

# Mindsight at Work – *IPNB in Action*

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IPNB provides a framework for understanding how our social and relational minds and brains regulate and integrate (or don't), and defines process level guidelines for how relationship with self and with others can facilitate well-being, resilience, and mental health. Many of those who first studied and applied IPNB were healers who wove it into therapeutic endeavors, strengthening their capacity to attune and facilitate growth in the artful science of psychotherapy. Others began bringing this multilevel perspective to parenting programs, and then to education, medicine, agencies, and organizations. Since 2006, when I first presented about the ways that IPNB can create meaningful differences in the health of our workplaces - with wide-ranging implications for people and the planet - I continue to be energized by the broad potential for the framework's integrative, multilevel focus on positive change. Think of the possibilities! Some sampling of examples: IPNB can help describe and influence the process in an organization (considering ways to grow more "middle prefrontal cortex" type functions in a network of relating minds/brains), can facilitate leadership development (training in methods for increasing awareness, regulation, and attunement), and can augment or assist in the creation of programs (the power of teaching people about their brains).

What are the concepts and components of the IPNB lens that are most effective in the workplace? How do they drive and maintain change and development? How can learning IPNB maximize leadership potential? How can IPNB facilitate the triple bottom line, a sustainable, successful workplace, healthy for all employees, with responsible environmental and social impact? How can IPNB principles help improve the quality of programmatic interventions and trainings? These are ongoing questions, awaiting more application and research. As a small beginning step, I offer information gathered from a sample of

ten people who are actively applying IPNB on an organizational level, through management and/or consultation. I obtained this sample by contacting people who either teach at or have taken classes from the IPNB certificate program at Portland State University. Adjunct faculty members in this program have integrated IPNB into all of their professional lives, in their work as clinicians, physicians, educators, and consultants. Many of the adult students report the IPNB classes bring them to a more complex and integrated understanding of mind, brain, and relationship that they immediately begin to apply in their own lives and work settings. (For more about the PSU program see the box at the end of this article). I gathered predominantly qualitative information from the self-selected sample, and with grateful acknowledgement of the participants' generosity, I will share some of their stories. The sole quantitative query I included, asking how often they utilize certain IPNB concepts at work, found regular and consistent application, with participants' reporting daily or weekly use, from teaching people directly about the brain and the mind, to using focus, attention, relationship, and narrative to sculpt neural pathways.

One executive began using IPNB principles in a healthcare corporation setting to improve management and team relationships and effectiveness. Much like many business settings, she leads a team of supervisors and managers who lead others. She reported being most impacted by the experience of giving intentional attention to her mind at work, and building this "mental muscle" with her self-chosen mindful awareness practices. She began changing her own leadership style, noticing that she was becoming more focused and efficient as she attended to the quality of her attention to a given task, and her attunement and positive influence with direct reports increased. She has now implemented national leadership meetings, with participants learning about and

discussing IPNB as well as neuroleadership. Meetings have changed in process and feel as she started leading with an IPNB mindset. She encourages open discussion and consideration, flexible and creative solutions, and clear resolution and follow-up, with the intent of increasing trust.

People who consult with organizations have found IPNB has infused and enlivened their work. Charlene Phipps and her colleagues are bringing education about compassion into a hospital setting and found that learning about IPNB expanded their work and methods for promoting emotional and social intelligence in all their business consultations (see Charlene's article in this edition). Sarah Peyton is a Communications Consultant and Coach, who uses a Non-Violent Communications perspective. As happens for most people who learn IPNB and have an expertise in an effective intervention theory/strategy, her approach has been supported and its efficacy deepened, as she learned and integrated IPNB into all of her training materials. She is now teaching IPNB-influenced NVC in the Oregon prison system, in parenting classes, and in business settings. As I have written about elsewhere, I use IPNB in executive, leadership, and organizational consulting, focusing on increasing integration in numerous ways.

A new opportunity to apply IPNB came recently: I will be contributing my mind/relationship/brain perspective as an invited member of the new Sustainability Leadership Collaborative (SLC), housed in the Hatfield School of Leadership; their exciting models for global initiatives in leadership development and sustainability are quite resonant with IPNB. Another SLC member, Chris Larsen, brought information about IPNB to one of the professors who founded the SLC, as she incorporates IPNB classes and information into her master's degree program in public administration. She already applies IPNB in her management, outreach and program development work at an

essential youth residential care facility, and has taken IPNB ideas into her influential work helping fashion Oregon's trauma treatment guidelines. She uses IPNB to support providing treatments that are culturally attuned and those that focus on developing somatic and relational safety and expression, like Street Yoga or PlayWrite (see below for more about the latter). Emerging as a consistent theme throughout the sample, all of us apply IPNB concepts to self and personal life, work relationships, program development, and organizational leadership.

