

How A Stroke Revealed The Secrets Of Whole Brain Living

Tim Doyle & Jill Bolte Taylor

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ABOUT THIS EPISODE

Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor shares how surviving a devastating stroke and losing all left-brain functions led her to discover the power of living through the right hemisphere. Over eight years, she rebuilt her ability to speak, read, and think, gaining unique insights into brain recovery and healing. We dive into her concept of *Whole Brain Living* and the *Four Characters* that shape our minds, offering practical tools for self-awareness, balance, and peace.

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Instagram: Tim Doyle | The Outworker Youtube: The Outworker

What's up outworkers. Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor shares how surviving a devastating stroke and losing all left-brain functions led her to discover the power of living through the right hemisphere. Over eight years, she rebuilt her ability to speak, read, and think, gaining unique insights into brain recovery and healing. We dive into her concept of Whole Brain Living and the Four Characters that shape our minds, offering practical tools for self-awareness, balance, and peace.

Tim Doyle: I know being a neuroanatomist was a critical reason why you believe you made a full recovery from your stroke, but how groundbreaking was it for the medical community as a whole to have an individual like yourself with your expertise and your knowledge and your work, be able to experience a stroke and then be able to talk about and document the entire process.

Jill Bolte Taylor: It's been a very interesting perspective from that avenue. Because of the stroke, I've been invited to a lot of conferences for neurologists, neurosurgeons, neuro anything, PTOT, speech and hearing, which is really wonderful because it shows to me medical community are interested in gaining insight into this type of major hemorrhagic stroke and recovery through the eyes of someone who speaks their language. It has been, and there are certain things that the medical world has done very well for the treatment of stroke survivors. And there are some things that I believe that they should do completely differently. And it's lovely that many of the medical professionals actually care about making changes based on some logical argument.

Tim Doyle: Do think you would have ever been able to garner your insights about the brain without your experience of going through a stroke?

Jill Bolte Taylor: I think that the only way that, you know, if we're very specific in what did I gain, what did I gain as a neuroanatomist who experienced a stroke in the left hemisphere of my brain, the left hemisphere is a part of our brain that connects us, one, to language, two, to me, the individual, my ego, my identity of self.

Three, the boundaries of where I begin and end as a human being, as a defined entity separate from the energetic ball around me. And then it takes that perception of me, an individual, and then relates me to the external world through language and through behavior that either fits in or does not fit into the social norm. So.

So that's how we function pretty much as living beings. And then we have this right hemisphere that is very creative, very open, very expansive, very entrepreneurial, very energy and connected to all that is based. And it's technically part of our unconscious brain. So the beauty of this experience was that in the shutting down of my left hemisphere, I lost me the individual, I lost language, I lost any past or any future, all I had was the present moment. And so because of this experience, I had the opportunity to live in the right here, right now, present moment of the right hemisphere, no longer tethered or inhibited by the left hemisphere, to know exactly what's going on in that what we would call and classifies the unconscious mind.

So there's simply no way that I ever could have attained that level of understanding and make that contribution to science and society if I didn't have that left hemisphere shut down completely.

Tim Doyle: So going to the day of your stroke, December 10th, 1996, you didn't realize right away that you were having a stroke. What did you think was going on in the

Jill Bolte Taylor: True.

Jill Bolte Taylor: I just knew I was having neurological weirdness.

That's the best way I describe anything that looks like neurological weirdness. I had had some neurological weirdness things in the past and you your brain says, well, that's interesting. But it wasn't until my right arm went paralyzed by my side that it was like, know, whack upside the head realization, my gosh, this is paralysis of my limb, I'm having a stroke. And so once I that I was having a stroke, I moved with more urgency in order to try to orchestrate a rescue so that I would actually survive the experience.

Tim Doyle: Instead of panicking, you thought to yourself, wow, this is so cool. So cool.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, it was. It was absolutely fascinating through the eyes of a scientist. know, neurological weirdness is a reality of our experience based on the brain cells that are, have now gone offline, removed inhibition off of an experience that I would describe as neurological weirdness. So, so yeah, through the eyes of a scientist, this was really an absolutely fascinating experience.

Tim Doyle: Do you think reacting in that type of positive fashion rather than panicking? Do you think that had some type of positive impacts on your physiological wellbeing in the moment?

Jill Bolte Taylor: I think that it was to my advantage to understand what was going on through the eyes of a scientist for the process of recovery. But I think it got in the way of me having more of a sense of urgency to get help on the morning of the stroke. So I think it was probably to my disadvantage while experiencing the stroke, but to my advantage in trying to figure out how to use what I still had in order to recover the circuits that I had lost.

