

The Business of IPNB

Leadership is Integration: A Follow-up to the 2009 NeuroLeadership Summit

Debra Pearce-McCall, PhD

The international, impromptu choir at the 2009 NeuroLeadership Summit sang a resonant rendition of *Amazing Grace*, as Dan Siegel, the opening keynote speaker, led them through choral illustrations of the singular note of rigidity, the cacophony of chaos, and the entraining integration of harmony. This audience participation exercise introduced the interpersonal neurobiology concept of “integration,” which mirrored the fourth annual gathering’s overall theme, “Toward Integration.” This year, the business leaders and neuroscience experts giving keynotes and panel presentations included two GAINS advisory board members, Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., one of the founders of interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB), and Marco Iacoboni, M.D., Ph.D., a pioneering mirror neuron researcher.

For the past three years, The NeuroLeadership Summits (sponsored by the NeuroLeadership Institute, Results Coaching Systems, and CIMBA – Consortium Institute of Management and Business Administration) have gathered thought leaders and change agents from around the globe to hear presentations by neuroscientists and business leaders, interspersing these with ample time for conversation and connection. Al Ringleb, PhD, the Executive Director of CIMBA, leads a pioneering effort integrating neuroscience into the undergraduate and MBA programs at his global educational institution. He also co-founded and co-directs the NeuroLeadership Institute with David

Rock, the founder and CEO of Results Coaching, a global firm using a brain-based curriculum in its coach training and in corporate consultations. David has also authored several excellent books on leadership and coaching, including his most recent book, *Your Brain at Work* (2009). Because Dan and Marco were on the program, The Global Association for Interpersonal Neurobiology Studies (GAINS) and UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC) were academic partners for the 2009 NeuroLeadership Summit. Since I’ve been teaching and writing about IPNB applications to leadership and organizations for several years,

I’d decided to return to this year’s summit, to experience the introduction of this integrative framework to 130 executives, consultants, and coaches from the world of commerce, who had traveled from over 17 countries to learn more about neuroscience and leadership.

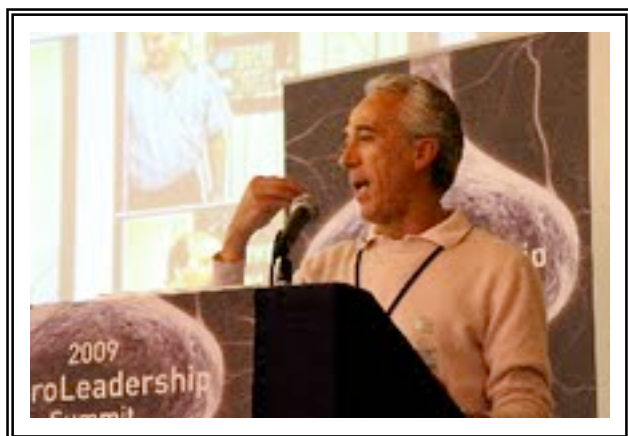


Dan Siegel

In his well-received opening keynote, Dan Siegel introduced this audience to the main concepts of interpersonal neurobiology, including the triangle of well-being and the importance of integration, the core role of mindsight and the wheel of awareness, the hand model of the brain and the nine functions of the mPFC, with examples relevant for leadership and organizations. In addition to his formal presentations, he wove ideas from IPNB throughout the Summit by asking questions of other presenting neuroscientists. For

example, he inquired of Naomi Eisenberger if her research showing social and physical pain share common neural pathways supports the IPNB thesis that the mind is both embodied and relational. (She was not ready to interpret her data in that way.) At the closing panel, Dan joined business leader Al Ringleb and integrative neuroscientist Evian Gordon to discuss how to actually make change happen in organizations, and spoke to the ways leaders can inspire neuroplasticity.

Prior to the summit, I worked with Dan to write an article that could serve as a primer on IPNB for leaders, and this full discussion of mindsight, integration and leadership was included in the second annual NeuroLeadership Journal. We hope this will facilitate the continued integration of these ideas.



