



Episode #90:

**Dr. Daniel Siegel Talks About Helping
Our Kids Develop a "Yes Brain"**

January 9, 2018

Debbie: Welcome to the TiLT Parenting Podcast, a podcast featuring interviews and conversations aimed at inspiring, informing, and supporting parents raising differently wired kids. I'm your host, Debbie Reber, and today I am thrilled to share with you a conversation I recently had with Dr. Dan Siegel. Dr Siegel is an internationally recognized educator, practicing child psychiatrist, and the author of several books including *Mindsight*, *The Whole Brain Child*, *Brainstorm*, *No-Drama Discipline*, and *Parenting From the Inside Out*, many of which sit well-worn out my bookshelf. He's also the founder of the Mindsight Institute, an Educational Organization offering online learning and in-person workshops that focus on how the development of mind sight in individuals, families, and communities can be enhanced by examining the interface of human relationships and basic biological processes. Dr, Siegel's newest book, which actually comes out today, is how to cultivate courage, curiosity, and resilience in your child. It's co-written by Tina Payne Bryson, and gives parents skills, scripts, ideas, and activities to bring kids of all ages into a state of mind which helps them approach life with curiosity and become more open, creative, and resilient, even during difficult times.

Dr. Siegel has such an extensive and important body of work, it was hard to narrow down where to take this conversation, but we focused on exploring the important concept of brain integration, mindset, and the Yes Brain, as they relate to differently wired kids. I hope you enjoy the episode, and if you get value from it, I would love if you would consider helping me amplify this conversation by sharing it on social media with friends and other parents and communities that might get value from it. And if you aren't already signed up for my TiLT Parenting newsletter, I would love for you to join me. Every Thursday I send out a short email including a quick note for me, a link to that week's podcast and bonus After the Show video and links to five must-read articles from the news that week that are relevant to parents of differently wired kids. Just visit tiltparenting.com and sign up where it says Join the Tilt Revolution. Lastly, I wanted to give you a heads up that I have another very special episode of the podcast coming out next week. My guest is Steve Silverman, author of the New York Times best selling book *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity*. This interview was months in the making and it's a conversation you won't want to miss. And now here's my conversation with Dr. Siegel.

Hello, Dr Siegel, welcome to the podcast!

Dr. Siegel: Thanks for having me, Debbie.

Debbie: I'm really excited to have you on the show and there are so many directions this conversation could go in because your body of work is so impressive. So I'm going to try to focus on the things that I think are most relevant to my audience, which as

you know is made up of parents raising differently wired kids. But before we get into that, I always like to ask guests just quickly what their personal why is. I'm so curious to know what drives you to do the work that you do?

Dr. Siegel: Well, that's a very interesting question with a complex answer, but the short version of it is trying to understand what it means to be human and then professionally as a physician and therapist and also as a scientist to understand what our mental lives are really all about beyond just the physicality of our bodies. And that led to kind of a deep dive into a whole range of sciences from anthropology, studying culture, all the way to physics, studying energy patterns. And I tried to put it all together in a field called interpersonal neurobiology, which has implications for how we parent our kids and how we understand education and things like therapy or organizational functioning; even how governments work or don't work and how we can understand climate change issues. So it's been a field that's had useful applications and for our discussion, you know, understanding kids and how kids have a diversity of ways that they grow. And the connection of their brain to their relationships in their minds is kind of what we focus on.

Debbie: Fantastic. It's one of those ever-evolving field, so I can imagine it's a very exciting space to be in.

Dr. Siegel: There's always new stuff as you're suggesting comes up and we just try to be open here at the Mindsight Institute, a kind of brick and mortar home for interpersonal neurobiology, to just be ready for whatever to try to help people to have happier and healthier lives.

Debbie: That's fantastic. Well, I wanted to talk a little bit about your books. *The Whole-Brain Child* was my introduction to your work. I think I read it when my son, who's now thirteen, when he was in first grade and it's one of those books that I think I was highlighting things on just about every other page, you know, it all seemed so important and relevant to what I was experiencing. So I would love if you could talk a little bit about, you know, one of the key issues of that book is integration of the child's brain. And you talk about doing that in a number of different ways. So could you tell us what integration of the brain is? What do you mean when you say that?