Tim Doyle: Can you just walk me through what exactly had transpired after you found out that you were having a stroke in the moment and how you were able to get the help that you needed?

Jill Bolte Taylor: So I can give you bits and pieces of it, but I encourage you to suggest to your audience that they go to my TED talk on ted.com for 18 minutes of the big drama. But suffice it to say that when I awoke that morning, I was a Harvard trained and published neuroanatomist. I was performing research and teaching at Harvard Medical School. So.

So that was the level of my scholastic achievement. And my interest in research was how does our brain create our perception of reality? Because I have a brother who's been diagnosed with the brain disorder schizophrenia. So my focus has always been on

what is the difference between my brain at a cellular level between my brain and my brother's brain in that he experiences hallucination and delusion.

and I do not. I can actually have a dream and connect my dream to a reality so that I can make my dream come true. So everything for me rests at a cellular level and then on the morning of December 10, 1996, I experienced a major hemorrhage in the left hemisphere of my brain and over the course of four hours I could not walk, talk, read, write or recall any of my life.

I describe myself as an infant in a woman's body.

Tim Doyle: What would the impact have been if the hemorrhage was on the right side of your brain instead of the left?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, you have to look at what do the two hemispheres do? How are they? Because they process the same information, but they do it in different ways. So the right hemisphere, it's a right here, right now machine. So I don't have an individualization. I don't have a past. I don't have a future. I perceive myself to be literally as big as the universe. I'm connected to all that is. I'm a living being relating to other living beings as as one human family in relationship to this beautiful planet. So that's the action of the right hemisphere. So in the absence of the left hemisphere, that was what my experience was. And then I had to rebuild my identity, the ability to experience a past and a future and regain a differentiation of myself as separate from everyone else.

So if I had lost the right hemisphere, I would have lost my connection to all that is and my perception of the big picture of our life. And I would have been focused on details, right, wrong, good, bad, and it would have been a completely different experience.

Tim Doyle: I know a big part of your identity that you turned into was you felt like you were a fluid rather than a solid. And that had a massive positive impact on you. And you've said that that's actually one thing that was challenging that that went offline as you started to improve and return to being a solid. Are you able to almost try to recreate or embody that feeling of that fluidity in your life today and if you do, how do you do that?

Jill Bolte Taylor: I do. pretty much, I was very blessed that I existed in the consciousness of feeling that I was a fluid for eight years. And it wasn't until the residual problem area in my brain disappeared and healed that I differentiated myself as an individual.

again. And so the beauty of that, I mean, just imagine if you know that you're connected to all that is and you're just just in the flow of life and life is just on an ongoing continuum, then you're not attached to the past, you're not attached to to being uncomfortable around change, change is becomes the natural. And so you just go with the flow and you are what you are and life shifts and you're good with whatever is because whatever is, is and in the consciousness of the present moment of whatever is, is, it's good. It's, you know, I had the perception that I was perfect and whole and beautiful in that present moment, energetic of the flow. And the left hemisphere then

comes online and it says, well, now I have a past and I have a future and there's right and wrong and there's good and bad. And now all of a sudden I'm going to make these judgments about my experience of life.

as good or bad and it's like but in the present moment it just is what it is and and an acceptance of that leads leads to a real sense of deep inner peace so so i i it was my priority to never leave that consciousness and re regain i wanted to regain the understanding of and the experience of how the left brain perceives me because that's the only way I can get those cells to become functional and I can become a functional individual again, but I exist in the flow of my own life. So I don't have to try to get back there. I have to go the opposite direction. I have to work harder at actually getting on a calendar, getting on a schedule, getting everything in punctual so that I get where I need to be, know, do all that.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Is more of a chore for me than actually experiencing the blissful euphoria the present moment

Tim Doyle: When you were in the hospital, you said you experienced people as concentrated packages of energy. How did this differ from the way you would experience people before your stroke?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, before the stroke, I saw individuals. After the stroke, I was more tuned into their affect, their emotion, the energy that they brought into a room. One of my most famous quotes is, take responsibility for the energy you bring into this space. And what that means is, is pay attention to who you are, be a conscious human being.

If you're unhappy, do you really want to bring your unhappiness in and spew it around the new environment? We have the ability to take responsibility for who and how we want to be in any moment and becoming a more conscious human is a tool, a way for us to be able to do that.

Tim Doyle: So you get a surgery and then afterwards there was a fear that you would maybe lose the ability to speak. And I believe our voice is one of the most powerful tools to use. What was that feeling like when you were able to talk to your mother when she arrived at the hospital after your surgery?