In rural Oregon, Lisa Ladendorff is a leader in a non-profit health collaborative with the mission of



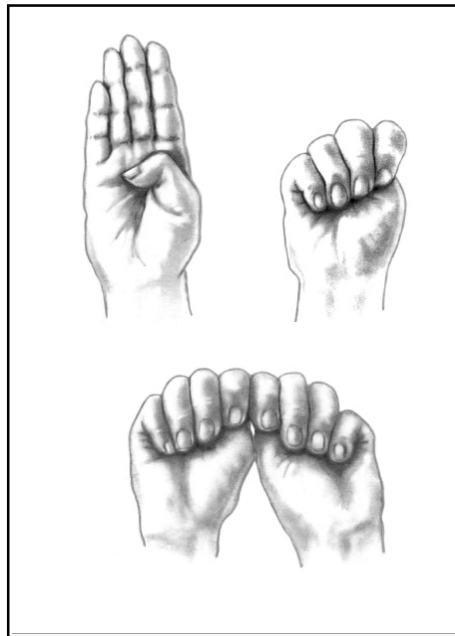
achieving 100% access to healthcare for those in their network's area. Their informal network is becoming a formal, incorporated organization, and she is working to weave IPNB into the organizational culture, policies, and plans. Lisa can speak eloquently about her use of IPNB for self, relationships, and systems, and highlights the importance of understanding neuroception and ways to respect the window of tolerance through relational and mindful practices. She also trains people from numerous professional disciplines in public health leadership and clinical skills, and finds IPNB helps her teach group dynamics much

more effectively, including how leaders can influence group cohesiveness and performance. She uses IPNB to help these professionals learn how to use themselves as regulatory tools for their groups. Instead of just learning a specific technique, Lisa notes they are learning tools and principles that apply across situations and theoretical orientations, and that this is allowing people from numerous disciplines to connect, listen, and learn deeply from each other during these trainings. The impact has been so positive that she has been asked to expand her IPNB-infused training to other professionals in the area and to members of the community at large.

One of the originators of and an adjunct faculty member in the IPNB program at PSU, Greg

Crosby, has brought the use of one favorite IPNB method for encouraging mindful awareness of the brain, the brain in the palm of your hand or hand model of the brain, into numerous settings, always with positive impact. Greg's primary work involves overseeing groups and interns in the mental/behavioral health departments at Kaiser Permanente. Since he brings IPNB principles into all of his work, people who are accessing these services learn the hand model of the brain in the therapy orientation class, preparing them to make their best use of the services, while group therapists consider mirror neurons and how to foster attunement. When he consulted with the ESD (education service district) staff of Clackamas County, he taught them how to use the hand model to help explain anger, autism, and regulation when consulting with parents and teachers, and this became part of their curriculum. With a national consulting practice, he has seen IPNB principles enhance the content of training for preschool teachers, community mental health centers, even a zoo's staff!

Under the creative leadership of Cindi Scott, addicted, incarcerated offenders are learning to use the brain in the palm of their hands for anger management. She has incorporated IPNB into her work directing prison programs through her employment with CEC/CiviGenics, a progressive organization specializing in the treatment of addicted offenders. Cindi brought Greg Crosby in for staff trainings and consultation, and now the two of them have developed a new IPNB class series designed for criminal justice professional staff and those working in probation and parole. Applying IPNB in her work setting led to the development of strategies for creating a prison climate that promotes change – implementing prison-based parenting groups that use Siegel and Hartzell's *Parenting from the Inside Out* (2003), increasing staff awareness of the IPNB roots of anger and