Marco Iacoboni

Of the many fields of scientific inquiry contributing to IPNB, one key stream is research on the social nature of our brains. The latest work on the mirror neuron system (MNS) was described in a riveting keynote from Marco Iacoboni, neuroscientist and GAINS advisory board member. He noted that evidence from this science literally challenges Western culture's assumption of individualism, as it provides concrete data showing that we are wired for relationship in ways beyond our awareness. Marco's presentation summarized the accumulating studies revealing the complexities of mirror neuron functionality, e.g., some neurons fire only for specific intentions, some fire for items within reach and others for items out of reach, as well as newer evidence that

mirror neurons appear to learn. He discussed some of the correlative findings that are beginning to provide hints of the real life implications of MNS research (see more detail in the interview with Marco Iacoboni in this issue, beginning on page 3). An additional article by Iacoboni and McHaney, published in the 2009 NeuroLeadership Journal, highlights areas that are specifically relevant for leaders, including self-awareness, role modeling, and empathy.

Through many of my conversations during the Summit, I found it easy to feel the influence of what Dan and Marco had shared. Conversations naturally moved in the direction of discussions of mindsight and integration in leadership. Similar to my experiences in conversations with healers and educators, the ideas are new and revolutionary for some; for others, they are congruent with long-held beliefs and feelings, making the integrative and scientifically grounded aspects of IPNB invigorating and validating. Three leadership experts I met at the summit have been weaving a relational perspective, an understanding of the mind, and an interest in science/neuroscience into their own work for decades. Thank you to Judith E. Glaser, MS, Joan Fiore, PhD, and Mark Goulston, MD, for their time and for graciously sharing their thoughts and their exemplary leadership work with us. From my perspective, all their approaches provide rich consilient leadership applications demonstrating the ingredients that IPNB highlights as pivotal to all successful relational endeavors: developing mindsight, especially awareness and emotional regulation skills; and developing relational skills through an increased understanding of interactive systems and the subtleties and power of words and narrative.

The first person I interviewed was at the Summit as a participant, but could easily have been a presenter, sharing her years of expertise integrating her studies of human behavior and development, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, neuroscience, and transformational social sciences into innovative business consultations. Judith E. Glaser calls herself an organizational

anthropologist, and provides executive coaching for numerous high-powered clients in a variety of industries. She is CEO of the consulting firm she founded in 1980, Benchmark Communications, Inc., as well as the author of *Creating WE: Change I-Thinking to We-Thinking & Build a Healthy, Thriving Organization* and *The DNA of Leadership* (new editions of both released in 2007). Both books made the Amazon Business Book Best Seller Lists in 2005 and 2006, and were also selected by both *Forbes* and *Business Book Review* as two of the top business books of 2005 and 2006.

The power of the approaches she described in *Creating WE* inspired an international group of multidisciplinary consultants and coaches to join with Judith and launch the Creating WE Institute, a consulting and research partnership, in 2007. In 2009, they collaborated on publishing a brief, technique-filled book titled *42 Rules for Creating WE*. Judith is already working on the third book in her trilogy, which promises to advance her ideas about utilizing the power of language and relationship to promote neuroplasticity and accelerate change in organizations.

One personal connection that informs Judith's work is conversation with her husband who is also an innovator, initiating cutting-edge cancer research. Talking together, they've compared their work on health, change, and transformation, finding numerous parallels between the physiological systems involved in the life course of cancer and cancer treatment, and the unhealthy and healthy relationship systems in organizations.

Judith: My husband has found a neuro-peptide—a real peptide—in the body that when injected back into cancer cells, can re-instruct the cells how to be normal and so we've been looking at the dynamics of those cells and how that relates to the health of

organizations through conversations.

Looking at the processes through which cancer cells learn to be healthy cells again led Judith to teaching leaders how to embrace and trigger what she calls the Vital Instincts or Principles of learning, growing, and nourishing throughout their organizations. Her work is an illustration of the IPNB view that when leaders harness the powers of reflection and relationship they promote resilience.