Jill Bolte Taylor: not as attached to that outcome as she was. She was desperately terrified. The blood clot that happened in my left hemisphere was between my two language centers, the one that creates sound, dog. Dog is a sound. then comprehension is placed on that dog, that image of dog, that understanding of what is a dog. So with this major blood clot the size of a golf ball pushing on those fibers, I didn't have much language and and so but my mother was an academic and she recognized, you know in the real world if I were to to lose the ability to Reomprehend at the level of language then I would be essentially completely disabled and an outcast from our society And my mother never had high achievement ideals for me. She simply wanted me to be able to regain enough ability to live individually, live independently, and hold down a job and be able to attend to my own needs. So she wanted me to be able to be a healthy, independent person.

Tim Doyle: How important was it that your mother was the one who was taking care of you?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, you know, I wouldn't be here talking to you if it hadn't have been for my mom because my mom moved, gave up her world and moved into my life. And it was her task to first tend to my needs as an infant. She recognized immediately that, you know, I could not walk, talk, read, write, recall any of my life. I was pretty much in a vegetative condition and she was, she walked into the room and was really quite shocked to discover that I was as ill as I was and you know she walked into the room realized I was an infant and she crawled right into bed with me and wrapped her arms around me and started to rock me just like she would rock a baby and people say you know they would ask her for years how did you know to do that and she said there was nothing else for me to do. My daughter, my 37 year old daughter was now an infant. And what do you do with an infant who is in distress? You cuddle them and you rock them. So that was the new beginning and what that said to me, because I did not know what a mother was, much less who my mother was, but what that said to me is this is the entity, this is the energy ball that is going to help me, she's going to protect me, she's going to care for me, she's going to nurture me. And I was very, very blessed that she was as good at it as she was.

Tim Doyle: Diving deeper into your recovery process. Something that I've become increasingly dedicated to is making sure I'm getting quality sleep and understanding the things that I should be doing to allow for that quality sleep to take place. Can you talk about how sleep was a crucial component for you after your surgery?

Jill Bolte Taylor: sleep was number one. Sleep was number one. you know, we exist in a society that doesn't value sleep on any level. And it's coming, starting to come back a little bit because there are good people and influencers now who are really recognizing the value of sleep. But we've existed in a society that has been sleep deprived as they absolutely possibly can. and is the great Ariana Huffington says, you know, yeah, you existed on four hours of sleep, but imagine how much more interesting you might be if you had one more hour. I mean, you know, it's like, come on, what are we doing? Sleep time is when the 50 trillion beautiful cells making up our our form as, as a life force, these are little little organisms that are eating and pooping.

And when we sleep, that's when the input shuts down so that the internal system can get flushed out. And all you have to do is look at a house or a bedroom or whatever kind of room. And if you don't go in and clean it up once in a while, it turns into a disaster zone and that's exactly the same of what happens with the brain. So if you want to be alert and you want to be clear and you want to be crisp and you want to be capable of learning and growing, then you need sleep. Quality sleep is number one and then what you're feeding those cells is right up there with it. And then exercise, you got to have movement. Movement pushes all the blood, it increases the flow through the venous system of dirty blood back into the system so that it can get re-cleansed again so that we can send oxygen for all those beautiful cells to be able to function. So,

you know, the top three are number one, sleep, number two, nutrition, and number three is going to be movement.

Tim Doyle: Is there any type of specific movement that you look to that you think is better than others?

Jill Bolte Taylor: find whatever movement you will do is the best movement. If you like to go play basketball, go shoot some hoops. If you're a swimmer, go swim. If you're a walker, go walk. If you got dogs, pick up your pace a little just so that you're getting, you're working your heart a little bit. You're actually getting it in. So I'm a firm believer that you don't have to go to the gym, especially as you age. What you need to do is to consciously and purposely increase the movement that you have in your house or during your day. So when you're leaning over and emptying the dryer, do it with panache, do it with enthusiasm, pull out just one piece at a time. So you have to bend over 15 times to get 15 different pieces instead of just grabbing them all in one and throwing them when you're upright. No, purposely engage in movement.

And to me, that's the best form of exercise anybody can give themselves is what comes naturally.

Tim Doyle: Another part of your recovery work that I really appreciate is what you call the try. And I feel like the word try has such a negative connotation within our society, but why was that also such a crucial component for you and your work after your surgery?