Dr. Siegel: The word integration is how something has different parts to it. And let's just talk about your body. You know, you have a left leg and right leg for example. So to integrate your experience of walking, you would want to differentiate your left leg from your right leg, but then let them become linked as they simultaneously, you know, lean forward and you step on your left and step on your right and step on your left. So if you weren't integrated, you wouldn't be able to have the smooth and efficient way that we walk. You'd be, you know, hopping around or falling down,

stumbling. So integration for walking involves the differentiation in linkage of left and right leg in the brain. You have different parts of the brain and they grow and become what's called differentiated, which means a bunch of the cells in the brain called neurons become differentiated in their connections with each other.

So they're specialized or unique or are growing in a very individualized way as a little cluster and then you take those clusters of neurons that are now having connections with each other so they're specialized or differentiate, which just means to make different regions. But then for the whole brain to work together, that cluster has got to connect and communicate with other clusters that themselves have become differentiated. So you get very sophisticated and really smooth walking essentially for a brain, you know, smooth functioning when these differentiated areas are allowed to be different. So that's important. But then you take the different clusters and you link them. So those connections can be grown too and you know, when there's challenges and how our minds function in all sorts of ways that are part of the wide range of neurodiversity, we have, um, we can avoid using the word disorder, but you certainly have challenges that are presented when integration is not developing as well as it could be. And so whether it's sensory integration problems or kids on the spectrum of issues related to social and emotional and sensory processing or you know, looking at mood challenges like mood dysfunctions, like depression or thought challenges, all of those challenges have various degrees of difficulty with integration. And so interventions that try to cultivate integration would be ones that would help that individual and the family and friends that they have, you know, function in a more coordinated and balanced way in their relationships when you can get integration to be happening more effectively in the brain itself.

Debbie: So for kids who are neurologically typical, are they also, you know, not having as much integration when they're younger and it's something that they naturally develop as they get older? I guess what I'm asking is, is this part of every child's journey that they need to learn how to link these different sections of the brain. and for kids who are atypical, it's just a more complicated journey?

Dr. Siegel: I think that's a really great way of describing it Debbie. And just to give you an example of the support for that, the brain grows based on genetics and the genes pushing for the growth of neurons and their connections with each other and the differentiation of areas and the brain also grows in addition to genetic information based on experiences. And those two really broad influences on brain development—genetics and experience—interact with each other as the brain becomes more and more differentiated and more and more linked. So the first dozen years of life, the child is kind of absorbing the world around them and becoming a more rich and their intricate interconnections in the brain. And then

during the second dozen years of life where your son is now, the brain begins a pruning process to get rid of some of those linkages and even some of the differentiated areas and the areas that are not used are pruned away and the brain actually is going to then establish more linkages in the later part of adolescence within a substance called Myelin, and so the brain becomes more integrated. That's basically the role of adolescent brain remodeling—I write about this in a book called *Brainstorm*, and so you could say that those first two dozen years of life, so until you're around 24, 25, 26, the overarching growth pattern of the brain is to become differentiated and linked in different ways and in people who are on the spectrum, what research has suggested, is for reasons we don't understand, the differentiation in the brain around 18 to 24 months of age begins to slow down for reasons we just don't understand why. We don't think it's related to parenting at all. It might influence how you experience being a parent, but parenting doesn't cause it. And with this decreased differentiation, we're seeing that you need differentiation to get a more integrated brain which would explain the sensory integration challenges that kids have and also you would see difficulties with emotion regulation and difficulties with social cognition. You know, understanding others minds in one's own mind. And those three things are the main areas that, you know, we talked about neurodiversity and differences along the spectrum. Those areas are all dependent on integration and if you don't have differentiation, which appears to be the main thing that happens, then it's gonna be hard to develop a more integrated brain because the first step, differentiation, has been hampered for reasons we don't know why.

Debbie: Wow. OK.

Dr. Siegel: So does that make sense? How does that feel when you hear that?

Debbie: Yeah, it absolutely does make sense. I mean, I think the question that I imagine most of our listeners want to know is, okay, so what do we do about it? When I read your books, I learn so much and I try to apply all these approaches and, and I want to get into them more in depth from you, but in helping our kids develop these things that they may not naturally have or where they have deficits and how much of an uphill battle are we in? You know, kids with ADHD or sensory processing issues or anxiety or you know, kids who are wired differently?

