Ep 186: Interoception, Emotional Regulation, and Why Slowing Down Changes Everything Transcript

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Opening and Tribute to Mom

Hi everybody, it's Dr. Laura with Connect My Brain Podcast, coming to you from our new location. So far, we're getting rave reviews and that is such a good thing.

It's a little bittersweet. it is a very, very big transition and it has been a lot of loss in a short period of time. I've done a couple of podcasts regarding my mom and my Mom has passed away on Valentine's Day this year, 2026. Today is March 4th, and depending upon when you hear this podcast, just kind of keep it relative to everything that's been going on.

We moved our location. I was so looking forward to having my mom come to this location because it's all on one floor. It's a very low grade coming in the front door.

She startled very easily and this way it would have been a easy path in. But God had a different plan and it is God's timing, not mine. I dedicate my work to her.

I am who I AM because of her. You know, she definitely was not a perfect person, but she taught me tenacity. She taught courage, and she saw something in me that I didn't see when I was young.

So I'm grateful. And I hope that all of us take a moment and really think about the people in our lives, regardless of the flaws, that we step back and we say, I'm grateful, i'm thankful to my parents, and grateful to the journey that I've been on.

I am grateful for whatever you fill in that line. So as we go into today, I really want to talk about how to really interpret those internal signals that you receive and how do you respond to them.

And that concept is called interoception, meaning inward. You get information from your organs. Am I thirsty? Am Do I need to go to the bathroom? Do i need To lay down and rest?

do I Need to unplug? And do we really listen to this? and it comes from the information from The exteroception, which is from outside coming in. And this is the world that we live in, what have you created?

What is the world that you live in? I think one of the most important things that I learned during this experience with my mom was how do I slow down?

Interoception and Listening to Internal Signals

When I first brought her to Atlanta, I just kind of picked up where I left off in our relationship and our relationships had to be different. So reading the exteroceptors, it helped me regulate myself inside and be more attentive to where she was in her life journey and respond accordingly.

So it's not just about the physicality of us, like the thirst, the hunger, rest, and the bathroom. It's also our emotions. And how are we taking those emotions?

I was in a really beautiful conversation last night and I asked, how do you really feel? How do really you feel about the loss of your mom? And you know, lots of times people say she's in better place.

While I'm sure that is very true, that doesn't really heal for me. I need to feel my feelings and this way if I allow myself to Feel my Feelings then I can actually process the grief and it can turn into the the wonderful memories that

I have of her and I would also encourage you to think about, do you really allow yourself to feel what you feel?

And sometimes that means that we do need to have our own space, our environment not constantly plugged in and kind of retreat. Think about all the ideas of going to a retreat.

Why do you do that? You go to unplug. Well, we can really do whenever we need to do. And I think it's really important for us to give ourselves that kind of grace.

Another thing that I brought to the conversation was we have to really stop saying that we don't have time. You know, your time is your, but you never know when something is going to change so drastically that your Time is over.

So the main part of that journey with my mom that I would really love to share with Make time, make time for what really matters, and give yourself space and time to process what you need to possess.

And again, when we think about the major population that I serve, children, I see children today so dysregulated with their emotions. And everything can create a meltdown and a drifting away and an aggression.

And we have more of this today than we've ever had. We have to ask ourselves as the adults, what is it that we are actually role modeling in front of our children?

And if we are role modeling that it can only be go, go go. If it only can be what's the next thing. if it could only how many sports am I gonna be involved in.

We are training them to be in that space of never having time. And I've told you this in previous podcasts, that whatever goes on those first seven and a half, eight years, you are totally training their subconscious mind.

And, I do work with adults. When I come to a questionnaire with them and say, How long have you been struggling with this? I would tell you probably 99.9% of the time, the adults say to me, ever since I was a kid, because the subconscious mind, as it is programmed, it IS what regulates your brain the majority of the time.

Your conscious brain is minute compared to your subconscious brain. So the idea is, especially if you're starting with some young ones, get it going right.

Slow down, simplify. Everything doesn't have to be done in a minute. Don't be constantly plugged in. There's a great update on children's health defense and what is being known about kids being on devices and the development of their brain and even the potential of cancers.

That Wi-Fi frequency permeates through a child's brain so much farther and faster than an adult brain. We have to teach where it is we want to go.

Why Slowing Down Matters for Children

So are we using devices to entertain them? Or can we regulate it because, yes, that's what schools do. I totally understand. And I personally believe that bodies of parents should go to the schools and say, you should be the leader of unplugging these children.