Judith: I think that we're caught in old paradigms when it comes to change, and I think that people can change much more rapidly and quickly than we realize if we're focusing at the right level on the right thing. There's stuff that I can't wait to bring out into the world in my next book, but it really speaks to how to make this change happen.

Her systemic understandings allowed her to respond with polarity-defusing curiosity in her early consultations during the 1980s, when she encountered concerns about addressing emotions or "softness" in the workplace because leaders were concerned that these were contrary to producing results. "As a linguist, I would study what are the dynamic tensions, where's the dissonance for

leaders that causes them to be fearful of speaking about emotions? And in what context are they comfortable?" She became known early in her career as an expert on bully bosses, and through this work found "a rich, rich landscape where I would be continually looking at alternative ways of referencing, phrasing, explaining, dealing with things that leaders would call soft, and push-pulling against the heart frame with the neuroscience, and I got tremendous response." Judith brings this brain/mind/relationship perspective into all her work. Years of experience helping leaders and organizations transform has led



Judith to believe deeply in the powerful future of the fellowship or collaborative model of leadership, based on the neurobiology of “we” in organizations, and in its potential to transform cultures in our schools and our larger communities as well. She has generated a model based in neuroscience, linguistics, and communication, with numerous exercises that demonstrate or communicate complex ideas in simple, practical ways.

Through concepts including Vital Instincts, Vital Choices, Vital Journeys, Courageous Conversations, Co-creating Conversations, and WE-Centric Leadership, Judith has elaborated numerous methods and processes for helping leaders become more intentional and aware, less defensive and reactive, and more empathic and collaborative. At the core of these is an understanding of the neurobiology of defensive, self-protective reactions (“I-centric”), and how to use understanding of self and others, as well as careful attention to language and its capacity to shape mind and relationship, to promote attunement, trust, and healthy, We-Thinking organizations.

One specific example is found in the Ladder of Conclusions, a tool to help leaders understand more about how the mind works (promoting mindsight). She uses this pictorial concept to explain an internal process aspect of conversations, how we are moving up rungs in this inner ladder of abstractions or conclusions when we listen or speak.

Judith: We have a bio-reaction as we’re talking and you could say that that’s the chemical feelings that we get as we’re talking, whether it’s positive or negative (and now there’s so much work around the reward systems and punishment systems), and so I would review with leaders how our conversations trigger pain or pleasure. We translate that into words that we call emotional words, and then we start to think about it. So, as you go up the ladder, you go from bio-reactions to emotions to thought to beliefs and then to conclusions. Giving this to leaders

helps them see that you can’t jump over the emotional rung; it’s part of the process of how your brain works.

She encourages leaders to become familiar with their own biases on the level of each rung, and to learn to discern when they are in an I-centric or a We-centric place. These “places” or perspectives are brain/mind/relational and bias all levels of the ladder of conclusions. This visual helps leaders understand how stating concerns and asking questions in different ways can engender defense and isolation, or connection and cooperation, and how taking the time to engage in partnering conversations will strengthen the company. She uses the image of a “gauge” to represent this range, from protective to partnering. Partnering conversations are one of the powerful ways to promote integration in organizations, but require enough self-regulation and connection to others to stay in the required state of mind.

Judith seeks to help leaders understand the linkage of Intention and Impact, and developed an exercise that uses a series of questions to help leaders identify their defensive, reactive postures, and move back into WE. The questions lead us through identifying the situation, our intention, expectations, action and results, our reactions and patterns, and then to a focus on what we want to create and what wisdom we accessed, what we learned. She notes that the Partnering spot on the gauge is “when we are in our resourceful, We-centric, mirror neuron place with people.”