Dr. Siegel: Well, you know, the thing that is so important to remember is that the brain is open to growth and change throughout childhood, adolescence, and even adulthood. So we need to take a deep breath and say, okay, how can I approach the growth of my child in a way that's going to support their particular needs? So if you go to our website, www.drdansiegel.com, you'll find a podcast where I was actually on the stage with someone with Asperger's syndrome, high functioning person on the

autistic spectrum is what you would describe it as, and it was all about neurodiversity and the big discussion we had, there were some parents in the room and it was right before we were all going to the play, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* about an adolescent on the spectrum. And you know, it was such a beautiful podcast because on the one hand, you know, people were saying we have to really talk about neurodiversity and how there's just a range of different ways that people are. And I completely agree with that. And then the parents in the room were basically feeling and saying, but you know, if we don't say what this is, how can we help our child with the challenges they face? And also in the United States anyway, you know, the funding is only given if you put a name to what you're dealing with and not just say, Oh, you know, there are people right-handed people. I don't need treatment for being a left-handed person. So they were actually being deprived of funding and services for their kids if they refuse to say this is an issue that needs some work. So it was a very understandable, complex moment that you'll hear in the podcast and you'll hear what I said to everyone in the room, including the people with autism, that if you really see it as these three things, challenges to integration that lead the sensory integration challenges, emotion regulation challenges, and self and other understanding. And the person on stage with me was saying, yeah, that's my life you've just described my whole life. I said, well then let's give you some support. We don't have to call it a name or a disorder unless you just need funding for that. That's fine. Do whatever you need to do. But in terms of our understanding, there's some difficulties with integration. And let's give you the kinds of integrative neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity just means a plasticity means you can change with experience. Neuro is the brain. Integrated means let's grow intentionally more integration in your brain. So the people I work with, that's what we do. And the different books I write—*Mindsight* or the books you're talking about, *The Whole Brain Child*, *No-Drama Discipline*, or our new book, *The Yes Brain*—it's all about what can you do as a parent to identify chaos or rigidity in a child or adolescent's life that is revealing challenges to integration, and then in a very specific way you are prepared as a parent to say, okay, this chaos or rigidity is a side of impaired integration. I don't have to call this a disorder, but I can certainly call this a challenge to integration and what my job as a parent is to do whatever the neurodiverse situation I'm working with, with myself or my kids or my friends or anyone you know, how do I best support people becoming as integrated as they can be. And then we give you the steps to doing that of how you use your relationship to help differentiate aspects of the brain if they're not differentiated and then using your relationship, which basically means what you're focusing attention, on because we have a saying where attention goes, neural firing flows and neural connection grows. So ideally what we're going to do is use our relationship to inspire people to rewire their brains toward a more integrative functioning, which is true of any human being, as you're suggesting, Debbie.

That's not just something with the neurodiverse situation is everyone. Everyone needs to move toward integration, so that way we're all in this boat together. You know, it's always a life journey. And what Tina Bryson and I try to do is lay out the steps that are accessible and practical and that are really something any parent can grasp. So they're really, they understand I'm doing integrative parenting, whatever your child has or whatever age your child or your spouse by the way, you know. So it's, it's just, it's just a way of living, you know, it's a way of living from the inside out where you realize within you and between you, the inside the outside is an opportunity to say where there's chaos and rigidity, there's blocked integration. Where there's blocked integration, I need to focus attention to make things more differentiated and linked, and it's quite wonderful and rewarding to see how it actually works.

Debbie: Yeah, it's fascinating. And I appreciate you talking about just the larger conversation around labels and that's something we talk a lot about on the podcast and in our community. And you know, I use the language of *difference*, *neurodifference* much more than I would use the word *disorder*, but I agree, you know, it is really about these real challenges or symptoms. I had Dr Gail Saltz on the podcast recently and she was talking about we really need to address the symptoms here so people can thrive, so they can work on those areas where they're challenged. So let's talk about integrative parenting. So when you say that, what I'm hearing is, you know, with my son, for example, if he's having a challenging situation, I've trained myself to have this go to reaction—when I'm having a good day...it doesn't happen all the time—but you know, to think about okay, this is obviously happening because he doesn't have the skills available to him right now to deal with this in a different way. So what can he learn through this? And I think of my job as trying to facilitate or even coach him through that. Is that what you're talking about when you're talking about us doing that integrative parenting?

