



Transcript: #499 How to Help Your Child Clean Up Their Mental Mess with Dr. Caroline Leaf

Dr. Wendy Myers:

Hello everyone, I'm Dr. Wendy Myers. Welcome to the Myers Detox Podcast. And today we have a fantastic show. It was so good with Dr. Carolyn Leaf and she's going to be talking about how to help your child clean up their mental mess because there is an epidemic of childhood suicide. Childhood suicide rates are higher than adults right now, and there are children as young as four years old committing suicide. And it's because they are not being taught how to manage their emotions, what their emotions mean, that negative emotions will not last forever. And Dr. Carolyn gave a great analogy of how kids are flying a plane but they're not being told how to land it, how to navigate it, fly it, and land it. And so we as parents really need to teach our children about their emotions and how to navigate those and really how to feel better in our world of social media and all the negative emotions and depression and self-loathing that that can incite in us.

So thanks for tuning in and this is a fantastic show. You got to listen to it. We talk about so many amazing things and how the thing is called the neuro cycle and how to help children walk through that process of negative feelings and how to resolve them. Just a really good show.

And I know you guys, a lot of people struggle with mental health issues. A lot of people struggle with negative feelings and that can actually produce physical health issues that can cause cancers and autoimmune issues and you name it. Mental health issues, emotional trauma contributes to 65% or more of physical health issues. So it's something that needs to be addressed. And I created a great masterclass you can check out at emo-detox.com and it's all about how emotional trauma leads to physical health issues and how to successfully address emotional trauma in really, really interesting, easy, simple ways. And so I'm all about doing things that are easy and simple. There's only so much time in the day, so I'm just like, I want to do easy, simple things and I want to get to the root cause of my health issues so I can feel good. And so go check out the masterclass. It's definitely worth your time. emo-detox.com.

So our guest today, Dr. Carolyn Leaf, is a communication pathologist, audiologist, and clinical and cognitive neuroscientist, specializing in psycho-neurobiology and metacognitive neuropsychology. And so her passion is to help people see the power of the mind, to change the brain, control chaotic thinking and find mental peace. Since the early 1980s, Dr. Leaf has researched the mind-brain connection, the nature of mental health, and the formation of memory. And as a highly sought outdoor expert on mental health, she's the host of the top-rated podcast, Cleaning Up the Mental Mess. Dr. Leaf is also the author of several best-selling books, including Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess, Switch on Your Brain, Think and Eat Yourself Smart, The Perfect You, Think to Learn, Succeed, and many more. She has a master's Ph.D. in Communication Pathology and a BSCE in logopedics. And Dr. Leaf does ongoing research in clinical trials in psycho-neurobiology in order to improve mental health interventions. You can learn more about Dr. Leaf and her work at drleaf.com.

Great. Dr. Carolyn Leaf, thank you so much for joining the show.

Dr. Caroline Leaf: Thank you, Wendy. I'm looking forward to chatting.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah, so why don't you tell us a little bit about the current state of depression, anxiety, and mental health issues in children, I have to say I'm very worried for this generation on social media and on their phones constantly and just the health implications for that. So what's going on in your opinion?

Dr. Caroline Leaf: Well, there's a lot going on. First of all, we have to look at why we are sitting with the worst statistics ever in the history of mankind of children being so unhappy. Just recent research and statistics just from a few years back showed that it was always the adults that were depressed and the kids that were happy. And now that's completely reversed. Children are more depressed and more anxious and a higher suicide rate than adults. So we have to look at what we have done as adults. And this has been my field for nearly 40 years now.

And if I track back to when I first started in the field and I was first doing my training back in the eighties, we looked at the whole person. And we looked at the whole person in terms of their context. We didn't just whip out a diagnosis in 15 minutes and label and medicate, it was very much around who is the child, what's the child going through? The adult, child, whatever. What are they going through? Multiple sessions of interacting with teams of people like teachers and really getting the child's story. And that obviously takes a lot of time, but it worked and it meant that you taught a child to be resilient and that kind of stuff. And life is full of challenges and it's never going to go away. So we have to teach our kids how to actually live with that.

And then fast-forward to where we are now, we had a big shift around the fifties, which and fast-forward to now, especially the last 40 years, we shifted from that more holistic approach, more human approach into one of the lay of a

biomedical model. And that biomedical model looks at symptoms and attempts to eliminate the symptoms and make diagnoses assuming there's an underlying biological cause and that works really well for diabetes and cancer and immune deficiencies and things that go wrong in our physical brain and body. But it doesn't work when it comes to issues of being a human alive in this world and impacted by life.

