

Big Brain Radio Show
12/17/05

(music)

D: Hey good morning! And it's Saturday morning. It's time for the Big Brain Radio Show. I'm Dr. David Stussy and you call me Dr. D.

Z: I'm Dr. Zena Xanders and you can call me Dr. Z.

D: And we are

B: The Big Brain Radio Show.

D: So Dr. Z, I've got a ... we've got a really interesting show this morning.

Z: We have a beautiful woman in the studio, named Wendy ...

B: Mulhauser.

Z: Did I say that right Wendy?

W: Yes, yes you did.

Z: Mulhauser.

D: Now we've been talking a lot about the brain the last few ... well, that's all we ever talk about is the brain. But one time we had gone over about the parts of the brain... and what it's like when certain parts aren't working. Those are called physiological problems. They can be corrected. But there's another type of thing that affects the brain and that's called a brain injury. There's different types, and it's generally called a soft head injury if you survive and return to normal function. But the brain is never quite the same. And Wendy is very interesting because she has taken one persona, which is being an outstanding actress, being on the edge of stardom in New York City...

Z: Yes.

D: ...And getting injured in a pedestrian accident and then returning to survive and kind of create a whole new lifestyle based on her head injury.

Z: So she has a before and after head injury story.

D: Yeah...

Z: It's quite amazing.

D: Yeah it is interesting because a lot ... well you know, we see... especially in my practice we see a lot of people come in with head injuries from physical injuries, like motor vehicle accidents and a lot of times they don't even perceive their injury at first, and then they don't know what to do about it. And sometimes they even become victims of it. And the thing is that once you've had this injury, it alters your perceptions and the biggest trial for a lot of people is they had certain skills and ways of looking at life... sensory and motor. So maybe we should review the sensory and motor.

Z: Dr. D, what is the philosophy behind the Big Brain Radio Show that has to do with motor and sensory?

D: Well we have talked about it every week. And it's all we are. We are our sensory input, our five senses... actually there are 109 senses in the body, did you know that?

Z: Um, you know I was at the same course you were so yes I think I do know that.

D: Yes, you did know that. It goes all the way to our deepest tissues, but the ones we're most familiar with. If those sensories give information to our ... ultimately to our brain and then we create a motor response. A motor response is something that does something for us. And we take it for granted for sure. But then we also have a big brain. The big brain is our mind, our ability to perceive and create life. And life itself is a big brain phenomenon... a big brain experience. Because you can't measure it, it's weightless and... but it's there. It's the greatest experience in life. But it is also a motor and sensory response. We have senses that we have come in that we create ideas and culture with and then we come up with the big

picture... the big idea. And so who we want to profile is the big brain individuals.

Z: This is the Big Brain Radio Show. This is Air America Minnesota.

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D: Welcome back to the Big Brain Radio Show. We are here with ...

Z: Wendy Mulhauser.

D: So we've been talking about this person called Wendy. Maybe we should just hear her voice or something like that.

Z: Well, Wendy is the Executive Director, Founder and Teacher Trainer with Jelly Beans Creative Learning. She grew up in Anchorage, Alaska and earned a BA degree in theatre from the University of North Dakota. She was in New York City pursuing an acting dream when an accident changed her life and direction completely. Welcome Wendy.

W: Thank you.

Z: Do you want to elaborate a little bit?

D: Well you know I was at the Nordic America Thanksgiving dinner. I was giving a speech to about 850 people...

Z: You were there with the Scandinavians.

D: Huh?

W: 2,000.

B: 2,000 people.

W: It was.

D: 2,000 people, excuse me.

Z: And it was breakfast, not dinner. (laughter)

D: Did I say dinner?

Z: You said dinner. It was... well anyway, you were at the Scandahuvian event...

D: It started at 6:30 in the morning, so I'm sure it was breakfast. Anyway, I was giving a talk and I was talking about the brain and about the Nordic culture and how great they were and how they represented some of the best of ... of that ... of what culture is. So anyway, up afterwards I'm talking, up comes this sort of lady who's kind of diminutive... and she's not real big, but she caught my attention...