Dr. Siegel: Yeah, I mean that's a beautiful way of setting the frame and then I think every parent listening to you will probably be nodding their heads, but then saying, well now what do I do? So the way to think about the DO part about it is if you begin with the idea that your relationship is a connection you have with your child, that's a, this is gonna sound, a little abstract, but it's actually quite useful and practical, but every relationship is based on a pattern of sharing energy and information flow. And if you just remember the acronym P.A.R.T., you'll get a feeling for the do part of this, which is I have to be present as a parent. I have to show up and be there, so whatever the challenges—my child's having a tantrum or know she's getting really angry at me or whatever, whatever you're faced with, it doesn't feel like it's in harmony, it's either can be chaos or rigidity. Generally it's what we all see in our lives—then you say, okay, so I have to be present, and the first step is then to

be there. The second is to attune, which means I focus my attention on the inner experience of my child, not just their outward behavior. That any parent can do. But integrated parenting means you're attuning to the *inner* experience of your child, not just what they're doing with their body and flailing around, but the *experience*. Let's say being frustrated or sad or feeling embarrassed. So at that moment, when you're attuning to the internal world, you're giving a child, any kind of child who's male, female, old or younger, neurodiverse, neurotypical, whatever, any child, any person, when you attune, you allow them to have the experience that their mind beneath their behavior is important to you, their parents, and that's an important relational moment.

Then the third thing in P.A.R.T. is R—Presence, Attunement, and Resonance. You resonate with them, so you may feel a little bit of your son's frustration, but it doesn't mean you fall down on the floor kicking. But you resonate with your child and when another person can get a sense that we're present, attuning, and resonating, they have this experience that a patient in mind described a long time ago called *feeling felt* and when they feel felt by you, that's a profound moment of joining and it's what every human being needs. And in that joining, there's a feeling like I have now become a part of something larger than just my private self. It's where I've become a part of a *we*. Right now at that moment, the brain of the individual, who's been in a tantrum or is stuck in a rigid this or that, is expanded in the way that the mind is now experiencing its relational possibilities, not just it's embodied reality.

So the mind is not the same as just the brain. The mind of course includes the brain, but includes the whole body in our relationships, and so when you realize this presence, attuning, and resonance, you're offering to your child, that moment, you're not fixing anything, you know, trying to change anything. You're just present, attuned, and resonating, at that moment, even if your child's behavior still continues, they're going to have a mental experience of expanding their connection to you and what develops in your child's brain is the fourth element of P.A.R.T., which is T for trust. So in this trusting state as a whole biology, you know, I've edited over 60 textbooks in our series for Norton and one of them is all about this, but I'll just give you a one sentence that's a whole textbook. You know, when the brain enters the state of trust through these kinds of present, attune, resonating relationships, so now that you've completed the part, that trust that's created turns on what's called the *social engagement system*, and at that moment you see someone who has, let's say, in terms of neurodiversity sensory integration problems were connecting with another floods them sensorily—you know, what they see, what they hear, what they feel, and their skin, what they smell—all that sensation is overwhelming to them, likely because of this integration challenge, so they can't regulate all regulation, depends on integration that turns out to be the

secret of the sauce and the brain. If you don't have integration than regulation has challenged and you go to chaos or rigidity, that's it in a nutshell. And then so now what you've done with the trust is you've allowed the brain to become more integrated in that trusting relational state. It becomes regulated. You see, because now you're creating more integration in that moment, and now what you can do after you connect, you can redirect, you can use your relationship—you know, presence, attune, resonate, and trust—to then say to your child, you know, *your friend didn't want to come over because he thought, you know, you guys were going to go to the water park, but instead you wanted to stay home and watch cartoons. He didn't want to come over. I understand, you're so frustrated and you've been throwing the pillows all around the house. I really see your frustration. So you connect that way rather, Don't throw pillows around the house, Billy. That's just not right. You gotta grow up. You know, your friend doesn't have to come over. He doesn't want to go. He wanted to go to the water park, you know like that. So this other approach creates the trusting state where the social engagement system is turned on.*

Everybody becomes more receptive and that's when learning can happen. And you can teach about the nature of emotions that, of course you wanted your friend to come over Billy and you were looking forward watching cartoons with them. He always thought you're going to the water park, but it's raining today. So we weren't going to go to the water park and you thought cartoons would be a great thing to do on a rainy day, and he was so frustrated that he wasn't going to the water park. He just couldn't get over his frustration. And you feel sad. So your, your frustration, your sadness. I understand you're throwing pillows around. So there are different things you could do. Why don't we get out some paper and you can draw what sadness feels like and draw what you know your frustration feels like. And then we have this thing called the wheel of awareness where kids can draw a big wheel where the outer rim is all the different feelings you have—mad at your friend, sad about your friend, frustrated with your friend but then you realize you also love your friend and he's your best friend and you liked to play with him and he's looking forward to the next time you guys go to the water park or watch cartoons or whatever.