So when you shift your philosophy so massively from looking at a human in the context of their life and us being impacted by environment and nurturing and parents' baggage and all the rest of it, and you shift it over and ignore all of that or pay attention but don't really consider that the main thing and you just focus on symptoms in a medical way, you are going to miss the plot. And that's what we've done.

We've got a generation of kids growing up now that as soon as they feel any level of anxiety or worry or any emotion, not a happy emotion, then something's wrong with them. And we parents have literally been trained, the media has indoctrinated, the psychiatric models have indoctrinated us with this thing that we mustn't be comfortable with being uncomfortable and that's wrong.

And so what that's done is taking a huge part of our humanity away from us as adults and also away from our children. They don't know how to process emotions. And a child that's two or three or five or seven or 10. If they have something going on in their life, they don't always have the words to be able to express and explain in an adult way. Obviously not. So it will come out in behavioral changes and that sort of thing. And in the past, we would look at why? Why does the behavior change? Why did the pattern change? Now, it's immediately off to the doctor or the teacher calls you in and your child's this and it's immediately a label and multiple labels and multiple medications.

And this is creating a situation where the medications, number one, change the brain. They're not safe for children, they're not safe for adults. The drugs, the psychotropic drugs. And even long-term use of those or early use of those increases a chance of a child having more and more issues. So if you put a child, for example, on Ritalin at the age of two, which they're doing in some cases and sometimes they're antidepressant that young, by the time that child's eight, there's a lot of brain damage from just those medications. And then on top of that, you're not helping them process and express themselves. You have a disaster waiting to happen. So we have to look at that.

And yes, of course, social media, we live in a changing world. Social media has changed us, the internet's changed us, the telephone changed us. Radio, TV, and every century things change us. And yes, the speed and everything is going up, so these things are not going away. We are going to have in 20, 30, 40 years' time, our grandkids will look back and say, gosh, the internet, that old thing, it's going to happen. So we've got to stop thinking that our generation's facing something unique. Every generation faces something unique. The difference

between this generation and previous generations, and I'm not saying that previous generations were better, they had a lot of issues too. But what has changed is how we as humans deal with ourselves as humans and help our kids as humans. So mind management. So that's a massive part. We can teach our kids to manage social media, AI, all these things, but we've got to teach them how to manage that and we're not doing that.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah, one of my biggest concerns, after the phones growing up on the phones and maybe brain damage or eye damage that can cause is the medications and children having brain damage or receptor damage for their neurotransmitters or inability to produce certain neurotransmitters, feel-good neurotransmitters where they have to continue taking these medications.

When I was 13, I was having depression and some other issues that every 13-year-old has for the most part, and the doctors wanted to put me on an antidepressant and I refused. And they asked me, well, why don't you want to go? And I'm like, I don't think that I need it and I'm concerned about, and I stood up for myself and advocated for myself and I just said, I just don't feel like I need that and I just want to address this without medication for right now. And luckily, that was respected, but I had concerns even at that age about how that would change my brain. And so can you talk a little bit about how the Ritalin, which frightens me to give that to a child, or the SSRIs that are being given, how is that affecting kids' brains and causing permanent brain damage?

Dr. Caroline Leaf: Well, first of all, kudos to you or well done to you for standing up and for your parents or your caregivers backing you and supporting you in that way because there are so many children that don't know how to advocate for themselves as you did. And parents don't know how to advocate because they're told by the doctors and the teachers that in some cases if you don't give your child Ritalin, take the child out of school. So parents are being put in a really, really difficult place. And I see the cycle has really started coming around full cycle because parents have reached the point where they're saying what you're saying, Wendy, I mean you're into detoxing and heavy metal detoxes. And that's one of the things that are in these meds is they are heavy metals in a lot of these medications, what they mix in with. So that's one aspect of this whole thing.

But the other side is that these do change the way that your brain adapts. Your brain is always changing. This conversation's changing your brain in a good way. But whatever you put in your brain, whatever you think about, whatever you physically put in your mouth, whatever you physically put in your body is changing your brain and changing your body. So when you put something in that is quite psychoactive, like a psychotropic, which are your Ritalins, your stimulants, your antidepressants, your anti-psychotics, and whatever I left out the anti-anxiety needs, those are changing the brain.

And over time, they generally use chronically, which means ongoing instead of acutely, which means in a one-off or two-off, like a short time period. And that

over time is changing the way that, as you mentioned, the receptors that are between the neurons, they're like little doorways that receive the chemicals. And what they do is they start getting less because you are putting on, you're flooding the synapse with all these different false chemicals that aren't real and it's very confusing. So to protect itself, there's an adaptation that's made. But those adaptations aren't healthy because now you've disrupted the homeostasis. Not only have you disrupted the serotonin, you've disrupted dopamine, you've disrupted anandamide, you've disrupted structures, you've disrupted electrochemistry, genetics, nothing is separated.

