

# BAUER SHEPHERD & ROSS

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**Collaborating Down Under:  
Integrating Neuroscience with Collaborative Practice  
Sydney, Australia 2009  
Presented by Nancy J. Ross, LCSW**

- Overview: How to integrate advances in neuroscience and science of intimate relationships into our work
- Setting the Stage: What's the brain got to do with it?
- Unique opportunities of interdisciplinary teamwork
- Exploring the brain: What do we know now?
- Using the knowledge to change our brains: Basic assumptions
- Translating science into pragmatics: For ourselves
- Interactive exercise
- Creating motivation for change
- Going deeper: The elements of change
- Helping clients change
- Exercise: Handling the challenged client
- Learning how to get your point across without raising defenses
- Developing a script
- Listening to disarm
- Creating an action plan
- Dealing with problems and problematic team members
- Interactive exercise

# **Integrating Neuroscience with Collaborative Practice**

**Collaborating Down Under**

**Collaborative Practice Conference  
Sydney, Australia**

**Presented by:  
Nancy Ross, LCSW**

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## **Overview**

- How our work can make use of information from social research and brain science
- Translating science to pragmatics
- Role of mindfulness

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## **Overview**

- How we can change our brains: our attitudes / our behaviors
- How we can help our clients
- How we use this with our teammates

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### What's The Brain Got To Do With It?

- Opportunities for integrating science and Collaborative Practice
- Knowledge leads to solutions

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### Taking Advantage Of Opportunities: The Uniqueness Of Our Work

- Opportunities of teams
- "Transformative" process promoting deep healing versus shallow peace
- Focus on all members of the family during and after divorce
- Invested in growth and moving forward healthfully versus simply getting to agreement

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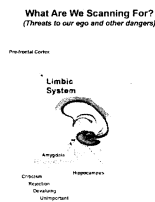
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### How "Software" and "Hardware Interact": The Bio-chemical Aspects of Intense Negative Emotions



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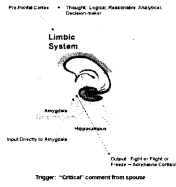
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## How "Software" and "Hardware Interact": The Bio-chemical Aspects Of Intense Negative Emotions

### The Results of the Scan



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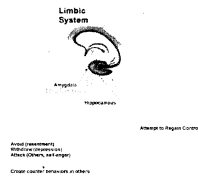
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## How "Software" and "Hardware Interact": The Bio-chemical Aspects of Intense Negative Emotions

### Reactive Responses



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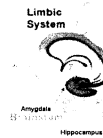
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### Creating Functional Responses "Rewiring Our Brain"



1. Deep (conscious) breathing and self-soothing behaviors
2. Exercise and challenge automatic thoughts
3. Creating new learned patterns of response
4. Create new feedback loops for new response
5. Repeat patterns to change brain pathways

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## Using Neuroscience To Change Our Brains

- What do we know about how the brain works?
- Key elements to brain change

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## Basic Assumptions

- The brain can change: Neuroplasticity
- Our brains are conditioned to produce predictable patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors
- By providing knowledge and supporting new skills, we can help ourselves and our clients create opportunities for change

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## Research Based Assumptions

- Certain behaviors are more likely to help individuals get their point across
- Individuals caught in their automatic internal states only benefit from repetitive exercises
- These exercises can change basic attitudes which change behaviors

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**Shifting Internal States**

- Determine situation (client centered) you want to work on
- Describe your internal state when triggered
- Verbalize the triggers
- State how you usually react

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**Shifting Internal States**

- What is the internal state you'd like to achieve?
- What might you say to yourself to create that state?
- From that internal state, what do you think you would like to do or say differently?

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**The First Tool Mindfulness: Personal Awareness**

- What is mindfulness?
- Role of the pre-frontal cortex interacting with the Amygdala
- Why is it important to our work?
  - The responsibility trap
- Setting the stage for the pre-frontal cortex to appear
- Practical tools in the moment

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**Exercise**

- With a partner, describe briefly a problematic situation with a client where you reacted strongly
- Partner: Guides through steps in handout "Studying Your State of Mind"

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**What Do Our Clients Need To Succeed?**

- Be able to determine what I want
- Develop skills to get my point across without making my spouse defensive
- Ability to manage my emotions and not let them manage me
- Be able to make good decisions for myself

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**Creating Motivation For Change**

**Help Client Determine:  
What's in the Client's Best Interest?**

- They will be less impacted by partner's attacks
- They will be able to present ideas more effectively
- They will be taken more seriously: be more influential
- They will build skills for other difficult situations

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### Going Deeper: Exploring Change

- Help client determine a specific situation
- Help client describe internal state that gets triggered
- Have client verbalize the triggers
- Have client describe defensive reaction

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### Helping Clients Change

- Help client describe a more desirable state
- Ask client: What can you say to yourself that might help you shift?
- Once there: What kinds of things does the client hope to say or do differently?
- Normalize mistakes

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### Exercise: Handling The Challenged Client

- In groups of 3's: One is the client; one is you, the professional; one the observer
- Professional: Instruct client on his / her role: guide client through sequence
- Observer: Give feedback / suggestions when appropriate

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**Getting Your Point Across Without Making The Other Defensive**

- Helping client get the "feel" of expressing healthy anger
- Detach from feelings / maintain cool
- Be assertive / engage
  - Determine appropriate situation
  - Develop and rehearse a script
  - Visualize giving it / address reservations
  - Roleplay

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**Standing Up For Oneself: Skills To Practice**

- Help client see that he / she has the right to be clear and direct and ask for what she or he wants in the face of consistent opposition: it's not a matter of right or wrong
- Help client learn how to state clearly and assertively what she / he wants without injecting criticism.

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**Standing Up For Oneself: Skills To Practice**

- Support client in delivering previously arranged script
- Coaches reinforce positive; help other person to hear message

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### **Developing a Script**

- From an "I" position
- Sensory data
- Thoughts / feelings
- Wants for self / other / stakeholders / new co-parenting relationship
- Past actions: taking responsibility
- Future action

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### **Listening To Disarm**

- Specific skills: Verbal Aikido
- Attend
- Acknowledge
- Summarize for accuracy
- Open ended questions on occasion

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### **Creating An Action Plan**

- Practice
- Visualize
- Check self-awareness
- Utilize self-calming techniques
- "What if's"

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### **Changing The Brain**

- Develop a practice plan: repetitive exercises
- Create self-reinforcing feedback
- Reframe conflict as opportunity
- Utilize team resources

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### **It's You / It's Your Team**

- Determine a problematic situation or difficult team member
- Note handout of possible interventions
- Try out a solution using one of the skills
- Get feedback from your team

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