So you can then, with the wheel of awareness, literally integrate your child's experience. And this is ideal. Of course it's hard to do this because it gives flailing around, throwing pillows, you get frustrated, but this is, this is the idea and every human being has a need to be seen and understood and to feel felt every human being and what my research mentor Marian Sigman was able to show research wise was that, you know, we knew for sure kids on the spectrum have that condition, not because of what parents do, but it affects your experience of being a parent for sure, but what she was able to prove was that the different attachment categories that neurotypical kids have. neurodiverse kids have to and people were

like amazed at that. But for us in our research lab with Marin, it was such an important research proposal to show because, just because you have sensory integration, difficulties in emotion regulation difficulties and even difficulties understanding the mind of yourself or others, that doesn't mean you don't have need for close, affectionate connections that feel supportive. That's called attachment. So, while you might have these other issues that make behavior atypical, your needs for attachment are in fact typical. That is, they are the need for closeness.

Debbie: Wow. First of all, thank you for explaining that acronym. Present, attuned, resonance, and trust I think is going to be so helpful for people. And I'm wondering is this the kind of thing that our kids over time, there's a cumulative effect, you know, so do they start to understand that this is how we're going to resolve challenging situations? And I imagine you get some momentum going and then it just becomes easier. Is that the way it works?

Dan Siegel: Yeah. That's a beautiful way of describing it, Debbie, and I'll just paraphrase, um, the conversation I had with this fellow who was neurodiverse on the panel that you can listen to him say it himself, but this is what I said to him. I said, I said, picture this, you know, for whatever reason your brain has some difficulties with sensory integration. That is maybe areas aren't a differentiated so well, so your visual channel and your auditory channel, just to stick with those for now, just flood you and it's just too much. So what you need to do if you're like, you know, six months old, is you need to figure out how to avoid how you're focusing your attention on what you hear. That's harder because your ears don't direct attention, but with your eyes, so you divert your eye gaze so you're not looking at people's eyes and not even looking at people's faces. You're looking at, let's say their fingers or you're looking at, you know, light that's coming through the window because you don't get flooded with as much as a face. I mean our, our nervous systems are designed to connect with other people's faces and their signals that reveal what's going on in their minds. But it's really intense if you have sensory integration problems. So that challenged for sensory integration can then make it so the emotions you feel, which are the processes in your body and lower parts of your brain that rise up and affect how you think even, you know, they're really intense. So you have super big emotions because of the sensory integration issues. But now you're nine months of age, 12 months of age. You're getting onto, let's say 18 months of age, and you've now, because you've been trying to just stay in a kind of equilibrium there to stay in balance and avoiding the input from other people's faces and you know, engaging with them in a way that neurotypical kids would've been having those learning experience of joining, you've been just trying to maintain some kind of survival because of your sensory integration challenges gives you emotion regulation challenged. So now you're a year and a half and you don't have the experience

because you've been avoiding them to try to survive. You haven't accumulated the kind of learning that other neurotypical kids would've had and now you're two years of age and three years of age. You keep on avoiding this stuff because no one knows that's what the issue is. And so now your four and your five and another kid has had five years of focusing attention on the face of other people looking at their eye gaze, trying to figure out what their lips mean when they are up or down or whatever. Trying to understand tone of voice gestures. All the non-verbal signals that let us know, really the bulk of how we know what's going on in the mind of another person is through these signals and if you look at all sorts of research I've ever written, a book called *Aware*, which was kind of talking about this, but we start out really knowing the mind of another before we know our own mind in our evolution. There's a long thing we can say about that, but the bottom line is we're very social creatures before we become self-aware creatures.