The other leadership experts I spoke with were at the summit on the Emotional Regulation Panel. They spoke of integration and complexity, answering audience questions about how to help leaders acquire this essential regulatory skill. One was Joan Fiore, PhD, one of the few women on the Summit program, a clinician, consultant, and executive coach whose biography exemplifies an interdisciplinary and integrative career. Currently, she maintains a private clinical practice and provides coaching, consultation, and training to

senior leadership at organizations including Microsoft and other Fortune 500 companies, the Gates Foundation, family-owned businesses, and start-ups. Her reputation and skills at teaching emotional regulation and interpersonal awareness to leaders brought her to the attention of David Rock, who invited her to share her expertise at the Summit.

Joan's professional education encompasses neural systems and relational systems. After completing a doctorate in clinical psychology, with dissertation research involving cerebral asymmetry and sex differences, she pursued her strong interest in family systems, becoming one of the first diplomates in family systems psychology and a faculty member at the medical schools of the University of Washington and Emory University. Through the years, she maintained her interest in neuropsychology and the advances in neuroscience. In the 1990s, she joined the faculty at the progressive Leadership Institute of Seattle (LIOS), which offers Master's degrees in either systems therapy or organizational systems. Her translation of systems concepts into organizational consulting continued to develop, as she served as a Director at LIOS and then as a consultant through the LIOS Consulting Corporation.

Her complex answers and contributions during the panel discussion fit with my integrative, multi-perspective way of working with people. For example, when an audience member suggested that instead of a cognitive technique, the executive coach should use a somatic one (by asking the leader to describe "here's how I'd like it to be in my body when I accomplish X"), Joan gave an inclusive, systemic response emphasizing the importance of individualizing approaches, suggesting that part of coaching involves

discerning whether cognitive, somatic, or other methods are the best ways to facilitate a shift for this particular person. She later spoke about the ways inspiring leaders derive power and influence from their emotions, and how she helps them learn to be emotion-informed but not "emotion-driven." Joan clarified that emotional regulation doesn't mean maintaining calm all the time. It means knowing how you feel and also learning how to keep yourself in a certain emotional place in order to choose the best expression of emotions for any particular work situation. For example, if you are angry you can choose not to express it, you can express it calmly, or you can express it with intensity, depending upon which will best achieve the effect that you are seeking as a leader.

Debra: How do the people you work with respond to information about emotions? Some business coaches say they tend to be careful talking about feelings.

Joan: In my experience, the more senior people that I have worked with have little difficulty talking about their emotions and the impact that emotion has, and the ways in which they can be both helpful and/or get in the way. I do find, though, when I do trainings for people somewhat lower down in organizations, the issue comes up. What I hear is somewhat of a myth, that you shouldn't bring your emotions into work, that somehow you should keep your emotions at home and work is all about being logical and rational and doing business. Anyone more senior that I have ever seen or worked with knows that is ridiculous. So it's like they put on a mask, and I think that it shows, and that is why they are not very effective. They leave the real person at home and they put on this mask and go to work in the pseudo, "this is what you're supposed to look like in this role." I just think I only see that in junior people.

Joan is a highly experienced clinician and

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Awareness is
important."
Joan Fiore



executive coach, and has wise, informed clarity about the differences. As we discussed what differentiates these roles, Joan described how each involves a different contract with the client, with different language and areas of focus, and how her style, questions, conversation, and interventions are not the same. In coaching, the focus is on leadership impact and business outcomes. She keeps clear boundaries about the parameters in coaching. For example, as a coach, she might help someone notice a feeling state and learn to mindfully address it, but she would not invite them to work deeply with it, connecting it to family of origin or other contexts as one might in therapy. When she realizes it is indicated, she will suggest some focused, private reflection and will also refer coaching clients to psychotherapists when that form of relational support for change is indicated.

Joan has developed and teaches an entire model about leading from the self that conceptually frames much of her coaching and teaching. Some of Joan's early training was in the family systems theory developed by Murray Bowen, whose central themes of differentiation of self, finding the balance between self and other, and developing a non-reactive or self-regulated way to be in relationship, became part of the framework she developed to guide top leaders.