So there's a total body-wide effect of these medications. Also, they're misnamed. An antibiotic is what it says it is. It's anti the biological factor that's challenging our brain or our body. So when someone has a bacterial infection, an antibiotic is anti that bacteria. So when you say antidepressant, it sounds like, oh that antidepressant is an antidepressant so they shouldn't be called those anyway.

And a lot of the doctors in this field that really are experts that I know well and they're colleagues of mine and they'll talk about, we shouldn't be talking about antidepressants, we should be talking about people taking pills to make their mood change or mood changes or something like that. Because what they're really doing is flattening emotions. So there are changes in the synapse, that's just one part, but there are whole structural changes that happen inside the brain and each part of the brain is responding to the mind in different ways and it changes how they respond. And over time, this just gets more and more difficult.

And this is why very often a child who's put on Ritalin will start showing side effects of depression and they get put on an antidepressant and then that combination of an anti-SSRI and something like Ritalin can lead to psychotic-type symptoms. So by the time they're in their 15s, we start seeing levels of psychosis, which could be a combination of the medication plus life trauma. And then by the time they're in their twenties, we start seeing some major stuff changing. And that's not every child that's going to go through that, but there's enough for us to know that there's a problem and that we need to change that.

So fortunately, because of the neuroplasticity of the brain and because of the fact that the brain is not the mind, the mind changes the brain, when we manage our mind, we can actually take advantage of neuroplasticity and we can bring healing to the brain through mind, through diet, exercise, et cetera. But the mind is the main thing that actually changes the brain.

Dr. Wendy Myers:

Yes, absolutely. And we know there's so much research now that shows that your thoughts change the physical outcomes in your body and make changes. And so let's talk about the suicide rates. So you mentioned that children are having higher suicide rates than adults, and that just really struck something. When I was 13, I actually tried to commit suicide, and it's something I've never

publicly said out there, but I think that so many children are being subjected to social media, and I get addicted to social media too, I get on and okay, I'm going to do 10 minutes and two hours later I'm like, what in the heck is going on here? It's so addicting and produces so much dopamine. Really hits those reward centers and it's hard for adults to control. And I find myself feeling bad, really bad about myself and my body and whatnot after going on social media. I can't imagine myself as a 13 year old in that deep dark place and you don't see a light out of that.

What can parents do to teach children to ride out that storm and prevent suicides a lot of parents and people wake up and they had no idea or in the wake of a death of a child, had no idea that that child was at risk for suicide.

Dr. Caroline Leaf:

And that's what's so scary about suicide it's very often the children that you may know that they're a little sad, but they seem to have it together. And those are the ones that, as you say, take you by surprise and it's just a terrible, terrible thing. Kids as young as four are committing suicide in this country. So if that is the case, then four and eight-year-olds, you can't even think about what does that even mean?

Okay, let's talk about what happens to the brain when you look at social media. Anything that you are, as I mentioned already, your brain's always changing. So the first thing that parents can do to help with the battle with suicide specifically depression, anxiety, all these things, is to understand how the brain actually responds to something like social media. Now, a young brain is obviously different from an older brain. And as you said yourself, if you battle as we as adults battle, what is a child who hasn't got all of their brains is not even mature yet, it's still growing and changing. Your brain grows your entire life, but there are certain structures that have to mature and so on and certain chemicals and so on.

So when you constantly look at something, you what you are looking at with your mind because you're looking at it with your mind, you're observing this, reading the social media, your mind takes that visual input, little magnetic light waves and auditory sound waves and everything, that's all the stimulation, all that physics stuff and your mind, you, which is your ability to think, feel and choose, you take that and you put that in your brain and then your brain responds on an electromagnetic, neurochemical and genetic level.

Now, genetics means it's going to make a change. So it gets literally, as a gene, as the energy of the inflammation in your brain literally collapses like waves. It comes in like waves. Then you get a genetic response and the genetic response basically makes a protein that captures what you are looking at on social media as like a vibration. And then as you're looking over, in 10 minutes, you've looked at a lot of stuff, or in two hours you've looked at a lot of stuff and each of those things that you've looked at have been captured as little vibrations inside proteins and have grown into little trees that are thoughts.

So you've wired a thought network that looks like a tree, that's why I call them thought trees into your brain. So now you do this today, you do it tomorrow, you do it. By the time you've done this for around 63 days, which is nine weeks, which is very easy to do. Nine weeks pass by just like that, you have wired in a habit. It takes around 63, 66 days to build a habit into the brain, but the brain is changing from day one through to day 63. And if there's no management of how you are perceiving things at that moment, body image, identity, whatever it is that you're getting absorbed into the comparison, the FOMO, the fear of other people's perceptions, FOPO, all these words that we have, if that's not managed, that's been wired into that tree.