We are absolutely manufacturing very anxious kids, very dysregulated kids. And we have to take some of that responsibility as a community, as culture.

So what can we do to make that difference? And that's really what I try to do in these podcasts is spend a little time giving you examples of what some of the common things that people use today, how they do impact not only an adult brain, but of course, a child's brain.

And it's different. because theirs are wide open for development. The other thing I really try to emphasize is when

your child has something going on or you have something on, let's just kind of lay down some information.

Any of this stuff can be true for adults too. It's about how the wiring goes when you're a child. it's totally different than in a mature brain. But if we don't take a step back, and begin to understand that some of the experiences that these kids are going through are so multifactorial.

And that's one of things I do. I spend an enormous amount of time teaching, teaching parents one-on-one or in groups about how far reaching these problems really go.

So today in this podcast, I'm going to give you two cases, actually three, but two of them in a little bit more detail in the third one, just to kind of give an example of an adult.

But I want you to hear the complaint of what it is that the child is going through and how that lines up with interoception. So first, let's identify interoception is that internal compass that tells you your body needs something.

Your emotions need something, okay? And yes, it's plugged in by the exteroceptors. What's going on in the environment? I'm running a marathon. It's really hot outside.

My interoception is picking up that information of heat, and it's going to drive me to replenish the water in my body. That's an example. So here's the case.

A child coming in under the age of eight and having a very difficult time taking the initiative and having the motivation to go to the bathroom. In questioning the child, I love to have conversations with children because if you ask them the right question, they'll tell you.

And when I asked, why is it hard for you to to bathroom? Why do you go in your pants versus going to toilet? I don't know, I know I have to go, but I just don t want to.

Okay, so doing developmental work, what does that mean? That means I do not have drive and motivation. I get the signal in the interception that I have to go to the bathroom.

Now, that part of the brain is called the insula that pulls in that information regarding physical need and to take that action, okay? That's in temporal lobe.

And for the podcast audience, I am literally taking my hand and putting it over my ear because that's your temporal lope. It's also into the frontal lobe, and that's by my forehead.

And so we have communication between what's called frontotemporal. That's where the insula is on both sides of the brain, but it has to communicate. So it's part of also the limbic lobes, which is made up of many different structures.

and it's a midline connection, which means that both sides of the brain are involved, okay?

Case Study: Potty Training and Brain Wiring

That's the important part of understanding the roadmap. So when I think of just isolating a problem, like going to the bathroom, It's not, do I give the child something to help him go to the bathroom?

Do I do a training program that helps a child identify a sensation and walk them to to toilet? We have to think of the roadmap that's involved. And I do, I see so many people going after so different programs that are literally from the neck down.

Now, it doesn't mean a training program may not be helpful. But if I don't include the brain, It won't last. And if this child has other things in their bucket, maybe that child had some type of genetic issue.

Maybe that the child also has some focus issues. So we can have many things in our bucket, and all that does is make the roadmap even bigger. And that's why a multidisciplinary approach is so important in looking at every human being.

So how can I get to the root of motivation and drive. And that has to do with how the child's frontal lobe actually came on. So always remember, when you come into this world, you're fully formed, but you are not fully functioning.

And you must go through movement strategies in order to start to wake up the brain. This even goes on in the womb. And this, I believe, becomes such a difficult concept sometimes because we are so used to the traditional medical approach.

I go in, I have a symptom, either give you a pill, cut something out, or I tell you it's in your head and send you to a counselor. We're not taking the road of how you actually get wired up and putting these pieces together so that you can begin to identify.

what is really going on and how far back do you actually have to go in order for the child to begin to forward. Now I'm gonna pull something up for myself really quickly here.

So to explain the roadmap, That is from the assessment, okay? And just to begin the journey, I'm gonna see how far back do I need to go, Okay? So when I did an initial assessment As I gave cues of what I wanted him to physically do, he had a really tough time following direction.

When we did additional movement pieces, He did have primitive reflexes. He had really hard time with a cross-crawl pattern. His timing was not too bad other than when additional sounds were introduced.

So let me explain timing. Let's go back to our brain anatomy. So if we're thinking about this interoception function, and we brought into the picture the front of the brain, the side of brain and its communication in the middle of a brain connecting both sides.

So you have function on both side's of your brain. Some of function is very similar. The easy one to say is the need or the desire to talk is on the right-hand side.