Jill Bolte Taylor: The try to me is an impetus toward. Do I look at something and do nothing or do I look at something and have an impetus toward action? And the try is the impetus toward action. And I have to have action and I have to have trial of action before I can achieve mastery of anything, whether it's learning how to play a scale on the piano or how to ride a bicycle or whatever it is I'm doing in recovery, it was try. And when I was feeling like a ton of lead laying in that bed because my body had no impetus, I could have just laid there as a ton of lead or I could have tried to even create a rock in motion, just a rock. Can I move anything? And I'm not going to move anything if I don't try. But trying doesn't mean doing. Because when you're wounded, you might try, I might think, okay, I want to move my finger, but I'm paralyzed. And I want to move my finger. Well, I got to find my finger first in my own mind. And I have to track the track the pathway between my brain and its understanding of that finger and rebuilding that pathway. So I might have to try 10,000 times to move my finger before it even thinks about a little bit of a budge. So I either try or I don't. And if I don't, well, I'm probably going to get more back with trying, then I'm going to get back without the drive.

Tim Doyle: off of that mindset, you've also mentioned that you've heard doctors say that you have six months max to make progress post stroke. And from my own experience, I've definitely been negatively affected by putting too much weight into certain medical opinions or things that have been told to me. Did you always have that long term mindset for you being able to make consistent progress, you know, year after year.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, neuroplasticity is an ongoing phenomenon in our brain. Neuroplasticity is the ability for neurons to be able to rearrange who they're communicating with based on their circumstance. It's called growth. So we are capable of neuronal growth, which gives us learning. So that never changes. That never stops. That's always available.

So do I try and in the try let that neuroplasticity have growth and learning or do I stop? And if you've got a professional saying, well, don't bother, stop trying. You're not going to get it back anyway. Well then.

shame on them because what that says to me is they don't understand neuroplasticity and the ability to heal. And unfortunately, we are existing in a time where science is finally catching up a little bit to the practice of medicine. But it is very typical for a medical professional who was taught 50 years ago when they were in school.

We didn't even know the word neuroplasticity until the 80s, much less really understand what it is until the year 2000. And unfortunately, getting anything practical in the world of medicine to shift takes literally eons of time.

Tim Doyle: Two terms that I think are used interchangeably a lot, I do think there is some difference is being able to recover and heal or recovery and healing. What do you think the difference there is between recovery and healing?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, I think healing is what happens at a cellular level, a physical level, in order for us to recover. So to my mind, they're pretty much the same. I can talk about recovery of something. I can talk about that at a healing level.

I think healing has a different connotation to it. It's kind of like the concept that science and spirituality are on different sides of a possibility of a scheme, you you're one or the other or you're in the middle somewhere. And it's like, as a biological creature, I don't see a separation. I see science as terminology that the left hemisphere is very comfortable with. So it would speak to recovery.

And I think that the right hemisphere is very open to the phenomenon of energetic interconnectedness and quantum physics. And that's, you know, that population is more comfortable with the language of healing. So I don't see them at a cellular level though as different.

Tim Doyle: That's a fascinating way of looking at that. I like that, that the right side of your brain is more apt to think or feel in terms of healing and the left side is more apt to think or feel in terms of recovery.

Jill Bolte Taylor: See you.

Tim Doyle: You learned how to feel the physical component of emotion and were able to control for how long you would feel that emotion. Can you explain how that works?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, so I love emotions because every ability we have is because we have cells that perform that function. So in order for me to be angry, I have to have an anger circuit.

and for me to feel sadness. I have a sadness circuit. So I have actual physical cells that get triggered, the circuit gets triggered, it runs the loop of the circuit, and then

either I re-stimulate that loop and I run it for longer and longer, or it dissipates, it gets interrupted. So simply in the process of recovering my left hemisphere, I noticed that when I would start feeling this tension in my chest, this clamping of my jaw, this furrow in my brow, this shoulders up, narrow breath, I just felt like exploding. And my mother said to me, Jill, we call that anger. That's anger.

And it's like, why would anybody ever want to do that? It feels like violence against my own self. It was horrible, felt horrible. And so I started looking at my clock, my watch, and I just measured the length of from the beginning of that stimulation until it triggered and dissipated out of my bloodstream was literally less than 90 seconds. And I thought, isn't that interesting?

our emotions run on a physiological loop, like a reflex loop, like the reflex and motor, but it's neuron to neuron, is less than 90 seconds. yeah, next time you start feeling a severe emotion, an extreme emotion, even if it's a belly laugh or it's joy, look at your watch and watch how long it takes for it to really run through you and flush out of your bloodstream.

Jill Bolte Taylor: will be less than 90 seconds.

Tim Doyle: How did you go about consciously choosing the parts of the left side of your brain that you wanted to recover when the left side of your brain started to come back online?