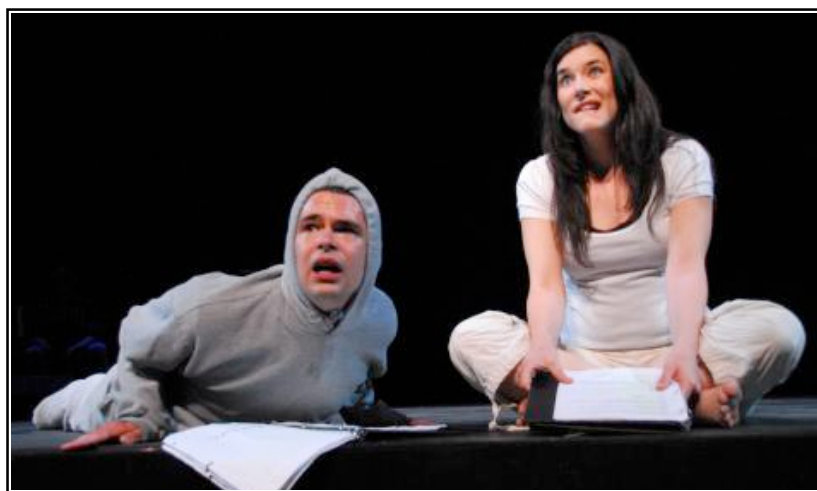


rage, and offering specific training for staff and offenders in the use of grounding and affect regulation. Cindi continues to experiment with the power of narrative as an integrative process, focusing on applying the science behind how storytelling and bonding can be reparative for a brain/mind recovering from addiction. Her agency's programs routinely use numerous direct and indirect applications of IPNB, from showing addicted offenders videos on the neuroscience of craving and relapse, to considering how to address multiple learning styles in therapeutic interventions.

Though he lives far from Oregon, Ron Wilgosh has taken several IPNB classes through the distance learning option and his learning has started rippling throughout his organization, the Havering Psychological Therapies Service, for North East London Foundation Trust in the NHS in U.K. First noticing differences in his own mindfulness and regulation as he applied what he was learning, he then expanded the curriculum in his treatment groups to reflect IPNB principles. He does this in the content of the groups (e.g., considering a particular emotion like anxiety from many levels – neurobiology, mind, relationship, environment; or discussing the significance of attachment relationships). This focus also permeates the integrative process of each group (e.g., sequencing a left mode information presentation with a bilateral activity break like juggling; followed by conversation about personal applications of the information; completing each group with deepening learning and intentions through regulation and mindful practices). He brought what he has learned about IPNB into training sessions for colleagues as well as consultations with a primary care triage team and with the team on a unit for the elderly. People throughout the inpatient and outpatient divisions have asked to learn more, so he just began a series of workshops open to administrators, clinicians from all disciplines, clients, and support staff

throughout the agency. Clearly, through his efforts, Ron is bringing IPNB into many facets of this entire healthcare agency, and helping provide a coherent framework that fosters increased collaboration across departments.

Imagine a group of teenagers with unstable lives, inadequate parenting, exposure to traumas, and repeated messages of their worthlessness experiencing the power of attuned connection and finding their voices through narrative, and you begin to get a sense of the impact of the 2-week workshop called PlayWrite. Offered in numerous alternative school settings in Oregon, this clearly structured and yet unpredictable experience is infused with IPNB concepts. Bruce Livingston,



Scene from a PlayWrite Production

executive director of PlayWrite, has taken the PSU course called the Science of IPNB twice, augmenting his own studies of attachment and narrative. The son of a neurosurgeon with a former career as an anthropologist, Bruce has his mind firmly planted in both brain hemispheres. He balances awe for the powerful impact and the emotional/relational experience of PlayWrite with an academic and scientific curiosity about how and why it works. Bruce has honed the techniques in these workshops, in which teens engage with trained coaches and develop a living work of art, which they then see performed by professional actors. The first days involve lots of “games” that encourage participation and safe engagement, mindful awareness, response flexibility, and an introduction to the healthy tension of dramatic

conflict. The teens experience uncovering and expressing emotion, finding motivation, and becoming aware of needs through discussing and creating characters. The trained coaches debrief daily so they can create a unique holding environment – an attuned witnessing – where they challenge teens by asking questions – Why would he do that? What does she long for? They are trained to not give any answers, suggestions, or ideas, to sit in lengthy silence if needed, and to be present and empathetic while challenging each teen to create his or her own original, coherent narrative. They function as scribes, freeing the teens from the mechanics of writing as they express themselves, and offering their attunement implicitly.

