

Integration

Imagine if you will, a group of volunteers who agree to sing one note without wavering. Then imagine them singing a song in harmony. Finally, imagine what would happen if they covered their ears and all sang different songs.

Which scenario would you like to witness?

The first case illustrates the notion of *rigidity*.

The second represents *integration*.

The third models *chaos*.

Ideally, systems are moving toward *complexity* and *integration*.

FACES is an acronym for encapsulating the quality of integration: F stands for *flexible*, A stands for *adaptive*, C is *coherent*, E is *energized*, and S is *stable*.

Chaos and rigidity are like the banks of a river where integration flows, to use Siegel's metaphor.

Eight domains of Integration

1. Integration of Consciousness.

How one focuses attention is the key to integrating the brain. We build the skills to stabilize attention and harness awareness to create choice and change. Enables us to see things as they are, not how we'd like them to be. Opens us up to the full range of our minds, including perception, information about the external world, bodily states, relationships, and the mind itself.

2. Horizontal Integration.

This has to do with left and right brain, with their separate-but-complementary functioning. If the linkage between the sides is blocked, one side may dominate, and we lose the creativity, richness, and complexity that results from both sides working together.

3. Vertical Integration

This refers to cortical/subcortical integration. In trauma, we see a split between these functions. We learn to live cut off from emotion and our bodies. If we bring sensation back, intuition blossoms. Wisdom can be said to result from this.

4. Memory Integration.

Implicit memory is an unconscious process that maps a world for us. Such maps shape our behavior outside of awareness. The pieces of implicit memory are later shaped into *explicit memory*, the factual and autobiographical information of which we're aware. The more we can shine the light of *mindsight* (mindfulness) on these free-floating puzzle pieces from the past and make them explicit, the more we can free ourselves to live fully in the present and have new choices about how we live our lives. Trauma

is a disorder of integration, and mindfulness can allow unintegrated implicit memories to connect in explicit content, resolving the trauma.

5. Narrative Integration

By creating stories that weave our left hemisphere's narrator function with the autobiographical memory storage of the right hemisphere, we make sense of our lives. The best predictor of our children's attachment to us is our ability to narrate the story of our own childhood in a coherent fashion. And conversely, overcoming blockages to such narratives frees ourselves and our children from the cross-generational patterns we want to avoid creating.

6. State Integration

We all have distinct states that embody fundamental drives and needs: closeness and solitude, autonomy and independence, caregiving and mastery, etc. Mindsight (meditation) enables us to embrace these states as healthy dimensions of a layered life instead of as parts of ourselves that we need to reject or suppress to try to achieve inner stability. We learn to embrace distinct states rather than deny their existence.

7. Interpersonal Integration

Mindsight can help us see how past adaptations are restricting current relationships and then allows us to open ourselves to others. We can love and preserve our identity at the same time. Couples caught in rigid patterns of defense or chaotic outbursts of disillusionment can be taught how to detect their own brainstem-driven states of reactivity and move their nervous systems toward the receptive state necessary for true and lasting connection. Knowing how the past shaped the present through synaptic changes early in life, couples can then ease the hostility that often surrounds their dysfunctional relationships. Mindsight can guide their way back to a life of passion and compassion as they promote integration within and between themselves.

8. Temporal Integration

Humans are unique in their understanding of their mortality and impermanence, as well as for those they love. Obsessive-compulsive disorder reveals how our hardwired survival drive seeks control, often to the point of paralysis. Temporal integration helps us to live with more ease and to find comforting connections in the face of uncertainty.

Freedom and Transpiration

We have an inherent drive toward health and integration. Sometimes integration gets blocked, perhaps from impairments to *linkage* as in unresolved trauma. Blockage can also come from impairments to *differentiation*, from childhood neglect or from various learning disabilities and developmental difficulties. Mindsight is the skill that leads back to integration. Michelangelo said that his great task was to liberate the sculpture from the stone. Similarly, our task is to find the impediments to the eight domains of integration and liberate the mind's natural drive to heal – to integrate mind, brain, and relationships in the triangle of well-being.

“Transpiration” means “breathing across,” and indicates a new dimension of interconnection. Mindsight expands one’s identity and helps people see that they’re a part of a much larger whole. This sense of interconnection seems to be at the heart of living a life of meaning and purpose.

Siegel, D. Mindsight. New York, Bantam Books, 2010.