Jill Bolte Taylor: How did I say that again? How did I choose?

Tim Doyle: Yeah, how did you consciously choose the parts of your left side of your brain that you wanted to recover?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, I knew I had the advantage of, I'm gonna turn on the light real quick. So, because I'm slowly dissipating away. I'm melting away into the darkness. I knew that I had had language. And language is how we as a society communicate with one another. So, I knew that that was important for me to work on.

but language is very, very complex. Reading is like ridiculously difficult for the number of steps that it takes in order to be able to read. you're, if you, know, my mother would make a symbol like this is an S and an S sounds like ssss and I would look at her and I, first of all, is this an S or can you turn it this way or can it be on an angle? Is it, is that, you know, it's a wiggle.

And I would think to myself, she's lost her mind. You know, this is a squiggle and it doesn't make any sound. So just the concept that this is a letter, a letter has a structure format and then it represents a sound. Well, this is abstract thought. I didn't have any abstract thought left. I didn't have any thinking left. I wasn't capable of processing information at that level, but I understood.

that if I'm ever going to truly remaster language, I was going to have to figure out how to read, how to write, how to comprehend, how to get the apparatus to work in making sound, and then in how to have a vocabulary and be able to communicate. And just in that, that's an enormous collection, constellation of skills.

that I was going to have to relearn simply to be able to have language.

Tim Doyle: throughout your entire recovery process. mean, obviously you have a large appreciation for your entire process and almost joy and peace came along with your process as well. But were there ever any very challenging moments? And it's crazy to have to ask you that because you would assume that that would just be the default setting that you would just be in a very almost depressive state of having to rebuild your entire body and mind. But I mean, what was the overarching theme? Was it more joy and appreciation or were there, you know, large spans of time where it was very challenging to live?

Jill Bolte Taylor: You know, I was, I'm gonna go back to my mother. My mother recognized that I would be able to work my mind, work my brain, work my body, work in recovery for X amount of time. And then I had no energy left and I wilted. And so she stood like a guard at the door and she wouldn't let anybody in because she realized that people would come in and drain my energy and then I'd be worthless.

So she became a guard at the door. She was my body blocker. She wouldn't let people come visit me, including my boss, which was really very interesting that she did that. But she realized that I had to finally balance, fine tune every amount of effort I had output, I had to sleep. And so sleep, that's why for this process of recovery, sleep was so important.

So I would sleep and then I would wake up and she would feed me, take me to the restroom. And then she would work me. And working me might just mean helping me hold a puzzle piece with my hands, because my right side had paresis. It was very, very weak, because on the morning of the stroke, it was paralyzed. So...

So it had to be this fine balance. And because she honored that fine balance, if I had plenty of sleep, then she realized I could actually learn little bitty steps if you went from A to B to C to D. Now, if the goal was to get from A to T, I would fail because I'd had to go back to the beginning and take every little step in order to get there balanced by appropriate sleep. And this was for the entire eight-year recovery. The hardest thing for me, I think, that I would say in the process of recovery was learning to read again. It was, well, first of all, I thought it was ridiculous. Again, this is a squiggle. This is an S and it sounds like sss. And so I worked so hard to memorize all those squiggles and those sounds and then

Jill Bolte Taylor: my mother would put those together in a word and I'd be going, you know, and then she'd say, no, now you don't care about the W-O-R-D, now you put them all together and they become a word. And it was like, all that work for nothing? It was horrible. It really, for me, was, learning to read was the hardest thing.

So, there were moments of suffering, but for me, I was just so happy I was alive and my mother was so happy I was alive. I did not die that day. And she would sit on the couch, I'd be sitting there looking like a little goofy, happy girl and she'd say, child, how can you be so happy? And I just knew it was like, I didn't die that day. It didn't matter what I couldn't do.

I was still alive and had the potential to have more time and to grow and to learn. And if we took it very systematically and valued sleep and nutrition and movement, body movement, then at least we set me up for success and look what happened.

Tim Doyle: remarkable and obviously a very slow and monotonous process was the rec...

Jill Bolte Taylor: Very slow, very monotonous.

Tim Doyle: What throughout the entire eight year recovery process, was it pretty much linear or were there ever plateaus or big setbacks at all?