Z: Lots of energy though.

D: Lots of energy ... that's what I was ... the energy caught me and she comes up and starts telling me a little bit about herself. And I was so excited about it I contacted her later and she agreed to come on the show.

Z: And what was it about Wendy that captured your imagination that you thought she'd be good for the Big Brain Radio Show?

D: Well, she told me that she had had a brain injury and I could see from looking at her that her brain injury was not obvious. Okay? But she said it had affected her and that she had changed what she did and now she was into learning for children.

Z: Well, maybe we should let Wendy tell us that.

D: Yes... (inaudible)

Z: Wendy, what happened? Fill us in on the before. What was happening before the accident?

D: We want to know about the ... I think you said you tried out for the Yale Drama School or something like that, right?

W: I did.

D: And then you went to New York City to stake your claim, so...

Z: Let her tell the story.

D: ...tell it from there. I'm going to give...

W: No, that's fine. That's fine. I... yeah, after doing an audition for Yale, when I didn't get in I did the next best thing and that was just go to New York City and audition and start pursuing my acting career. So I was very fortunate to find a place close to New York because New York is too expensive to live very comfortably when you don't have much money. So ... so I was auditioning. I had something very exciting happen where a management company really liked my reading and they were going to send me out on auditions for film parts. And about... I think about a week later, I ... during a lunch hour I was hit by a car as a pedestrian and suffered a brain injury. I was working during the day in... you know just a daytime job. Not doing my acting during the day. And life just sort of changed in a moment.

Z: So you were crossing the street?

W: I was. I had a crosswalk too. In New York City, nothing is safe though. Really you just ... you just...

Z: So you were struck and you hit the pavement, you hit the car? What did you hit with what part of your head?

W: I was ... I was thrown in the air and I was thrown on the right side of my head. So my brain took ... my head took the impact and I was just pretty stunned. It took me a while to be able to move. This was the interesting piece too... In New York City it's just sort of a different culture and a different place. I loved it in so many ways because of the energy. But when you get hurt in New York nobody rushes to you.

Z: So there you were, laying on the pavement.

W: I was. And do you know, there really... there really is no reason I should... I just shouldn't be here. The car should have continued to run over me. I really... I really was so spared in that accident. I really... and I also really know that when that happened... I don't know... Because it was a

super hot day that day, I think there was give to the pavement and I think that's another piece of why I survived that day. So I think that saved me and then I think... I don't know... somehow I was protected. And I was spa...

Z: So do you believe that after that accident... did you have this realization that you're here for a reason?

W: I did.

Z: You were very clear about that.

W: I knew it. I ...

Z: Because you weren't supposed to be here.

W: No, I knew it...

Z: Logically.

W: No, no, no. This was Manhattan at noon time.

Z: Right.

W: I should not... nobody came to me, nobody protected me, nobody guarded me... I was lying ...

Z: So how long were you in the hospital recovering? Or what was your recovery like?

W: Do you know... I went straight to a hospital that day and just spent the day being... being reviewed and then was released. And it took ... it took me about a week of having severe spiraling and sleeping for hours and head pain that was just unbelievable, to finally get myself into a neurologist and talk to a neurologist about what was going on.

D: So ... I think it's important that we realize that she was an actress. And an actress has a certain style. We would probably tend to call them right-brained, which means they're very demonstrative, very... they see the big picture, everything is very excited. Everything counts.

Z: It's a creative artistic side of the brain.

D: Yeah, right. And so ... she landed on the right side. Now you can injure both sides when you do that, but it sounds ... from talking to her it sounds like she injured the right side of the brain.

Z: Would you characterize yourself as a pretty artistic personality before all this happened?

W: Oh, I was.

Z: You weren't into science and ...

W: No, no.

Z: ... and mathematics?

W: Hated history.

Z: Okay.

W: Hated those kinds of things.

Z: You were a dancer, actress, singer?

W: Absolutely, absolutely.

Z: The triple threat they call it.

W: Right... well...

Z: (laughter) More than that.

