

Defining | US

PODCAST LEARNING COMPANION

Our podcast companions expand learning beyond the walls of schools and organizations by bringing crucial conversations to the leaders, educators and organizations that matter. Use this guide to promote critical reflection, deeper discussion and meaningful connections among adults and youth around the topics that are Defining US.

VOICES OF CHANGE

A Podcast with Stacey DeWitt

INSIDE EPISODE 18:

"Practical Neuropsychology"

Join the conversation as Dr. Paul Nussbaum and Stacey DeWitt engage in a constructive discussion about the implications of brain science for changing times. Nussbaum provides practical solutions for emotional regulation and brain training tools to support engaging in complex conversations. Learn how brain health can support self-awareness and collaborative work toward equity and social justice.



MEET PAUL NUSSBAUM:

Doctor Nussbaum is board-certified in Clinical Psychology and Geropsychology with a specialization in Neuropsychology. He is a member of the National Health Register for Psychologists and a Fellow of the National Academy of Neuropsychology and American Academy of Clinical Psychology. He earned Phi-Beta Kappa and his Doctorate in clinical psychology from the University of Arizona in 1991.

He is the Founder and President of Brain Health Center, Inc. that provides independent medical examinations, record reviews, and case management for those suffering neurological and neurobehavioral disorders. The Center also serves as the epicenter for Dr. Nussbaum's Brain Health Lifestyle®, consultation business, and his Keynote presentations internationally.



LISTENING AND REFLECTING

Use this learning companion to dive deeper into the episode topic, with suggestions for asynchronous listening, engagement and experiences that offer opportunities for reflection, connection and commitment.

WAYS TO LISTEN

Use the podcast transcript to increase engagement by following along and highlighting words, phrases, or concepts that stand out in the conversation. Take notes in the margin of reflections, connections and questions and consider these three methods for listening:

1. Open Listening - Listen to the podcast to simply notice and note the words, phrases and moments in the conversation that spark emotion and connections
2. Focused Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on the Moments that Matter using the time stamp and topics from the "Podcast Notes"
3. Reflective Listening - Listen to the podcast with a focus on critical self-reflection, using any or all the reflection questions below

CRITICAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR BEFORE AND DURING THE LISTENING

BEFORE YOU LISTEN:

1. What experiences have you had that connect to this topic?
2. What do you hope to learn from listening to this episode?

AS YOU LISTEN:

1. How do you measure your brain health?
2. What actions do you take to support your neurological functioning and emotional health?
3. What is the impact of the current social and political climate on your physiological health?
4. How do you communicate with people with whom you hold opposing views?
5. What role does socialization play in your ability to shift long-standing ideas and beliefs about racial, ethnic and gender differences?

AFTERWARDS:

1. What about this discussion resonated with you?
2. What questions or ideas would you like to explore further?
3. What conversations will you have or immediate actions will you take to create change in our own sphere of influence?

EXPERIENCES THAT ELEVATE THE LEARNING

The following experiences are intended for use with leaders, educators, parents and those working in educational organizations. The purpose is to promote critical reflection, connection and commitment toward action. They should be used and adapted based on the individuals, group dynamics and organizational context of the learning.

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

Reflect on Important Moments in the Conversation

Relisten to one or all of the powerful moments. Use the [podcast notes](#) to find the powerful moments with time stamps. Then write about your own perspective, experience and insights.

- How does your identity, experiences and knowledge influence your understanding of this topic?
- How does this topic connect with your current context?
- What are the implications to your practice?
- How will you continue the conversation in your school/community/organizations?

CROSS THE LINE

An important act of critical reflection is recognizing both the similarities and differences that we have with others. Nussbaum advocates focusing on our similarities rather than our differences and using the common ground as a tool for communication. [Cross the Line](#) is an activity that encourages individuals to identify and focus on their similarities. Although the activity is designed for students, it can be used in most settings and with people of all ages. The linked guide for Cross the Line also includes reflection questions to support further exploration of the power of similarities.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

Concentric circles are circles with a common center. Dr. Nussbaum talked extensively about the value of recognizing the commonalities that human beings share. He names kindness, goodness and empathy as attributes that all humans can cultivate and possess if we are intentional about developing our brains toward mental and emotional stability. Participants will use concentric circles and the questions in the “As You Listen” portion of the Critical Reflection Questions to discuss their experiences with brain functioning and development. The following describes the procedures for facilitating concentric circles:

1. Participants stand in two concentric circles facing one another (one facing outward and the other facing inward) and take turns responding to the question posed by the facilitator
2. When prompted by the facilitator, one of the circles moves to the left or right so that each participant faces a new partner
3. Facilitator should pose a new question
4. Participants and their new partners discuss the new question
5. Repeat all steps for questions in the “As You Listen” section of the Critical Reflection Questions

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE BUILDING DEEPER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND THE LEARNING

GO DEEPER WITH THE PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

In the podcast Dr. Nussbaum describes his practice of using the cell phone for good. He uses this practice as an act of kindness and connection within his community. Nussbaum texts at least one person each day with a positive and uplifting message. His texting is an intentional act of love and helps Nussbaum get back to his “home base”. Review the transcript to learn more about the concept of home base.