So if you've been avoiding the social side of connection, you haven't given your brain the opportunity to develop those relational communications into neural structures of understanding the mind of another. Those are the exact structures you use to understand your own mind and so now you're five or six or seven or eight or nine and you're confused and lost in the very fast paced non-verbal communication sharing world of kids on the playground and now you're 11, 12 and 13 and my God, adolescence is hard enough for anybody, but you have no idea what's going on in the mind of other people, let alone your own mind. So now you're 15, 16, you can see why it's so disparaging because you haven't had those years. Now I think it's possible if we slow things down and look at what the fundamental challenges which is sensory integration and then avoidance of social contact and then emotion dysregulation, to really work with people to allow them to have the relational experiences where another significant person like your parent or therapist or somebody can play this part with you, so within a setting where you're not avoiding that kind of connection, you can slowly build up the circuitry of other understanding, self understanding, emotion regulation, and then even if sensory integration remains challenging, although that can change a bit too, but that may be the most difficult thing and maybe even the first thing, then you're just learned that this is who I am. I need to avoid, you know, loud parties or I don't like to go to a loud movies or when I watch a movie, I'm at home and I can turn the DVD off and it's not a dark room. There's all sorts of things that, you know, because everyone is neurodiverse to some extent or another, so the issue is what is your particular growth edge, and I love that term David Daniels, your what's your growth edge for your neurodiversity and how do you work with that to optimize how you're gonna keep on integrating as you grow forward because, what I described was a way where you shut down growth in learning because you're just trying to survive. That make sense?

Debbie: Yes, and I never heard it explained that way. You know, the way that you described these kids really falling further and further behind. It makes so much sense. I just had a lot of aha moments listening to you describe that and so it does sound also like early intervention is really important. I mean that just shuts a whole new light on why we want to get good support and practice in these areas as soon as we know that something different is going on.

Dr. Siegel: Exactly. And I totally respect and understand the feeling of I don't want to label my child or say this difference is a disorder. I get that totally and then we can take a deep breath and say, and there is a difference that is actually creating a lot of difficulty for your child. So it's like, I haven't, I have an eye problem, you know, and for whatever reason, my parents didn't pick it up and they sent me the eye doctors and the eye doctors didn't pick it up and it wasn't until I was 30 years old that finally I just said, something's really wrong here. And I just pushed through everyone telling me I was fine and finally found somebody who could say this is something really wrong with you. And I was 30, you know, and my God, if only someone would have just been willing to say, yeah, you know, we think there's something wrong with you Dan, and let's try to identify it, name it, and do something about it. I mean, God, that would've saved me a lot, a lot, a lot, a lot of anguish, but no one did. So here we are. But the point is, I understand the desire and let's just call it was use the word *normal*, but it's like this desire to normalize and say everything's fine, everything's fine, but I have some very close family friends, for example, they were trying to ignore a difference in their kid and it wasn't until there was kind of a family intervention where we said, you know, we're just gonna say we love you madly, but this is an issue. And so they went and got evaluated. There was a big, huge issue, got wonderful intensive therapy and the issue was taken care of. And I understand the parents want to just say, stop, stop saying there's something wrong. Of course you want to say that. Every parent is very protective of their child in the last thing you want to say, is there something different that could be called wrong or needing intervention. But the sad thing with that, while it's understandable, loving stance of every parent, totally get that, is that there are certain impediments to integration that can be helped to become more integrated. So forget the word disorder or a naming it unless you need that for insurance or to go get help, but everyone should find that when there's chaos and rigidity in their lives and then say, okay, integration is being blocked there. I don't have to call it a disorder but it's a growth edge and everyone's got a growth edge and here's mine or this is mine for my kid and let's do the work.

Debbie: That's fantastic. Thank you for sharing that. So I want to be cognizant of time here and I really want to hear about your new book. *The Yes Brain*, which the date of this episode it comes out is the day that your book is released to the world. So can you tell us a little bit about it?

Dr. Siegel: I am so excited to share this with you because I just read part of, you know Tina Bryson and I wrote the book *The Yes Brain*, and I just did half of the audio book. She's doing the other half. And we were so excited when we wrote it and then of course it takes some time because the printer and all this stuff, so then I did the audio book and it was like, Whoa, this is a fun book. So the idea of the book is very, very direct. The brain has two states and this is going to be so relevant for all your listeners, especially after the conversation we had. The two states are, one is a reactive state that you can induce by just saying the word *no* really harshly. I could do it now if you want, but anyway you can say no, no, no, really harshly, and then your brain gets reactive, which means it's feeling threatened and it creates for F's: either fighting back, fleeing, freezing, meaning tightening up your muscles and not moving temporarily, or fainting, even collapsing and feigning death.