So imagine that tree growing to be this wiry, toxic, ugly-looking tree. Very much alive, but all the proteins are distorted. So when you look at something that affects your body image, like you gave that example and you don't feel good about yourself, your body image, that information is a vibration, but it's not a nice vibration, it's a horrible vibration. So it distorts the protein.

So we have distorted networks in our brain that become established networks and then if there are another nine weeks go by and whatever you think about the most is growing. So if we don't intervene and get an understanding of what this is doing to us and know how to read the signals of how that distorted network in the brain is affecting how we show up in life, then that's going to feed back in and eventually, multiple trees are forming and with no way to manage all the toxic energy that's been coming out of that which a child has, they can explode with major behavioral issues which then get medicated and the medications, we know that the depression pulls, those will increase the chance of suicide by I think it's somewhere between 60% plus.

So here you've already got a child whose identity's shot and they are absorbed and just consumed with this toxicity and looking for likes on Instagram and this one had 900 likes, I only got three likes, and my life compared to that life and was constantly consumed with that. You are driven by these toxic trees and your immune system responds and sees that as a threat in the same way it would see something like a virus in your body. The immune system of your brain does not distinguish between a psychological and a physical threat. It's a threat. So your immune system starts playing up, inflammation increases, creating brain fog, concentration problems, attention problems, et cetera. And then that immediately affects your body because the mind is embodied. Mind into the brain, into the body.

On top of that, if there's not enough exercise because they're not getting outside, they're not getting oxygen, they're not moving, they're not playing, they're not interacting with the same age group, it's so important for them to have that. That's how they're forming. They're not getting enough of that. They're withdrawing. Everything becomes distorted.

Now, all of that said, when I talk about mind management, what can we do as parents? So I explained the whole picture. When you tell this to a child, now I've worked with kids as young as three, two, and three and this is why I've written this book *How to Help Your Child Clean Up Their Mental Mess*. This first one is actually for two to 10-year-olds and it's coming out in August. Then I have the other one that came out about a year and a half ago. This you can give to an adolescent, to adults. And it's essentially, how can I recognize, how can I learn to manage this? How can I learn to deal with these emotions and how can I learn to recognize when I'm being affected and what can I do once I've recognized it?

Because it's one thing to recognize that and to talk about you're aware and all that stuff that if you don't know what to do with what you're aware of, you're going to get worse as well. So it's not enough just to say how you feel, which is happening at a lot of schools, which is great. They're talking about mindfulness and having feelings and then even maybe some CBT techniques where you have a technique to that's a bad thought, this is a good thought, let's now train the bad thought away. You can't get rid of what's happened, you can't get rid of that image of that other person's body. But what you can do is you can change what it looks like in your brain and you can change how it influences your future. So we have to empower our children and ourselves and children as young as two and three respond to this message of the brain.

So what I found a really easy way to get through to kids is to never treat them like they're dumb. They're brilliant. Kids have way more insight. We know from the research that's coming out now in this time period that we have misunderstood how much kids actually do understand. They may not have the words, but they are processing nonverbal communication better than an adult. They read your tone, body language, and eye contact, they read that so well.

They also understand when something's wrong, but they don't know what to do with that. So our role as adults is to actually sit down with them and tell them this is what's happening in your brain, this is your mind, this is your brain. This is what grows in your brain when you are looking at that stuff on social media, when you're going on the internet and you're reading all that stuff, AI is commodifying what you're looking at. It's basically mimicking you, looking at what you're looking at. There's all these calculations and people are watching you, what you are reading and what you are watching and what you are. And they are basically feeding back to you with calculations. It's not a real person inside that machine. It is people outside that computer that are actually watching you and using you to make money to feed more stuff back to you. And this is what it's doing in your brain.

That conversation is a very, very successful conversation with kids. They love it. I have brain pictures for older kids here and in this book what we've done is we've created a character called Brainy. This is the little Brainy toy and this brain is throughout the book. So Brainy is basically a superhero that walks the mental health journey with you. You can teach kids incredibly complex concepts when

you've got something as simple as a Brainy toy or something like that, a cartoon character. You can teach them really how to recognize, okay, my brain is feeling like this. My body's feeling like this, my emotions are feeling like this. And you can teach them the language. So to answer your question, it's important for a parent to understand how your brain works for yourself, and then to teach your kids how this is working and then to do this together to teach them mind management.

