



*February 14, 2018 *In The Know* Summary

REWIRE YOUR BRAIN FOR LOVE

Creating Vibrant Relationships Using the Science of Mindfulness
by Marsha Lucas

About the Book – Background

Laura Mendelow facilitated a discussion about the book *Rewire Your Brain for Love* by Marsha Lucas. The author has a varied background, with expertise in neuroscience, coaching, and meditation. The book takes particular focus on how the brain works with regard to relationships—and provides science-based guidance for “rewiring” the brain to support healthy patterns and strong, supportive relationships. One particularly powerful teaching from the book is, “You can’t change the person, but you can change the pattern.” During the Book Club, we practiced some of the meditations in the book and then discussed what is happening in the brain when we meditate. We also talked about how to “sell” meditation to clients who may be skeptics.

First Things First: Brain Basics

- The brain interacts with your nervous system through chemicals passed between neurons. There are 100 billion neurons in the brain, and each neuron has between 10 and 20,000 connections with other neurons. Hebb’s rule: “Neurons that fire together, wire together.” As neurons connect, you create neuropath ways.
- The **amygdala** is the part of the brain involved in emotional responses, including fear conditioning, expressing trust, and relating to others. Most of your brain’s wiring was determined before age two, and can be characterized as “Secure Attachment,” or “Insecure Attachment,” which could be “Anxious” or “Avoidant”—
 - **Attachment** – Per Dan Siegel, attachment is based on parental sensitivity and responsivity to the child’s signals, which allow for collaborative parent-child communication
 - 55% have **Secure Attachment**. 45% have either **Anxious attachment** or **Avoidant attachment**.
 - Your reaction to life events, i.e., whether you’re safe or not, is linked to your attachment style.
- Regardless of your pattern pre-age-two, you can rewire your brain! You can make new neurons (neurogenesis) or modify your existing neuro pathways (neuroplasticity). If you can rewire your brain such that your upper brain and lower brain are connected and left and right brain are integrated, you create a “scenic bypass.” This integration is the key to calm. In practical terms this means you’ll take notice of what is happening, be more present, make better decisions, and improve your overall health.

Meditation Practice

As a group, we practiced the “Circuit Breaker Meditation” (pg. 74). The instructions for the meditation are accessible at [this link](#). Then we turned to brain science for an explanation of why this meditation works.

#1: You’re integrating higher brain structures with lower brain structures.

Tip for introducing meditation to others

Meditation changes the brain and better equips you to deal with challenges.

- The **insula** is a roadway between the higher and the lower brain structures. It governs a number of emotions, including anger, fear, happiness, and sadness. It also plays a part in the perception of pain and changes in heart rate.
- The brains of people who meditate have a thicker insula, which is believed to help with perceiving information more accurately.

#2: You're indicating to your body that you're safe by warming your hands—or by merely imagining your hands being warmed—and softening your facial muscles. (Loosen that jaw! Yawn!)

- The **sympathetic system** is the brain's gas pedal. This is the part that revs up your body in response to perceived threat. It increases heart rate, breathing, tension, and diverts blood flow to extremities in case fight/flight is needed.
- The **parasympathetic system** is the brake. Helps us to recover from the stress of the revving up and is needed for relaxation, play, creativity, daydreaming, and insight.
- The **smart vagus** is a nerve that calms down the heart and lungs and perceives the sound of voices and facial expressions.

Tip for introducing meditation to others

Meditation changes the brain and better equips you to deal with challenges. Meditation can help with problem solving and innovation.

#3: Release of oxytocin.

- When you feel safe, you release a “cuddle hormone” called oxytocin. Just by *imagining* you are with someone who makes you feel safe, your brain will release this hormone.

So, What Did We Learn?

Meditation is key! The author suggests building up to a mindfulness or meditation practice for 20 minutes a day. Meditation creates stronger awareness of self and others and promotes calmness and kindness. Getting started can feel daunting. Keep in mind:

- It only takes a second to pause and access a higher-level thinking.
- When you're more conscious of your body and more tuned into emotions, this leads to more rational actions and decisions.
- Meditation is like preparing for a big race...Do the conditioning now, and it will kick in when you need it the most.
- Per Dan Siegel, if you can make sense out of your story, you can change it. Said otherwise: having a coherent narrative is linked to emotional wellbeing.

Where Do I Begin?

You may be motivated to try meditation, or to introduce it to a client. One suggestion from the group discussion is to ask clients to be more mindful for **one minute**, whether walking or sitting in a meeting. Start with one minute, and then build your meditation practice from there.

Related Resources

- Laura's related Blog: [Meditation: You Can't Afford Not to Do It.](#)
- [My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey](#) by Jill Bolte Taylor Right
- [Ghost Boy](#) by Martin Pistorious. Click here for a [blog post](#) by Laura Mendelow that mentions the book.
- Reverse Bicycle [video](#).
- [Female Vision: Women's Real Power At Work](#) by Sally Helgesen (A discussion of this book is on the schedule for the May 2018 Book Club).

- [Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us](#) by Daniel Pink

*The Chesapeake Bay Organizational Development Network (CBODN) Book Club is a monthly session, open to all learners. Each month, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, or coaching. There's no obligation to pre-read the book. The session summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here for upcoming events](#). For a listing of [Book Club summaries, click here](#).