



Episode 14: The Surprises of Treatment

Hosts: Tracy Stackhouse · Cory Dundon · Michelle Maunder

LISTENER NAME

DATE LISTENED

TOTAL LISTENING + REFLECTION TIME (MINS)

CPD HOURS CLAIMED



Episode Summary

We pick up the little guy from Episode 3, the praxis episode: a clever, social, ideational nearly-six-year-old whose sensory discrimination, postural stability and motor execution make him slide laterally, changing the goalposts whenever something gets hard. Michelle came in armed with a kit for ball play and some new language for error-making, and he ignored all of it. Then, deep in COVID and wearing a mask, he arrived with a drippy nose and an actual, urgent, self-generated goal: I need to blow my nose. Michelle followed it, and across that session and the weeks after, shoelaces, balloon-blowing and tying, he stuck with self-care tasks far longer than she would have predicted, monitoring, problem-solving and staying regulated, because the goal was his.

Tracy unpacks why: the high route of A, his own motivation, pulled him into a different kind of adaptation, and Michelle was there to scaffold the weak pieces, sensory discrimination and interoception, in a playful, embodied way. She walks Dan Siegel's four E's of cognition, embodied, enacted, extended, embedded, as a map of what Michelle did, and uses canalization and a Texan cow-path analogy to explain how a new, more adaptive pathway gets carved when motivation and connection do the work. Cory adds her own story of teaching a teenager with an intellectual disability to manage zips across an intensive week, reducing the demands and using her affect as the motivator, when the goal was not the child's own. It lands on the I can space: motivation as a high form of regulation, and the moment a child looks up and says, I did it.



Resources & Mentions

- Dan Siegel's four E's of cognition (embodied, enacted, extended, embedded); Tracy recommends going to the primary source.
- Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model, referenced on the non-linear nature of development.
- Ross Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions, kids do the best they can when they can.
- The Spirit tool and the high route of A (the motivational system; Stackhouse), with the spiraling continuum of development (Gilfoyle, Grady and Moore).
- On canalization, the carving of neural pathways, with thanks to OT Marty Smith's cow-path analogy.
- Check out DFX's Learning Journeys to build your clinical reasoning skills: <https://dfxlearningjourneys.thinkific.com/>



Reflection Prompts

Take a few quiet minutes to consider each prompt and write freely. Add or remove a prompt block to suit the episode.

- 1 Michelle's best session came from abandoning the plan and following the child's own urgent goal. Where might you be holding to a plan when a child's self-generated goal would teach them more?

- 2 When the goal was his, the child sustained attention, monitored errors and stayed regulated far beyond his usual. Think of a child: what becomes possible when the motivation is genuinely theirs rather than yours?

- 3 Tracy frames motivation as the high route of A, a high form of regulation. For a dysregulated child, how could harnessing their own motivation do regulatory work that calming strategies alone cannot?

- 4 Cory's teen case had no self-driven goal, so she reduced the demands and used her own affect as the motivator. When a child's own motivation is not there, how do you supply the drive without taking over?

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The canalization, or cow-path, image describes a new adaptive pathway getting carved through repetition and connection. For a skill a child is building, what would it take to carve the more adaptive path rather than reinforcing the old one?