Jill Bolte Taylor: You know, this is really important because when we learn, no matter what we learn, whether we're recovering something like I was recovering, or we're simply learning like how to play tennis, right? Or how to golf or do something, play a piano. We have to learn details and we have to learn patterns. And then we have to work those patterns and become a master.

that before we can achieve the next level and Unfortunately when it comes to insurance coverage as soon as you reach that plateau and you should celebrate when you reach a plateau because now it's time to stop bringing in new information and master everything you have learned, integrate that. And then once you have that mastery, now you approach it from a whole new perspective. And then it's time to reengage and learn again. And that's not what the insurance companies do. The insurance company says, they've reached a plateau, they've stopped learning. And so now we're gonna withdraw the insurance coverage. And so now we're not working with anybody and now we digress.

because we haven't been given the chance for mastery. So that's how that system works. But you have to master.

Tim Doyle: helping people liberate their own inner peace, joy and magnificent beauty has become my personal agenda. How is your work with whole brain living?

Jill Bolte Taylor: gonna say you're a very nice person if that's your personal agenda but then I'm realizing you're reading my words yeah

Tim Doyle: Yeah, that was a quote. Helping people liberate their own inner peace, joy and magnificent beauty has become my personal agenda. How is your work with Whole Brain Living and the four characters played into that agenda?

Jill Bolte Taylor: No.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, you know, when I gave that Ted talk, had already defined myself as completely recovered. And that went out into the world and the whole world got introduced to Jill Multi-Taylor at that level. And so Ted and I, I was the first Ted talk that ever went viral.

on the internet. So Ted and I kind of got famous together and that was exciting and interesting. But for me, it was a miss because I wanted people to walk away from that Ted talk in awe of themselves and what they are as a biological creature. And instead what happened was people were in awe of me. And I It was a miss. That wasn't my goal. My goal was to help people realize they have the power to choose moment by moment who and how they want to be and that they have these awesome parts of who

they are and they can get to know these different parts of who they are and then have the power to choose. So it took me until 2021 to publish book number two. I never thought I'd publish.

Book number two, I never thought I'd have anything more to say, what it does, whole-brain living, the anatomy of choice and the four characters that drive our life is all about helping people differentiate four different parts of who they are. Two different emotional parts, one in each hemisphere, and two thinking groups of cells, one in each hemisphere. And when you get to know each of those four groups of cells, then...

you can choose in any moment because you know what your choices are. And you can't choose if you don't know what your options are, which is why people may meditate for 20 years and never feel that experience of blissful euphoria because they don't know where they're going. And what Whole Brain Living does was it gives them a framework of getting to know this part of who you are. And then once you do that, then you can choose to embody that part.

Jill Bolte Taylor: by choice.

Tim Doyle: How can we go about becoming more consciously aware of all four of our characters?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, I encourage them to read whole brain living. Whole brain living is a one of a kind. This is a framework that marries the neuroanatomy underlying neuro anatomical cells with what those cells do. thinking cells think, emotional cells emote or experience or experiential.

but there are big differences between what the right brain does and what the left brain does. So for example, then the right emotion, which is right here right now is more experiential. What does it feel like to be in this body? What does it feel like to dive into water and feel the pressure of the water and the temperature of the water and literally wetness of the water? What does that experience where the left hemisphere emotional tissue.

actually steps out of the consciousness of the present moment and it takes the information from the present moment and compares it to our past experience to determine, am I in danger or threat in the present moment? So we have these two very different instruments inside outside of our brain and how they process information so that we can be a whole human and the better we get to know those four characters, then we can bring them into conversation with one another. And it's a democracy. It's like, well, who do we want to be right here right now and have a negotiation with the other parts so that we never experience personal conflict because we're in communication with ourselves.

Tim Doyle: building off us as individuals, building that relationship with our four characters. You also say that the ultimate goal is for your four characters to become so familiar with one another that they create healthy relationships among themselves. How do we make sure we're going about that as well with those relationships between the characters are also being built?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Exactly.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, I think that, you know, as we, if we sit and we recognize that there's four different personalities inside of me that are very predictable based on the skill sets and you have the exact same four characters based on the anatomy of your brain and we all have four characters, then I have my own four that I need to work with and let them get to know one another. But in any interpersonal relationship, that means there's eight of us.

And so we might find that some parts of our brain get along really well, but there are certain parts of ourselves that we just don't know how to navigate in a healthy way. Because when you're in your unhappy triggered self, it's my automaticity. I automatically become emotionally triggered as well. And when we will never find a resolution until someone steps out of that triggered emotional part of who we are.

in order to hold the space in a different way. So what Whole Brain Living does is it gives us a roadmap to our own peace of mind. And when we have that inside of ourselves and we understand the four characters in the other person, then I can strategize your four characters very differently because I have gained the power then to have choice.

and who and how I want to be in relationship with you.