The work, the putting it together is in the left- hand side, we have to have the Right Timing to Have a conversation. So if I'm physically off as a child and even as an adult, remember, we laid that groundwork.

I am not getting that feedback mechanism up to my brain to allow both sides of the brain with each other so that you can do the functions that want to do.

Now, in addition to the toilet needs and the focus needs, the cadence of speech or the speed of was slow. The processing was low. We have a very sophisticated piece of equipment here where we can actually measure how the eyeballs move.

So I'm not an eye doctor, but that would be visual acuity. This is oculomotor, so it's muscles wrapping around the eye balls. And if I cannot follow a target, how in the world could I focus?

Okay, just keep that in mind. So we also had in our writing primitive reflexes, the Palmer reflex was demonstrated, as well as there's mixed laterality.

Now, we've talked about laterally before. You can get into another podcast and listen to it, but it is the outward organization of your eye, ear, hand, and foot, which should all be on one side.

It doesn't matter if it's right or left, But it should be all on on side, And if its not, then it causes confusion and chaos in the brain. So we had in this situation right handedness, right foot, Right ear, but he was left eye dominant and he actually went to both eyes versus picking one over the other.

So he had never declared a dominant eye, which is going to create visual confusion. Now, if I think about this for a minute, If my eyeballs are the only piece of neurology outside of my skull, but my information from my eyes is processed all the way back in the back of the brain, that means how you see the mechanical part of how see is influencing the entire brain.

Wow, okay. So now let me connect some dots. If my timing is off, I'm not getting good information from both sides of my brain. If mechanics, which should have been, by this time, smooth sailing, that means I am not giving the correct feedback from my body to my mind.

My brain is constantly trying to figure out which way am I going? Which way I am supposed to do something? And children do not have that point of reference, a large library.

They go backwards. That's why regression is so prevalent in some of these populations where kids are not going in the direction that we want them to go in.

they regress because they don't have the material to bring it forward and to make the right connections and build excellent processing circuits.

Case Study: Teen Stress, GI Issues, and Regulation

So my movement is off, my timing is My eyes are not coordinated whatsoever. And when we checked auditory, sound was actually traveling more to the right ear, which that is the dominant.

But in some of the different frequencies, the bone to air ratio was off. Now, what does that mean? Okay, so you should hear sound in the air twice as long as it being placed directly on the bones of the skull called the mastoid, and you time it.

So here's my special senses of my eyes, my ears, So this is about how I get wired up. Mechanically, I'm not coordinated. Wonder if this little guy is just exhausted because he's trying so hard to adapt in an environment and he doesn't have the ability to tell somebody what he is really struggling with.

So this is how the brain came online. It came on line in a dampened manner. And that directly relates to impacting motivation and drive. Now, What did we do?

We really, really worked on the physical part for this child. And I have to tell you, I've been very impressed with how much endurance he's come up with.

Even one of our body weight programs Kids have to do planks. And this young boy, we literally started to hear him say, I'm going to my time longer than I did the first round.

He was setting goals for himself. When you go back far enough, you begin to reboot how the body can now give the brain the information that it's hungry for.

And once you go back far enough, many times it is like a domino effect. You may find all kinds of things in an assessment, but I really believe it about going back to that very first part.

that really began to pull the domino out of place and literally halt the progression of development. And if we go in there with that information, it's pushing that domine back in and allowing everything to go forward.

So we may have a chief complaint of we've got potty training issues, but it's not just potting training issue. It's about his perception of what it is to go to the bathroom.

And that's what has to be changed. So that is one example. The second example that I wanna give is an older teenager, okay? And lots of GI issues, a mindset of perfectionism and pushing themselves so hard that they actually have now programmed themselves into this state of pure stress.

And the consequence of that purestress is an inability to go to the bathroom. And it then turns into many, many different trips to more of urgent care rather than changing a lifestyle.

and the same part of the brain, because remember, we map, and we can see where there's calm, where's there is a storm, Where we need to go in and bring just some relaxation so an individual could be okay with experiencing calm.

Yes, that is exactly what can happen by the patterns that we practice. If we go about something for years where I have this body image struggle, don't eat properly, you begin to think that you can't.

and trying to get an individual that's been practicing this pattern of neglect to those interoceptors, which would be screaming, saying, it's okay to be calm, and literally pushing that back.

No, its performance. I have to perform. And what ends up happening is that the longer these patterns go on, you are changing your own brain. You're basically having neurofeedback all on your home.