Death is maintenance, so that's the No brain state. In contrast to that, the brain has a second major overall state. If you call that one a reactive no brain state. There's the receptive, Yes brain state, and this, yes brain state is something that parents can learn how to create their child even when they're creating structure or maybe especially when they're creating structure and they are offering teaching that we call discipline. And so the Yes brain state of receptivity is literally when you turn on this social engagement system, establish a feeling of trust. Um, a child is open to learning anyone's open, receptive state. And so what Tina and I do in the book is we offer four fundamental steps that are essentially coming from a review that I write up in a, uh, undergraduate graduate school textbook called *the developing mind* that I wrote in that book.

It kind of summarizes what are the essential functions that come from an integrated brain. And so when you look at that science review, there are many functions, but some of them can be called executive functions and what kids on the spectrum have challenges with, for sure. It's what kids with ADHD have challenges with, for sure anxiety. And actually many, many people have regulatory challenges. And so if you look at the way you can integrate the brain through the Yes brain approach, it comes down to four things that spell, those of you who know my work, you know I'm an acronym addict. So this acronym was the cheese brie, B.R.I.E. And it's balance. How do you allow emotions and thoughts and sensory stuff to be balanced so it enriches your life but doesn't flood your life or shut your life down. And we talk about flowing in this integrative state of harmony which can call the green zone versus being in a reactive state of fight, flight, or freeze, which is the red zone, or diving down into this faint collapse, rigidity, which is the blue zone.

So we talk about how to feel that in your child and yourself and try to help the child stay in the Green Zone, this integrated flow of harmony. Um, so that's balance.

Resilience, the next letter, is where we teach about how when you're in the red or blue zone, when you're, when you're in this reactive state of either activation and hyper-arousal or deactivation hypo-arousal, either of those are reactive actually, then you learn how to bring yourself back to this green state of the integrated flow and we teach, you know, these fundamental steps like we do in all of our books. You know, okay, now here's the idea. Now how do you actually apply it? So that's where resilience comes from, is the ability to bounce back after the becoming out of whack, you know, out of balance including flipping your lid and having a tantrum. Then the, the others are insight and empathy.

Insight is basically, and this would be really great for kids with various neurodiverse differences where you want to teach insight. You know, kids who are self-aware and adolescents and adults too, have a lot more capacity to regulate their emotions, to connect with other people, to deal with disappointments. And with that self-awareness comes self-regulation. And so we teach the steps of what you can do as a parent to create this Yes brain state. It's kind of like Carol Dweck's work and Carol Dweck is a professor at Stanford. She was really kind to write a really supportive endorsement for our book. And this is a book that guides you to how to develop a growth mindset through the self-awareness that says my abilities and my achievements are based on my effort, not on some innate, fixed quality that I have or don't have. It comes from my efforts. So if I feel frustrated at something that didn't go my way, a playdate with a friend, a test at school, uh, you know, something on an athletic team or whatever, instead of shutting down and becoming an underachiever, which happens with what's called a fixed mindset, I can have a growth mindset where I say, you know, something that was hard. I wanted to do better on the field. I wanted to better on the test. I want to do better at the play date. And I'm going to try to learn from this and really grow from this and you can actually teach kids with a Yes brain approach like that to actually take what before felt like overwhelming burdensome challenges you know, that you just shut down with, but instead say, okay, that was that, and now I'm going to move and learn from it.

So that's insight.

And then empathy is, you know, realizing that all the research on our lives suggests that the mind is not just inside of us, it's also between us and if you want to help the mind, sure, do you want to have insight for sure, but you need to have empathy which includes understanding the mind of another, taking their perspective, but also feeling happy for their happiness and really concerned when they're not well. What's called compassionate empathy or compassionate concern. And in this way, what we're trying to teach in the Yes Brain book is for a parent to have the tools, no matter what challenges their child presents in life, this book will be useful to say,

how do I have a strategy to parent as a Yes Brain parent? So I'm going to create discipline, I'm going to have opportunities for learning. So it's not like passive parenting, like I just say yes to everything, that's not at all what it is. It's really about understanding that deep and good and long-lasting learning happen from a receptive, Yes brain state and we want every parent to be prepared for how to live life with their kids to the fullest and let them grow to be the best people that they can be.