What we have done in the last 40 years is pathologized childhood. We pathologize adolescence and we should not be doing that because adolescence is tough and they do need to cry and they do need to be sad and they do need to be happy. And depression's not a bad thing. And when depression is understood, it's an emotional signal. Anxiety and depression are, if you teach a child that these are not bad, they're telling you something, you then keep depression working for you. If you don't, it tips into the zone where it works against you.

And this is the stuff kids can learn. And this is really why I wrote this book now for these kids. I've got my own four children that are now adults. They've grown up with the stuff that I've worked with hundreds of kids over the years, thousands throughout my practices, and people that work for me. And I've done a lot of clinical trials. So I know that when we equip a parent to understand how their brain works and how they can learn to manage their mind, then we can teach a child that. You have built a great platform for relationship building and a great way for you and your child to actually work out and deal with those emotions.

So I don't know if you want to ask me more specific stuff, but that's where I would start with getting to understand and help our children.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yes. Well, what are some of the warning signals you can teach children that something's going on, maybe something is going wrong with their mind or they're having negative emotions, and how to recognize those and deal with them more effectively and healthily?

Dr. Caroline Leaf: Absolutely. So what we see is that the mind, brain, body, connection; mind, brain, body, because the mind which is all around us and through us, makes us alive. It makes our heart beat, it makes our brain work. That's our mind. And on a physical level and on a psychological level, our mind is our ability to think and feel and choose. Okay? So our mind takes that, puts it in the brain and body, and the body responds by building it into the network. And then we show up. How do we show up? These are these four signals. We show up with our feelings, we show up with our emotions, we show up with our behaviors, what we say, and what we do. We show up with how that all feels in our body and then we show up with our perspectives.

So let's say a child comes home from school and you can see they're totally flat, really withdrawn. They're not. You can see that they seem very depressed or flat or just withdrawn. They're not talking, they just go to their room. They're not connecting, they don't want to eat. That would be behavior. When they do speak, it's monotone, monosyllabic. Then maybe they say, Hey, they've got such a headache and they have headache tablets, body. And from perspective, you can see that they're just looking totally negative.

So those would be four signals that they've shown up. So there are four main signals and those are emotions, behaviors, bodily sensations, and perspectives. So that's easy to remember. Four things we all show. Every human shows up like that all day long. Four categories of signals and for each of those, you can name emotions. Depression, anxiety, frustration, jealousy, indie, all of them, happy, sad, whatever. All of those are going to be. Behaviors, what we say, what we do, how we say it, how we do it. And bodily sensation, whatever you're feeling in your body because everything gets stored in the brain and the body, in the brain in one way and in the body, it goes into our cells, it's slightly different. It's controlled by the brain and in our mind we even store what we're experiencing as gravitational fields. And all of that collectively shows up in these four signals.

So what we can do with our kids is we can say, hey, and you can either, depending on the age, you can either model it for them, you can ask them, you can say, Hey, I see that you aren't feeling great, that you're really quiet. So you can just go through the thoughts. I see you aren't feeling great, that you don't really want to talk. You're just speaking in monosyllables. Asking, you've got a headache? And you seem really sad today. These are your four signals. So you can make a statement to them or you could ask that as questions with the four signals.

You can teach these kids the four signals first and say, Hey listen, there's a way that we can manage our emotions and no emotions are bad, no matter what you're feeling. I know that when you show up in X way, I know that that's not who you are. I know that you're coming home from school or you're coming home from your friend or you're coming out of your room after being on social media in this way that's not you. You're like this because of, so let me help you. Let's sit together and do this.

And so I've developed this concept called the neuro cycle that's had 38 years of research. It's got a foundational theory, it's got a lot of clinical trials and we still do clinical trials, that's what's in this book and in the other book and I have an app that brings the superhero who basically is a young child, two to 10 walks you through the neuro cycle.

So the neuro cycle starts with helping a child gather awareness of the four signals. So you teach a child that trees look at the experience at school, it grows, everything grows, there's thought trees inside of our brain. And those thought trees can be good and bad and they can make you feel like this. They make you

do things, they make your body sore and they make you look at life in a bad way or in a good way. So kids can learn that from, and I've got all the language, obviously age appropriate for a two-year-old versus a six-year-old for example. So I put that in the book.

So you first want to tell the children, let's do a neuro cycle, let's sit together and do this thing because it makes our brain work properly, it helps us to fix our brain, it helps us to take that energy from that emotion that makes you feel so heavy and so sad or so frustrated that you want to kick everything or so mad that you're breaking things. I understand that that's not you, but let's take that energy and let's use that energy in a way to help you.

