source - through inflammatory process - of structural damages; on the opposite dopamine levels and endorphins released through attunement boost and repair integrative processes. Integration is needed for metacognition and mentalization, two processes that allow us to relate to others and to the world, with *in* *fine* the maintenance of a multitude of evolving “selfs”. By recollecting our implicit and explicit memories, a sense of conscience is created with possible resilience and empathetic behavior, allowing for a cultural treatment of all information and a deeper appreciation of narratives, with the result of constructing and reviewing who we are, what we do, how and why we respond, where we might belong to and when we are out of our natural balance and integrative depth (window). Dan Siegel offers us an unprecedented vision of development, where multiple factors influence our biological and psychological growth, where emotions, cognition and behaviors are permanently influencing and mirroring each other’s awareness and relationships with oneself and each other. Very far from delivering a sentencing ascertainment, this book takes us on a never-ending journey of changes, repairs and hopes for a better belonging with others and respect with oneself. In a era where GPS are giving you exact directions and end goals, this book is a magnificent compass to reassess the past visits and to feel at ease with the ever possibly changing directions of the future. A real invite to get lost, isn’t it ?

**Response**

From the very beginning of this reading until the very last page, I have found a multitude of situations and personal episodes that connect with the abundance of key concepts demonstrated. The entire umbrella of the purpose of this books relates to every of my adventures so far; in other words, my life having been far from linear and oppositely multidimensional, multidisciplinary, multicultural and multidirectional, there are great matches to most of the content. For instance the attunement that my parents did and did not provide at different stages of my life gave different outcomes: early childhood allowed - through a secure attachment - for the best possible neural set up , while as of middle childhood traumatic experiences and the lack of attunement influenced certain neural paths and automated response and information processing. It lead me to withdrawal attitudes and a left / right brain attentional (mis-?) balance in the processing of information and attempt to create a new coherent narrative. In my adolescence and late adolescence I had finally constructed that coherence, but my parents leaving back to Chile and me being left alone again – abandoned in our psychological terms – that coherence exploded, only to be recovered years later. However this is highly interesting as the combination of both episodes provided a unique opportunity and the repair process through mature attachment and adult relationships turned that left vs. right brain processing into a unique strength: I successfully studied, graduated and worked in fields of economics and arts, sports and now psychology, and this because of having the ability to be strong on the top down and bottom up perception of the world, others and myself.

As well the change from one country to another with its acculturation worked on my identity and therefore cultural processing of information. I like to repeat that every morning after breakfast, when leaving home I was leaving Chile to enter into Switzerland, and by the evening I was leaving Switzerland to come back to Chile, permanently having that dual cultural identity to foster with the differences of each culture and emotional management, impacting my window of tolerance. It even became a continuous process as my wife is from Poland and we lived in Poland, in the USA and in Switzerland. The same applies to the language and how my expression levels and narrative self created my personality and self- conscience; I do speak and understand 6 different languages which again in terms of integration and brain usage has to be efficient. I see how during my teen days I didn’t have a rebellion as the absence of my parents and early independence didn’t put me into having to cut from their perspective (as well the double cultural existence influenced this process) while my activity in elite sports kept me away from the destiny of most of my peers that for some didn’t make it through without permanent damages of addictions. The content of the book gave me a warm feeling because it speaks to something that I strongly cherish which is the larger picture of life and existence, with its complexity and diversity, its interlaced influences and factors that all have something to do in a final permanently moving result. The end of the book where all theoretic bits merge altogether into how to be a related human to oneself and to the others is a great confirmation that my mind of “field researcher” is validated by an eminent professor. I always thought of life with a humanistic attitude from the Renaissance and to see Siegel’s wheel is a nice historical wink. In my case, having known these elements earlier in life would probably have blocked me, as the experience of the situations is what allows to evolve and integrate, and the unique understanding, when I was younger, was wrongly believed to be sufficient as if I knew about it and had integrated those very same elements, which was only the top down reassuring approach and not a well distributed asymmetrical process. However now as a father, as a husband, as a son, a brother, a cousin, a coach, a member of a community and of course a consultant, this information is a gift, as I have the now the experience to integrate and share it in a meaningful way – a real practical case of functioning and integration process. For instance it is what I have done with the plane of probability and other developmental growth patterns, emotional processes and key developmental turning points as I included them in a practical, simplified, understandable and meaningful way to the presentation of the athletic program I lead, for all stakeholders to understand that it is a journey where we all have a role. And when I became a father, I told myself that there was no way I would pass the darkest sides of my own experience onto my son and had to keep my excellence levels of healthy functioning high. It lead me to work on myself even more than usual, to ask for help when needed in order to optimize the process and since I started this program at UWS more than 2 years ago, every time I look at my son, the multiple roles of who I am, dad, consultant or coach see the different performances and theories lively, and Daniel Siegel allowed me to finally find the words to most of the feelings that coexist in me since ever, and to understand in a better way that young life and what occurs to that incredible amount of pure energy every day.**Reflection**