The play they create during week two has rules – two characters, an inanimate object and an animal, and the emergence of a new narrative, not a pre-existing story about themselves or their lives. Working one-to-one with their coach, they choose three incidents from their own life to connect the two created characters and imagine *their* relational history. The coaches’ persistent questioning helps them discern the deepest want, need, fear, and secret of each. The conflict resolution emerges through the struggles of their created characters as they relate. When completed, their scripts are sent to professional actors, and several days later, these teen authors gather to answer the actors’ questions about their characters during a rehearsal, and then experience themselves as authors/directors, with an audience in a real theater, as their play is performed. Performances are deeply moving for everyone involved, including the audience, as is the closing circle for writers, coaches, and actors. The experience of the workshop encourages new self-definition and social engagement – months later, follow-up questionnaires have found improved class participation, increased engagement in conversations with adults, more positive attitudes and persistence in creative work, and more hope for their future, for the majority of the participants. Bruce has written about and continues to explore how the IPNB perspective helps explain the power and impact of PlayWrite:

- the teens are learning a number of self-regulation techniques,
- they are being respected and attuned to while being challenged – a secure attachment experience of respect and growth,
- they are learning to see dual qualities of consciousness/relationship through their two characters,
- they are developing mindsight while exploring the minds of characters and themselves, and
- they are experiencing the integrative power of narrative as they transform traumatic implicit memories and emotions into plays.

From adolescents being coached to create narratives, to prisoners learning how to use the hand model of the brain for self-regulation, this sampling of the many ways that IPNB can be applied in the workplace encourages us to imagine multiplying possibilities. Most of us spend a good portion of our waking life at work, and the relationships and experiences we have in the workplace are significant for our quality of life far beyond the workday. What might be possible if we have more businesses and leaders acknowledging the importance of relationship, emotion, compassion, and mindsight, and understanding how to create processes that promote integration? What if many people learned

about minding their brains at work? Bringing IPNB to work could significantly impact our world.

Whether applying IPNB in consultation, leadership and organizational development, or program development, certain themes emerged across everyone's reports. Those who learn and teach IPNB often take it personally - they apply it in all levels and areas of their lives. Using the framework deepens understanding of the importance of mindsight – developing the capacity to see our minds at work, and see the minds of others. Knowing about how our brains work often increases compassion and patience as well as pointing toward more effective methods of change in the workplace. IPNB helps us think about how to design content and processes that facilitate multiple ways of learning, and utilize the power of connection and narrative. Safety that allows us to risk and change, regulation, emotion, and integration become essential components of a day at work. Skills for collaborative and sustainable leadership of self, groups of people, and businesses emerge from learning to perceive through an IPNB lens. In sum, my hypothesis is that the well-being and health of organizations and employees increases, leaders are more attuned and effective, and program content is enhanced and more memorable when we incorporate the understanding of our social brains and minds at work.

**The Interpersonal Neurobiology certificate program at PSU** offers flexible learning options including on site and distance formats for courses that are available for graduate credit or continuing education units, as single classes or as a full certificate program (which requires an integrative capstone project). Extended learning opportunities – class websites, readings, discussions, real world exercises, and applications – are part of the courses. The growing catalog includes core classes like Introduction to IPNB and The Science of IPNB, and specialty courses applying IPNB in Adult Relationships, Education, or Mental Health and Addictions. Short courses feature invited experts whose meaningful workshops are augmented with online extensions; past guests have included Jeffrey Schwartz and Stephanie West Allen, Steven Porges and C. Sue Carter, and Bonnie Badenoch. One-day workshops focus on areas like mindfulness, or the IPNB of hope. As mentioned in the article, a specialization series in IPNB and Criminal Justice, based on experience/research applying IPNB in Oregon's prison system, is being introduced this summer. Debra Pearce-McCall will be offering a new course on IPNB, leadership, and organizations, starting in Fall 2009. Bonnie Badenoch will be giving a three-part class on Being a Brain-Wise Practitioner: The Neurobiology of Attachment in November 2009, Weaving Brain Talk into the Flow of Practice in February 2010, and States, Traits, and Neuroplasticity in May 2010.

**For more information about the IPNB program at PSU**, housed within the Graduate School of Education Continuing Education Department, contact the Program Administrator, Marion Sharp, at [sharpml@pdx.edu](mailto:sharpml@pdx.edu) or check the website at <http://www.ceed.pdx.edu/ipnb/>.