And it's so important in this process of going from these signals and working through the neuro cycle, and I'll explain it very briefly in a moment, is to constantly validate the child. And I'm not saying that they're kicking their brother or biting their sister or throwing their tantrum and throwing things around the house. Obviously, that behavior needs to be controlled and it's, look, we don't do that. I understand you're frustrated and you've got all this energy inside of you, but let's take that energy and let's maybe first go for a walk. Let's go kick a ball in the garden, get that physical, they're very physical. Do something physical that can just decompress them. I'll give a lot of examples of how to do that.

Then second, let's go sit on the sateen or I often recommend to parents to create a mind management corner in their house, a neuro cycle corner, a mind corner, whatever you want to call it where it's beautiful. There's maybe a big chalkboard or a whiteboard because you're going to write and draw, but that's the place where you intentionally and deliberately go. That there are books there, the brain is there, toys are there, building blocks are there, pens are there, whatever.

So it's a place, my sister-in-law painted one whole part of her kitchen with black chalk and paint. And it was a cute little bench with flowers and a little box of toys. And that's an example of what you can do. Nothing that looks ugly, something that looks beautiful, but it's a point of departure. You go to the kitchen to eat, you go to the bathroom to clean your teeth and have a bath and go to the loo and that's a toilet for Americans. And you go to the gym to do gym.

We have these places we go to to do things that we have to do every day. Well, we have to manage our mind every day because our mind drives everything. When you're dead, your mind goes. So when you're alive, your mind's working. So let's be deliberate about managing our minds. That concept isn't a difficult one if you associate it with things like that.

So maybe your child comes home from school, and you go sit wherever your little neuro cycle corner is. If you haven't got one, just sit somewhere nice and comfortable or maybe do whatever you need to do to decompress them first,

kick the ball, breathe, whatever. And then you say, okay, let's talk about the four signals. Do you want me to give you a sentence or can you give me the sentence? Can I ask you the questions? And I've got all these in the book, I've got charts and examples of how you can do this.

And then once you've done that sequentially, going through each feeling, think of those signals as balloons, and they're balloons that have got strings attached. And then all those strings are attached to a thought. And as you come in the house, you don't know what the thought is that the child's gone through and the thought is the encapsulation of the experience, whatever they've gone through. So experience both into the brain as a thought. So it's this thing that's wired in your brain.

By identifying the signals, you pull the thought into the conscious mind. As soon as you are aware of, oh, this is coming from something, this happened at school, then we know from neuroscience that as soon as you are aware, then the protein bonds that are holding that horrible vibration in those protein ugly trees weaken. The branches become very unstable, which means that you can change them. So you are deliberate, intentional going through each of those four signals with your child has helped to change the brain. And the kids love this. They respond very, very well to this. Adolescents, you just use slightly more mature language. But it's helpful too. My adult patients, I did this with. Any age. It's just nice to know if I do that, this is what's happening in my brain, I'm actually weakening the bonds or the branches of the tree.

So then you say, okay, well, now let's look at the top of the tree, which is why this is happening, how it's happening. In other words, what are you saying to yourself? So now you take the four signals and you make bigger sentences. Four bigger sentences and each of those sentences will be okay, you're feeling mad. Why do you think you're feeling mad? Are you feeling anything else? I'm feeling mad because I'm just mad. I'm angry, I'm frustrated because this is something that happened at school. Okay, great. Well, you're moving your arms around and you're kicking the ball as you're telling me this. That's good. And you don't want to eat. So those behaviors, I understand that. So something happened at school. Are you feeling anything in your body right now? Yes, my stomach is sore. Why do you think your stomach's sore? Because I was so sad. I was so sad, they made me feel bad about myself.

So in other words, the second step is to reflect. Let's reflect on the four signals. Let's go through each of the four signals and see if we can start seeing what happened. Sometimes they'll be able to say, I was teased at school at that point. Sometimes they'll just say, I'm mad because I'm mad. I'm mad because I'm very sad. I'm mad because I'm frustrated. So they just add another emotion or they add another sensation and then you could ask questions like, how, when did this happen? So it's who, what, when, where, why, and how. You start asking those questions at the second level around those four signals. So it's very sequential. Your brain responds to order. Getting chaos into order. And the way we do that is

to drive a very organized flow of energy through the brain, which is what we're doing in these four steps. If you just talk about everything all at once, it's a big mess-up.

Then what you do is you grab say, okay, let's start writing this down. And you either write it on the chalkboard or you take a big piece of paper out and different colored pens, or however you want to do it and just start writing it down. And then you just put down everything that comes up. Let's just write everything that comes up. And that's when you start diving deep into the non-conscious, you start getting to the root of the issue, you'll start seeing what happened and then you stop and you go to step four, which is recheck. You look back, okay, let's see. You wrote this and you drew this picture and you did that. If it's a young child and they can't write, they'll maybe make a few scribbles. They can use a toy. You can get, Brainy set, show me what brain you did so you can enact and then you can talk about what you've enacted. So it's very sequential.