Tim Doyle: To set the stage, you also just briefly describe what each character represents?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Yeah, yeah, character one is the left thinking tissue in our brain, left thinking, and that's our rational brain. It defines the boundaries of where I begin and end. It is my individuation, my identity as an individual. I have a past, I have a future. It defines what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad. It likes to control people, places, and things. It's our alpha type personality.

and it likes to be the boss in most of us. So that's left thinking. Left emotion, again, has a past and a future. So these cells step out of the present moment, compare the present moment to our past experience, and our past experience is where all of our emotional trauma from our childhood is. So this is where our trauma from the past is. So it may be angry, it's also our fight or flight.

autonomic nervous system with the amygdala and the hippocampus. It's all of our addiction tissue right there in the left insular cortex. Wipe that out, people don't have addiction anymore. It's really very interesting. So character two is kind of our, it's a little person inside of ourselves, one of the children that never matures inside of ourselves and it's...

It's kind of always looking for a reason to push away and say, no, I don't want more of that in my life. It's designed to protect us. It also is necessary for us to grow because it learns from past experience. So we have to have this little character two part of who we are in order to learn and grow.

I call character three is the emotional tissue in the right hemisphere and the right hemisphere it's right here right now. So in that emotional it's more experiential as I described like diving into water. So it's that playful, it's creative, it's open, it's expansive, it's entrepreneurial, it's adventurous because it doesn't define right what's

right wrong good and bad. It just is what it is and it's going to color anything any color it wants because it

Jill Bolte Taylor: and it wants to try you know whatever it is and then the right thinking tissue is the tissue that is right here right now and it's the big picture perspective of our life but the biggest piece of that big picture perspective is I'm a living being I'm alive and I'm made up from a single cell and that single cell multiplied and divided itself inside the womb at a rate of 250,000 cells per second, per second, and it's this big energy ball of consciousness around these cells that make up this magnificent organism that we all are. So it's the part of us that is a more our, what a lot of people think of it as our divine self or our...

higher self or our our self that is connected to something that is greater than we are. It's like the portal through which our consciousness moves when we pray or when we have awe and celebration and gratitude in the present moment.

Tim Doyle: Our character four's consciousness is the most distant destination of our hero's journey and returning to this consciousness is a coming home to our precious and most peaceful self. Our character four is our authenticity.

Jill Bolte Taylor: I couldn't have said it better.

Tim Doyle: What I find most fascinating about that, just to break it down a little, is that you say it's the most distant destination, but then it's a return and us coming home rather than us traveling to uncharted territory in a way. Why is it that return home?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Because that's the energy from which we come. mean, when you stop and you think about that single cell and that single cell becoming two cells, then four cells, then eight cells, etc., eventually you're like 50 trillion cells. Those are pretty complex differentiation of job and function in order for you to exist as a living being.

And part of that is going to be the ability to experience that right emotional tissue, consciousness. But that's going to take us away from blissful euphoria because now we're in action. And blissful euphoria is not in action. It simply is what it is. Move that into impetus toward, and now you have...

that right emotional tissue and then step out of the present moment and now you're in the left hemisphere and that's going to take you even further away from the consciousness from which we come because now you're going to distract us and complicate us with a past and a future and a linearity across time which is all made up by the cells that we have so returning to the stillness returning to the peacefulness is the quieting of the left hemisphere, both thinking and emotion, as well as the experiential impetus in the right hemisphere. So for me, that's how, and that's what happened to me with the morning of the stroke. I wiped out three of my four characters. I was swimming in a sea of silent euphoria and it was, well, what do I do with this? Do I just stay here until my body...

Rotson dies or or do I try?

Tim Doyle: A years back, I had a really bad back injury and no conventional physical treatments helped me stuff like physical therapy, cortisone shots, spinal decompression, et cetera, et cetera. None of that had any improvement on my condition. It was all mental work and meditation that helped me and what I came to understand as talking with my brain where it was almost like having one-on-one therapy sessions with myself. And what I was taught was the goal here is to bring your unconscious thoughts into your conscious mind. And after learning more about you and your work, the way that I also see it now is I needed to become more aligned with my character for.

And from a lot of the people that I've spoken to for this show, who I would say are very aligned with their character for they've also gone through some type of physical stress or physical hardship, whether it be some type of injury or depression or something along those lines. Do you think there's any correlation there between physical suffering and becoming more aligned with your character for.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, I think that when we suffer, we either continue to suffer because misery loves miserable company. But boy, you know, after a while it's like, and we may seek relief from the external world. And it sounds like, you know, you, went through, you jumped through all those hoops of what does society have to offer me so I can suffer less. And when all of that fails, you know, at some point we surrender.

and you surrendered. You surrendered for hunting for something outside of yourself to try to figure out, I have any ability from within to draw on this mystery of healing energy that people talk about and people demonstrate and people try to guide others through and And in order to do that, you have to surrender doing everything else that the system says you ought to be doing when unfortunately the success rate is often very poor on especially certain types of recoveries. So when we do hit that wall and we explore we, you if we're lucky, we find and you found and you got it. And for me, whole brain living is a fantastic tool for people to use to identify, well, what does that mean?