This activity guides you to practice using your cell phone for good. Identify a short, yet salient piece of information from the podcast transcript. In a brief text, share a piece of information from the podcast that you think will be helpful, with someone in your phone contacts.

THE REFLEX METAPHOR

The reflex metaphor illustrates the difference between reacting and responding to challenging situations. Dr. Nussbaum suggests that, as a society, our default reaction has been rooted in violence (verbal and physical) towards one another. He proposes that people pause, take time, then respond from what he calls our "home base". Home base is a place of love and kindness; it is one where we better ourselves and allow others grace to do the same. Use the podcast notes to review Dr. Nussbaum's ideas on the reflex metaphor at timestamp 11:55. Share with a partner what you identify as your home base. What character traits do you demonstrate when operating from your highest consciousness? Share some examples of when you have responded from your home base and when you have reacted out of violence as your default

- 0:42 Dr. Paul Nussbaum's background and why he became passionate for the work he does
- 4:09 How to position our brains to be loving, kind, and nurturing
- 6:07 The pressure for us to focus on how we perceive things
- 10:03 The Importance of Mindfulness
- 11:55 The Reflex Metaphor
- 14:15 Use your cell phone in a good way
- 22:59 Developing new strategies for constructive conversations
- 24:23 Emotional intelligence in teaching

EXPERIENCES TO PROMOTE TAKING ACTION

COLLABORATIVE CONVERSATIONS

A current complex conversation in education is surrounding the censorship of topics and texts that teachers should be allowed to address with their students. Stacey DeWitt discusses the conflicting feelings of teachers who want to perform the duties of their job while being respected and trusted for their professional expertise and experience to make decisions about instruction. DeWitt asks Nussbaum to provide tips for teachers who feel shut down by the conversations surrounding censorship through restricted topics and texts in their classrooms. Nussbaum offers collaborative conversations as a solution to the alienation that teachers may feel as a result of these rules. He asserts that all stakeholders deserve opportunities to present their perspectives and that collaborative conversations should be modeled for students as pathways to success. Collaboration during complex conversations requires emotional intelligence, planning and practice. This activity is an opportunity to plan for a collaborative conversation. Consider the following tips for your discussion:

- What topic do you need to address?
- Who should be included/represented in your discussion?
- What facts and opinions will you share during the conversation?
- How do you plan to respond if you are triggered by negative emotions?

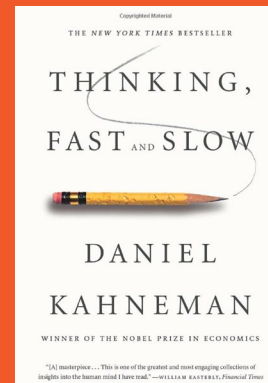
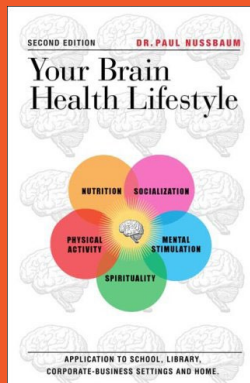
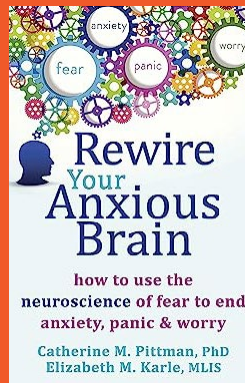
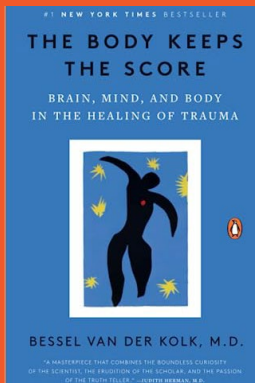
MOMENTS OF MINDFULNESS

Dr. Nussbaum reminds listeners of the importance of self-awareness for developing higher social consciousness and engaging in complex conversation. He suggests being mindful of one's behavior in every moment- paying attention to indicators of discomfort, giving voice to one's feelings and examining their underlying causes. This activity is a guided opportunity to practice mindfulness of daily practices and behaviors.

Use a journal or recording device (there are applications for your cellular device) to document "check-ins" throughout your day. Set a goal to check in with yourself at least three times throughout the day. At the end of the day, or the following day, take some time to review your journaling or audio recordings. Consider the following:

- What were your moments of joy or surprise?
- What were your moments of discomfort? What did you find challenging?
- What underlying emotions are related to your feelings of discomfort?
- How can you use your reflections to inform your future responses in challenging and complex situations?

INDEPENDENT READING AND BOOK CLUB RECOMMENDATIONS



RELEVANT RESOURCES:

- [Official website: Dr. Paul Nussbaum](#)

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