And then you re-conceptualize, which is step four. This has happened. So you've got teased at school, what did you do? That made you feel like this. What are we going to do about that? So you got teased at school and they teased you because you couldn't do your math at school and they laughed at you. And then at break time, they called you stupid, and that made you very sad. And this is what will come out of these previous four steps. So now you've got the details of what happened.

Okay, this is what happened, what can we do about it? Let's see, how can we help you? Can I help you learn that math so when you go to school tomorrow, you know how to do the math? We can ask your teacher for extra lessons. Children's duties. So let's see how we can make you resilient. You are not going to use those words for the two-year-old, but how can we put on some nice strong superhero cloak around Brainy so that if they tease you tomorrow, which they may, you can't protect your child and put them in bubble wrap, it's going to happen. What can you do to protect your child in case it does happen tomorrow?

You can get your child to something like imagine you've got a big cloak around you and it's this magic cloak like a Harry Potter and you put it around you and you're invisible. When they're teasing you, just imagine you're invisible or whatever. Something like that that you create, give them something that they can do that helps them to protect themselves and develop their resilience so they practice that with you.

And then the first step is pretty much you deciding what you're going to do and then actually practicing that three or four times and say, okay, here's Brainy. Here's another toy and this one's teasing that one. Now, what is Brainy going to do? And you actually practice that. So that's a young child. If it's an adolescent, you talk about that. What could you say? What could you say that would make

you comfortable? There's something that they'll be able to do that they can then practice doing and that'll be your active reach.

And that cycle took quite a long to explain because the first time explaining it to you and the first time you teach your kids, that'll take you a long time. But you can eventually get to the point where you can do this in a few minutes. You can be in the corner and your child's really upset during the neuro cycle. You could see that there's a pattern in your child's life and notice that there's something that they're consistently doing. Then what you could do is say, okay, let's sit down every day for the next few weeks, and let's work through this pattern. Because if there's a pattern that's consistent that's disrupting sleep, behavior and that's more extreme than just a little tantrum coming home from school but seems to have disrupted their life that they seem to be going down a black hole, that then you would do the neuro cycle for around about 5, 10, 15 minutes every day. And you'll start seeing more and more insight.

And it's very important to record this. And this can actually give you an indication that maybe there's some level of trauma happening and that's when you can decide maybe to reach out to a therapist, reach out to the teacher, reach out to whatever. But what you're doing is you're teaching the child, you know what? It's okay to have emotions. It's okay to feel these things. Bad things happen. What are we going to do about it? And that's what's vital.

And then a key component here to help your child is you as a parent should do this. It's very hard being a parent. It's very hard being alive. It's very hard, there are great things, but there are also things that aren't so great. So let your child see you upset. If you come home from work and you've had a bad day and you walk in the door and you yell and this happens and that happens and you stop and say, oh, I'm sorry, I feel mad. I'm frustrated and I kicked your toys out the way and my heart's beating so fast and today just sucked. Tell them that. Age appropriate, just use the words that they can handle and say this and just run through it very quickly and say, something happened at work today and this is why I'm like this. And then you could maybe draw some pictures on the board or you could draw a piece of paper and write a few words and say, my boss yelled at me or whatever.

And then you could say, but you know what? I'm at home with you guys now. I'm not going to take this from my boss. They were very unfair. This is what I'm going to do and now my action now is I'm going to sit and make dinner with you guys. You've just done a neuro cycle and you've modeled and given them permission. Oh, mom, also battles. Dad also battles. It's okay to battle. It's okay to mom and mom, dad and dad, whatever the relationship is. It's okay to battle. And my mom could say that my dad could say that and you're showing them it's okay to have emotions, but I don't just stay there. I work through the process. And that teaches a child resilience. Every time you do that, you unmask a layer of resilience. So tomorrow when something else happens, it's unanticipated because of what you did today and yesterday, you're that much more resilient.

Yes, it's a new situation, but your resilience enables you to handle that more efficiently, to have more wisdom activated inside of you, et cetera, et cetera.

Dr. Wendy Myers:

Yeah, and I think it's so important to lead your children emotionally and teach them because they just, especially today, I think there's so much working against children's mental health and there's an epidemic of neglect happening where parents can just leave their kids in front of the iPad or Netflix and do what they feel like doing. And we've all been there. But I think parents really need to be very mindful of teaching kids about their emotions and being mindful of not neglecting their children so that we create a healthier, happier generation.