Debbie: Well, it's very exciting. Uh, yeah. I had a chance to look at your book, actually read it before our conversation and as you said, it is so relevant to our community. I mean every aspect of it, the balance, the resilience, the insight, empathy, those are all things that, especially kids who definitely wired kids tend to be hyper reactive. They tend to be chronically inflexible and having more rigid thinkers, concrete thinkers, black and white thinkers. So, so much of what you presented just felt so tangible for the tools that we can really use. So I, I'm really excited about your new book and congratulations on it. I really think it's important work putting out into the world.

Dr. Siegel: Well, thank you. You know, Tina and I really feel so grateful that as we try to synthesize the science and then weave it with our clinical practices and experience and then with our experiences as educators as well as our experiences as parents ourselves. It's so rewarding to say, okay, you have this huge amount of science. How do you actually translate it in a way that is absolutely accurate but not overwhelming and all the scientific jargon and everything like that. And then say, look, here's what's practical about it and here's what you can do for a busy, tired parent. Here's some easy to remember things and you know, we put in cartoons and there's a section as usual, you know, on how do you actually not just know how to approach this as a parent, but how would you sit down with your child and maybe read these cartoons to them? And so it teaches them the principles of every chapter and then even we have a section for yourself because we as parents, you have to take care of ourselves and develop this Yes brain state for us too. So I'm very excited about how this book can become a companion for parents on the journey of really helping our, our children thrive and um, thank you for supporting it's being out in the world.

Debbie: It's exciting and you know, as you said, I love that you included information for parents on how we can be more balanced ourselves. For me that was something that I, I read it and I was like, ah, yes, thank you. Because so many parenting books, especially the books that we're reading, right? They are all about addressing our child's issues and so many of us aren't taking care of ourselves and we really do need to be in that mindset to best be present and show up for our kids. So yeah, I appreciated that a lot.

So I am going to let you go. This has gone longer than I intended. I know you have a lot on your plate and I just want to say thank you so much for taking the time. This is just been fantastic. My audience has been very excited about hearing from you on all of this. So I just appreciate everything you've shared and listeners, I will share all the resources, definitely check out Dr Siegel's books, they are all worth a read and very practical, really usable and accessible for parents like us to know how to apply the concepts. So I'll leave links to all of that information, Dr. Siegel's website, all of it in the show notes pages. So Dr. Siegel, thank you so much and this has just been wonderful. I really appreciate it.

Dr. Siegel: Thank you Debbie. It's been a pleasure and I look forward to talking more in the future.

Debbie: You've been listening to the TiLT Parenting Podcast. For the show notes for this episode, including links to Dr Siegel's website, his new book, *The Yes Brain*, and all the other resources we discussed. Visit tiltparenting.com/session90. And don't forget to check out my After the Show short video where I share my top takeaways from my conversation with Dr Siegel. You'll find a link on the show notes page, or you can go straight to tiltparenting.com/aftertheshow.

If you enjoy this podcast and would like to help me cover the costs of producing it, please consider signing up for my Patreon campaign. Patreon is a simple membership platform that allows people to make a small monthly contribution—as little as \$2 a month—to fund the show. If you want to help visit Patreon.com/tiltparenting.

And if you like what you heard on today's episode, I would be grateful if you could take a minute and head over to iTunes and leave a rating or review. This really helps us spread the word in a crowded parenting podcast space.

Thank you so much and thanks again for listening. For more information on TiLT Parenting, visit www.tiltparenting.com

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [Dr. Dan Siegel's website](#)
- [The Mindsight Institute](#)
- [*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*](#) by Mark Haddon
- [The Wheel of Awareness](#) (downloadable PDF) from Dr. Siegel's website
- [Dr. David Daniels](#)
- [Carol Dweck and Mindset](#)
- [*The Yes Brain: How to Cultivate Courage, Curiosity, and Resilience in Your Child*](#) by Dr. Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson PhD
- [*Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain*](#) by Dr. Dan Siegel
- [*The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*](#) by Dr. Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson PhD
- [*No-Drama Discipline: The Whole-Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*](#) by Dr. Dan Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson PhD
- [*Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive*](#) by Dr. Dan Siegel with Mary Hartzell, M.Ed
- [*Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*](#) by Dr. Dan Siegel