Joan: If you aren't managing yourself very well, nobody is going to follow you anywhere. Awareness is important. I think the most effective leaders are those leaders who are absolutely capable of having in their self a clear articulation of what they think, how they feel, where they want to go, and at the same time staying connected to other people who may or may not have the same point of view. That involves a lot of self-regulation, it involves empathy, it involves understanding your audience and where they are coming from, so that you can better connect to them and lead them where you want to go. In the learning of all of that, I work with people on understanding whether they are in a nonreactive or reactive state and what to do about it.

Joan helps people recognize what they do when

they become reactive or non-regulated, and has a four-quadrant model to aid in recognizing what attachment-driven behaviors they engage in when they become non-regulated (e.g., getting rigid and dogmatic or becoming accommodating and appeasing). Once a leader is aware of his or her defensive style and how this influences their impact and effectiveness, the leader is often motivated to change. Using active, experiential learning, she helps leaders develop their capacity for non-reactivity, which she describes as "a mindful, thoughtful space where you are making choices." She helps people become self-led, knowing their preferred reactive patterns, and "what triggers them, how they know when they are in that space, how to get out of that space, how to see it coming." This emphasis on self-regulation is balanced with her focus on the relational, where she is helping leaders "get much more mindful about feedback, about seeking it, about receiving it well, so that they know what their impact is." She will share information about neurobiology, such as explaining an amygdala takeover, when this seems useful to motivate a particular person to make needed changes.

Joan: I would be leading them to realize how different people perceive them differently, and how some things that they do, regardless of their intention, might be having a different impact than they intended. With that awareness, they get to choose whether they want to have that impact or not. Whether I'm a therapist or a coach, I serve as some form of mirror, but I tend to mirror somewhat different things. I help leaders focus on relationship by asking, "Do you know your impact? How often do you seek feedback? Do you get feedback? How safe are you to give feedback to? How costly is it for other people to give you feedback, so that they wouldn't give it to you anyway, even if you asked for it? How open are you?" So I get them much more mindful about feedback, about seeking it, about receiving it well, so that they can continue to know what their impact is. They don't have to guess. We work on empathy and getting where other people are coming from, and what gets in the way of their

empathizing.

Joan encourages leaders to create a continuous openness to their relationships by helping them develop their understanding of how they appear in the minds of others, a practice that I consider an example of the development of their mindsight skills. This ongoing awareness contributes to their leadership attunement and effectiveness over time.

The other practitioner who participated on the emotional regulation panel was Mark Goulston, MD, who co-authored his first book, *Get Out of Your Own Way*, in 1996, translating twenty years of clinical experience and insights into readable, doable methods. It became an international bestseller. Another interdisciplinary thinker, his career evolved from medical and psychiatric training, to clinical work and being a UCLA professor, to his current focuses on advising top corporate leaders, speaking, and writing. In addition to authoring several excellent and practical books, he maintains blogs and online resources for various audiences. In all of these, his warmth, humor, and direct style translate systemic ideas about relationship, self-awareness, and regulation into memorable stories and techniques.

His aware and relational style was developed through his early career experiences with suicidal and violent individuals. This work then led him to become a highly respected trainer for police and FBI hostage negotiators. These high stakes situations require developing rapport quickly, listening “fast enough” to connect with an extremely dysregulated person while staying in a relatively non-reactive state. By doing so, one can begin to co-regulate and then decrease the other person’s reactivity, hopefully defusing the intensity of their state enough to lead to a safer outcome.

Debra: How did you transition from clinician to business psychiatrist?

Mark: I transitioned from the clinical world into the business world because of doing many house calls to dying patients and their families. During those, I learned how to help families

resolve conflicts and bury the hatchet regarding situations that had been festering for decades. Following these interventions, the surviving generation would occasionally ask me to deal with them in their businesses. I discovered that the parallels between families and organizations were stunning. Bosses were like parents; silos [a business term for separate units/divisions/ departments] were like siblings with deep-seated rivalries.

As a systemic thinker, Mark was easily able to translate relational therapy interventions into relational business interventions, as described in his answer to the following question.