Dr. Caroline Leaf:

Absolutely. It's so true. And sorry to interrupt you there, but Wendy, what's so important is not just to be aware of our emotions. Emotions go with behaviors. We must always remember that emotions are never alone. When we talk about emotions, we must talk about behaviors, we must talk about body sensations, we must talk about perspectives and we must then process through. Otherwise, what we do is we teach them to let the plane take off. But then if you don't fly the plane and land the plane, teach them how to fly the plane and land the plane, the plane will crash.

So what we're seeing a lot of is yes, let's talk about, oh, you're feeling like this, but if you leave it there, the kid will crash. You have to say, okay, well, why do you feel that? What are we going to do about it? Where did this come from? How are we going to deconstruct and reconstruct this? So you're teaching them to embrace, process, and reconceptualize, not just be mindful.

And that's critical because there's a lot of mindfulness out there. These kids are getting all kinds of mindfulness awareness training everywhere. But it's what you do after, you've got to go beyond that to get a child to feel empowered, to be able to manage. And you're quite right. This is a job that parents have to do, and teachers. And teachers are doing their best and parents are doing their best, but there's so much pressure. But it doesn't mean we could just leave our kids.

You don't have to take them off social media. You've got to teach them how to manage social media so they're looking at that social media and they're feeling bad about themselves, we've recreated a space as parents, they can then come to you and say, I'm so bad about how I look. And then you can say, okay, let's talk about this and go through the four signals. And then why? Because I looked at that. Show me what you looked at. Would you be comfortable showing me? I looked at those. And then you can give them a realistic analysis and then recheck four steps of, okay, is this really real? Isn't this maybe edited? Does everyone look like that? So it allows for deep, meaningful discussion between you and the child, an opportunity to teach. An opportunity for them to ask the questions and for you to answer the questions and ask them the questions.

And that doesn't take long, Wendy. It's something that you can bring into your life and you can do that in a car driving to school. In 10 minutes while you're

making dinner. If you've created that safe space, your kids will find the time and you'll find the time to talk to them.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yes. And also I, of course, talked to my daughter, but I also decided to put her in therapy just because I think sometimes kids don't want to talk to their parents or there are very sensitive subjects, sex, and boyfriends or whatever, they don't want to talk about that with their parents, but they'll just blab away to another adult. So I put my daughter in therapy even though there was no reason for it. There was no horrible event or anything like that. But I just decided to do that just to help her navigate her emotions and relationships at a young age.

Dr. Caroline Leaf: Fantastic.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Because yeah, for me that was pivotal when I was having my issues and my parents got me into therapy at a really young age. It just helped so much. So lots of different options out there.

Dr. Caroline Leaf: There are lots of options. The biggest thing is that therapy is so important, the biggest thing, however, in addition to that and I'm all for therapy, but you can't be with your therapist 24/7. You have to teach your child, they wake up with themselves at three in the morning and they're having a panic attack. They're at school being teased, they're sitting there on their phone on social media or there's a text group going on and they've been excluded. You can't have a therapist every moment. So we have to teach our kids and empower our kids to manage their minds. Mind management is critical.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Show us your book again and tell us where we can get it. Tell us what your website is.

Dr. Caroline Leaf: So it's called How to Help Your Child Clean Up Their Mental Illness. And it's exactly how to do the neuro cycle. There are many different scenarios used to uncover social media, trauma, social interactions, identity, and that kind of stuff. It's available wherever books are sold on pre-order at the moment, and my Instagram is [Dr Carolyn Leaf](#). Website, drleaf.com. And Brainy is a Brainy toy, but he's also a coloring book. So the younger kids can color in and there's a blank page. So Brainy goes through all these different scenarios and whatever. Once kids have got tools, they can tell their story.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Okay, great. So drleaf.com. Very easy to remember. And so Dr. Leaf, thank you so much for coming on the show. That was fantastic and I wanted to do a show like this, which is why I wanted to have you on because we do, we have a generation of kids that are hurting, they're in trouble and they need our guidance. So thanks for coming on and lighting the way.

Dr. Caroline Leaf: Thank you. I appreciate it. Nice to meet you.

Dr. Wendy Myers:

Yes. Well, everyone, I'm Dr. Wendy Myers, and thank you so much for tuning in every year and every week. We're coming up on the 500th episode. Can't believe I've been doing this for almost 10 years. Many, many more years, I'm going to be doing this and bringing you experts around the world about how to use alternative ways to address your health. Looking at detoxification, looking at bioenergetics, looking at emotional trauma, and things you're not getting, answers you're not getting at your conventional medical doctors to address your health because you deserve to feel good.