As already sketched in the previous part, for me the most meaningful insight has been to see a match between my life experience that shaped a perspective that always focused on the integration of all the elements of the “bigger picture” and to read a sort of scientific validation of it. As you have seen it is always hard for me to be concise and every word has its meaning, just as much as it is initially hard to read all of Siegel’s because it is dense though needed. Of course there are elements like the attachment theories from a neurological perspective or how the emotional balance (inverted U) influences attention and memory (and indirectly conscience and behaviors) that are directly applicable elements when it comes to education and coaching. The cultural perspective and its influence matters to me a lot, as all issues related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are related to how a brain is being shaped through the repetition, the narrative and the influence of an ecosystem. Within USA hockey I have been actively working on such matters and for me this course and the practical science and explanations of mechanisms behind are another item of the larger toolkit at hand for creating relevant plans of action. Another important matter for me is the adequacy between a coach and the players he or she is in charge of, even more when working with youth athletes. Understanding the science behind the emotional integration and the attunement that has to be reached is an element that I was working on without the extend knowledge until now, but definitely is one of the elements that for me matters the most, as most coaches don’t realize the negative or positive long lasting impact they can have over a young athlete and how they can sometimes be the help they need in their lives to reinstate an emotional balance and best sense of self. Finally a last one where I see myself going further is all the cultural influence and how the acculturation process influences the brain of an athlete.

As a conclusion, the change for me lies into the fact that practice and theory are now connected and it makes me a best prepared and knowledgeable director, coach and consultant, and in a society that culturally values the academic achievements and learning, this comes as the most beneficial help in changing minds and opening in a subtle way to the beauty of the larger picture and its natural and redeeming nature.

**Action**

Not working in the clinical field but in the sport and performance psychology, I used the plane of probability with the cones and peaks model correlated to the long term athlete developmental model to explain the successful path for a neural pathway build up and what phases and attitudes to have during all most crucial stages before the “final” myelination process taking place. The use of scientific proven data allows gathering people and unifying a program under a contemporary vision – especially when a revision and update of such is needed. The importance of the emotional recognition and learning is another key point, to realize the importance of how identities and memorization of a process or a skill needs a fine attunement in quality and quantity. I had feedbacks over the content and most stakeholders are delighted to learn something that enriches them and motivates them to some attitudes and coaching style they wouldn’t have thought about or embraced without the solid scientific elements. The assessment is being done periodically as we just started this implementation and already having people coming with their motivation and sense of inclusion to a larger than sports project is the first tangible proof of a plausible success. Other parts related to the practice of mindfulness as help for attentional resources and structural embedding of information in the brain has been prepared, through exercises with the athletes and again for and by a positive and secure attachment-like way to function. Finally, practice plans; drills and communication are being worked through the left vs. right brain theory, depending on the occasion and as an attempt to work on sport psychology through an integrated neuronal aspect; a specific attention is made on how to prepare the practice for younger ones regarding their implicit and explicit memory, making sure the right stuff is erased for the essential to be actively remembered and narrated, constructing a healthy athletic identity.

Back to 1986, a member of the band wrote in that same ballad that everything changes, asking, “What are the reasons why, Nothing stays the same”. After interacting for the last 10 weeks with *The Developing Mind*, the answer comes easily to my mind: solid predictability is an maladaptive illusion and a permanent active evolving internal and external conscious (aware) relationship is our true complex nature that allows to be compassionate, mindful, eudemonistic and have an integrated mind. Is that easy to comprehend and to apply? Just like book: not always, but that is the very reason why nothing stays the same in a developing mind.**References**

Siegel, D. J. (2020). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are (3rd ed.).* Guilford Press.