And that's why we know neuro feedback works. Because we have to take certain states And we have to introduce a therapy of self-regulation so that the individual can begin to remember what that feels like.

It isn't enough to just tell somebody, hey, you need to relax. Hey, need you to eat. You need go to the bathroom. Those things are innate. But if we practice a pattern of stress, if get so involved, in a pattern of urgent care and having the attention that you get when you go into that environment and constantly coming out with another label, another diagnosis, and another prescription, it becomes your way of trying to manage a situation.

Now, let me just kind of also put out there If somebody chooses for themselves to go into the traditional medical direction, that is your right. Absolutely your.

Right. And if you want to use prescriptions and you you. Want to get other types of medical care, That is you're right, But again, if we just constantly keep putting pills down the body, so again from the neck down, and we don't include the brain.

The body image is set up in the brand. You're literally mapped out on what's called the homunculus. But that limbic system, That insula cortex, so from the front of the brain, the midline, to the sides of brain.

You are conditioning this area and the more that those thoughts are going on, your brain goes in the direction that you want it to go into. This individual may not really want to go in this direction, but this is the pattern, and it's been going on for years.

And if we only go from the neck down and we don't include the brain, you can't fully change the outcome. Okay, so here's a possible question somebody has in their mind.

But that's what psychotrophic drugs are meant to do. They're meant improve the chemical balance of the brain, the connections between synapses in order to improve chemistry of brain.

That is its goal. Does it always do that?

Neurofeedback, Medication, and a Multidisciplinary Approach

Well, let me kind of set up a few things that I know I've heard over 30 years of practice. Well we tried this medication, it didn't work. We tried medication it, didn' work, we've tried several medications and we're not really where we want to be.

Neurofeedback actually makes medication work better because you may have the influence of a medication but you're now practicing the brain waves so that they're not just getting a chemical charge at the synapse, they are actually getting influences to the brains waves that's helping them realize what self-regulation actually feels like

inside of you because you are getting rewarded through a visual and auditory special senses feedback.

And you are a feedback mechanism, just like we're talking about with interception. That is a feed back mechanism. You're thirsty, I'm thirsty. I got to get something to drink.

Your hungry, i'm hungry. i got get to something eat. You have that line of messaging. You also have chemistry inside of you that when you need vitamins and protein and minerals, it might say to your brain, not only am I hungry, but I think I'll go eat that tuna fish sandwich that's in the refrigerator because it's going to meet a chemical need inside of the body.

So again, multi-disciplinarian, if I pull all those pieces together, If I choose to use medication and maybe even some counseling, but I incorporate my brain into the equation.

And we did a couple of podcasts on that genomic tests. That genomic test, not genetics. Genetics is chromosome to chromosome. genomics is your personal blueprint.

It's your ancestral line and epigenetics that have influenced the variants that exist inside each and every one of us. It gives us that information but it tells us potential interventions.

What can we do to support this person? Supplementation, lifestyle changes, but also medications that would actually work for this individual. So again, when we combine on a multi-disciplinarian level you're addressing how the human body actually works.

As I sit here right now on my podcast, my postural system is holding me up on this chair. My brain is going in many different directions. I'm reaching for neurons and I am locking in on them so that I can process the information that i want to deliver.

My eyes are focused on my camera so that I deliver a well-rounded podcast. I'm not looking all over the room, so I am able to literally zero in on what it is I want to focus on.

So there's many things going on, I beginning to feel thirsty and I have my water right here. to the feelings that I have and the personal needs that i have in order to balance out my brain.

Here at Connect My Brain, that's what we can do for children and for adults. We have a new facility, we have state of the art equipment, and we wonderful ways for you to get to know us.

Connect My Brain Services and Closing Remarks

We something called the CMB membership, which is only $19.99 and it allows you dip your toe in and get know to us Now, there's other ways. We have coaching, we have intensos, but most of all, it's always important to figure out, are we the right fit for you and are you the fit fit us?

If anything in the podcast really says, wow, that's my child, That's me, reach out, go to the website, connectmybrain.com and fill out an inquiry form.

It comes directly to me and I will be the one that calls you back and we'll have a little chat and We can start to see if we have A chance to work together.

Thanks for tuning in today. This is a special podcast in the remembrance of my mother, Mary Frances Hannigan Hansen, born December 23rd, 1932, and her heaven birthdate is February 14th, 2026. Mom, I love you and I'm so grateful.

To all of you, be blessed.