You know, what is that character for? What are they talking about? What is blissful euphoria? What is the healing power of the universe? Is all that real or is that all woo woo crap? And it's like, you know, every ability we have, we have because we have brain cells that perform that function. And that's part of the function of the character for is bliss. is this awareness that regardless of my external circumstances,

Jill Bolte Taylor: I'm the life force power of the universe with manual dexterity and cognitive mind. I mean, we are this miracle and to be able to tap into that part of ourselves that allows us to flow with healing is real.

Tim Doyle: The line that stuck with me the most from your second book, peace really is just a thought away. Why do you think we've been programmed to think otherwise?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, just to be the kind of creature that has relationships with other creatures forces us into having a social norm. And the left hemisphere is this masterpiece of a tool that we use to communicate with one another, to speak with one

another, to read, to write, to, you know, do billions and billions of bits of data in every moment of details, details, more details about those details. We're a masterpiece. But when we're being a masterpiece, we're not in our healing part of our brain. We're in our doing part of our brain.

So, but we exist in a society where we really have skewed to the value of the me, the I, the individual, as opposed to the collective whole of humanity. And as long as that's how we are, and it's interesting that politically we're shifting even more and more toward that, then that becomes, it's not our health and wellness, it is our stress.

circuitry and so you know I care about nothing more than I care about our emotional health and well-being and and it's important that people realize I'm in charge of my health and well-being regardless of my external circumstances I have the capacity to know what that means for me and for me that means okay paying really close attention to What TV do I watch? What radio do I listen to? What influencers do I listen to on podcasts? What do I want my bubble to look like? Because it's my bubble. I live in my bubble. You live in your bubble. Everybody lives in their bubble. And I want my bubble to be peaceful.

Jill Bolte Taylor: and beautiful. So I'm going to surround myself with that energetic and then take me and put me into the external world instead of taking the external world and putting it into me and letting it dictate who and how I'm going to be.

Tim Doyle: I think a line that sums up all those ideas perfectly from your book, how we choose to be today is not predetermined by how we were yesterday. How can someone start to see their personality as something they can intentionally design in the present moment?

Jill Bolte Taylor: Well, you know, I have to go back to Whole Brain Living because I think it's, I think Whole Brain Living, the book, the material is why I had that stroke. You know, if you believe in destiny, there's no question that that was my destiny. If you don't believe in destiny, it's the way my gig unfolded and it makes for a really good story. And it was, you know, I was the perfect girl in the right place with the right education, with the right personal family history.

to go through this experience and walk away with the insights that I've walked away with. And so I think if people really want to know, whole brain living is popping up everywhere. It's really very interesting because it is the only platform, again, that framework that is psychology based on the anatomy underlying the brain.

So I really encourage people to explore whole brain living, get to know your four characters, learn how to practice the huddle of bringing them into conversation with one another and live a life of peace. It's possible, but everything's a practice. And whole brain living becomes a life practice that, wow, I like living a peaceful life.

Tim Doyle: I couldn't agree with you more. And after reading the book and this happened today where I had some internal self-talk and I think in weeks past, would kind of, I would have become anxious or would have overtaken me. But in that present

moment, I was just consciously aware of it and was able to tell myself, this is by character too. Who's just trying to take over and talk to me right now.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Save you. We're trying to save you, trying to push you away from it and save you, but not necessarily what you want for growth and learning.

Tim Doyle: It's powerful knowledge that when you're able to bring it into your conscious mind, it can definitely change your life on a daily basis.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Good. Thank you.

Tim Doyle: Dr. Taylor, where can people go to connect with you and your work?

Jill Bolte Taylor: You know, I'm at drjiltaylor.com. We'll be creating a new website. We'll be popping soon because we were waiting for the election to see how it went in order to figure out, you know, how do we progress forward? So, but anything by Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, right now I kind of happen to be everywhere because whole brain living, there's a real need for it in our society and people.

People are talking about it. Thank you. Thank you, Tim. I really appreciate your time.

Tim Doyle: Dr. Taylor was fantastic to have you on the show.

Jill Bolte Taylor: Thank you dear, take good care.

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