Debra: Would you give us a practical example of how we might view some of your work as helping a leader develop the mindsight capacity of seeing another’s mind?

Mark: During the middle part of my career, I specialized in couples’ counseling and created “Recoupling Therapy,” after which divorced couples remarried their ex-spouse. I discovered that you couldn’t be empathic and angry with another person at the same time. That is because anger is a motor function that is inside-out directed (usually in reaction to a perceived slight or injury), whereas empathy is a sensory function that is outside-in directed. And you can’t come from a motor and sensory function at the same moment in time.

Based on this, I developed an approach called “Empathogenic Therapy” where I would have both partners tell me what they would say if they were the other person in various situations. I have taken that into the management and leadership world and, when there is an impasse, I have asked them to imagine what their partner, employees, shareholders, directors would say in a particular situation. For example, if I asked the other person to answer: “What worries you most about where the company is going and why?” what would they say? When these leaders answered those questions, for example, regarding employees with, “I think they’d say,

‘We’ve been lied to by the last two administrations, why should we believe you?’”
—that understanding was transformative.

Mark’s newest book, *Just Listen* (Goulston & Ferrazzi, 2009), shares insights from his work with corporations, professional firms, senior executives, and patients, on how to communicate with anyone. With stories, strategies, and tools, he explains how to move people through what he calls the Persuasion Cycle. Clinicians will recognize the theories he credits with inspiring his development of the steps of this cycle, Prochaska and DiClemente’s stages of change, and Miller and Rollnick’s motivational interviewing. The book weaves neuroscience facts lightly through his practical recommendations. An early chapter, entitled “A Little Science,” introduces the triune brain, the amygdala, and mirror neurons. An example of his attention to mind, brain, and relationship is his own descriptive term “mirror neuron receptor deficits” (we’ve all been there):

Mark: I have created the term “mirror neuron receptor deficit” (which may not be scientifically correct—I am a practitioner, not a researcher) to describe and explain a phenomenon that is validated by my clinical and now coaching work for more than 30 years. However, I didn’t use the term way back then. In my observations and in my view, our mirror neurons are often mirroring/conforming to/empathizing with/caring about the needs of the world around us. I believe that as we do that, a reciprocal desire to be mirrored/conformed to/empathized with/cared about builds, creating what I refer to as a “mirror neuron receptor deficit” (MNRD). In retrospect, a more accurate term might be “gap” as opposed to “deficit.”

At any rate, the greater the deficit, the greater

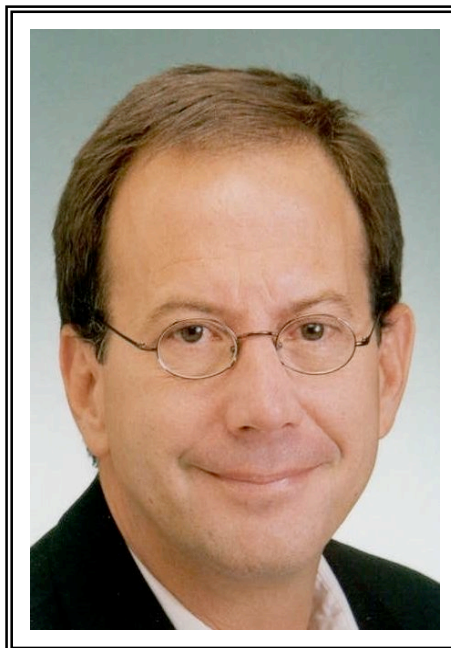
the hunger to be mirrored/ conformed to/empathized with/cared about in return. And when we receive such mirroring, empathy, and caring from the outside, especially when we don’t ask for it, the deficit is eliminated. That experience causes us to cry in response to kindness as we feel a sense of relief, a sense of wholeness, and takes away our feeling alone. That is why we cry at tearjerker movies, because at those special moments of conflict melting into empathy, we vicariously feel the elimination of the MNRD of one of the protagonists. (We might think of Jack Nicholson proclaiming to Helen Hunt in the movie, *As Good as It Gets*, “You make me want to be a better man,” or Kevin Costner calling out to his dad at the end of *Field of Dreams*, “Want to have a catch?”)

What does this have to do with leadership? If you can view your customers and clients, employees, shareholders all as people with MNRDs, and if you can connect to them in a way that reduces those deficits, you will spontaneously draw them

towards you. Or as my mentor, Warren Bennis, said in the dedication of my new book, *Just*

Listen: “When you deeply listen and get where people are coming from, and then care about them when you’re there, they’re more likely to let you take them where you want them to go.”

In this book, Mark mentions mirror neurons when explaining how learning to help others “feel felt” can overcome their resistance and shift the dynamics of conflictual relationship to collaboration. He then outlines, in very pragmatic terms, six steps or starting questions to utilize, to begin helping someone “feel felt.” A similarly practical application of brain understanding is found in the Six-Step Pause, a technique to move awareness up from lower to higher brain areas,



Mark Goulston

shifting focus from physical sensation, to emotional labeling, to impulse and consequence awareness, and finally to more integrative thinking about better solutions and their benefits.

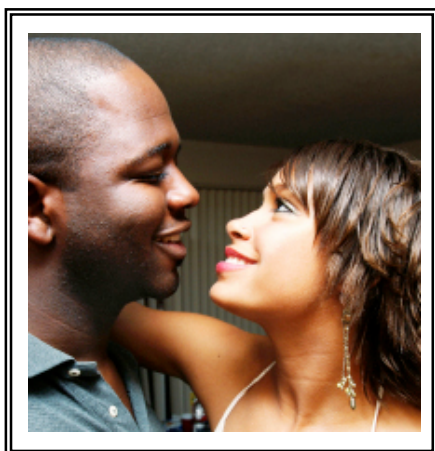
All of these outstanding leadership consultants have their own original models and methods that provide examples of how systemic, constructive attention to the minds of leaders, using the development of awareness, language, and empathy, can improve leadership skills, impact, and outcomes. As those working with the IPNB framework know, the science and art of attuned relationship and attention, and their power and potential to positively influence, regulate, and even transform others, is at the core of many human endeavors, including psychotherapy, education, and any form of leadership or coaching. IPNB gives us a coherent, living framework of consilient

understandings of mind, brain, relationship, and the process of change, which can guide any of these encounters. Conversations with Judith Glaser, Joan Fiore, and Mark Goulston about their work provided clear examples of how one might attend to mind/brain/relationship in leadership consultations.

Consultants and coaches from across the planet were introduced to IPNB at the 2009 NeuroLeadership Summit, learning from Dan Siegel and Marco Iacoboni, and then reading related articles in the NeuroLeadership Journal. Perhaps a number of them will also consider these three interacting levels of human experience in unison, and begin exploring the implications of mindsight, mirror neurons and our social brains, attuned relationships, and the key processes of integration, in their own leadership and organizational development work.

Debra Pearce-McCall, PhD, is a clinician, leadership consultant, educator, and writer who brings a mindful focus on our relating brains into all her work. She developed her systemic, interdisciplinary perspective working directly with clients and providing leadership and training in nonprofit agencies, academic settings, group practices, and corporate management. She keeps the personal challenge of lifetime learning alive through teaching graduate classes, most recently helping to develop the IPNB Certificate Program at Portland State University. A charter member of GAINS (Global Association for Interpersonal Neurobiology Studies), she serves on the board and is an editor for the GAINS Quarterly. Since 2005, she has been applying IPNB ideas to leadership and organizations through consulting, speaking, and writing, and she is delighted to have co-authored an article with Dan Siegel on IPNB and leadership. She can be reached at Debra@MindinConnections.com.

Pictures of Marco Iacoboni and Dan Siegel at the 2009 NeuroLeadership Summit by Stuart Ziegler.



I live in the facial expression of the
other, as I feel him living in mine.
-Maurice Merleau-Ponty