D: I think she told me... I asked her if she noticed any coordination problems, she said she went back and tried to tap dance and wasn't quite right but she couldn't figure out why. See her left side ... she hit the right side... her motor skills on her left side would be diminished. Or not ... it could not even be diminished, they just wouldn't be as good as they could be and when you're in that competition that you were trying to be in, which is the Big Apple...

W: Um hmm.

D: You would be able to tell that you were not the same person anymore.

Z: So what would you say ... what was the timeframe of your recovery? Was it six months, a year, two years? How long did it take you to find your new normal?

W: That's kind of a tough question. I think the new normal probably took a couple of years...

Z: Two years... yeah.

W: ...Probably a couple of years.

Z: And during that time were you doing active rehabilitation for your brain injury? You were seeing this neurologist... how did you recover?

W: It ... it took some time with me seeing different people. Some of probably what ... what was a detriment to me was the fact that I was so sort of strong internally. I was always a ... I was always a person who sort of could come back from things and endure and be the strength for everybody else. And in some ways that didn't help me because...

Z: That Nordic quality in you.

W: It probably was.

Z: The Viking Nordic blood.

W: Assertive...

D: Here we go again.

W: Assertive. And do you know I think people didn't realize how much trouble I was having until my body would start collapsing, or ... um, or ...or probably when I started having seizures. Different things like that where my brain was giving a...

Z: Yeah that would be a clue (laughter).

D: And that's a motor response that's there to save you. The other thing is your perception of yourself would have been altered so it was hard for you to tell that you weren't the same because your perceptions are altered. When your perceptions... you don't know because it's your perceptions. It's like you think everything the same, but things don't always... you know like there's this question mark. So you're living with your memory of how you used to be in your actions in the present and they don't jive. So you're kind of like two people almost for a while.

W: Absolutely. And I think one of the most important pieces of recovering from a brain injury is getting to the point where you can let go, to a point, of the old self.

Z: How it used to be.

W: You have to.

Z: You have to.

W: You have ...

Z: You can't be that anymore.

W: No. No. And you have to embrace the new person and you have to embrace some of the limitations. And you have to learn to forgive and care for yourself in a completely different way. You really knew yourself... for me, for 27 years I knew that Wendy...

Z: Um hmm.

W: So it was letting go of what I knew were my strengths what I knew I was good at and I could rely upon and start to learn who I had become or who I was becoming. And...

Z: How did you do that? How'd you do the spiritual emotional piece?

W: Boy, you know some of it was getting to the point where I could go to a support group and that was tough for me. I really felt... I really felt as though I was giving up when I ... when I got to the point...

Z: Like it was a sign of weakness or something? To do that?

W: Yes. Yes. Yes.

D: Was it effective for you when you did go?

W: Yes.

D: And how was it effective?

W: It was so effective because I was listening to other people who were ... who were in high functioning, high pressure kinds of jobs before the brain injury, and then after the brain injury they just couldn't do those same sorts of things.

D: Yeah, I think that's something we should talk about because your ability to take in information and just the... I don't think we realize how much stuff is coming into our brain all at once. And we kind of sense it because we can feel we're in a more stressful society, and when we get away from it we notice that. But there's a real distinction that happens because you're not able to handle that input. And the problem is like I said is the perception of yourself and other people. You look the same. People looked at you and probably thought you were the same person...

W: Right.

D: So what you're talking about didn't even make sense to them. So that when you talk to another person that shares that experience, that probably gave you a lot of strength.

W: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Z: Did you stay in New York for that? Or did you come back to Minnesota? Where were you after this time?

W: I got to the point where my brain, thankfully, started shutting down a little bit. I kept trying to do the, you know the Midwestern pull yourself up by the bootstrap thing and try to do everything I was doing before. And I just couldn't. I collapsed in my apartment one night and then the next morning I couldn't read and write. My brain was just shutting down. I wasn't letting it heal. So we packed up ... the boyfriend at the time ... and I and went back to Minnesota and sought out a neurologist I could work with. And I knew at that point that I really just needed to rest my brain. And I did just for a little bit and then I kept pushing it again. What I was also learning to do ... was learning how to pace the recovery because what I was finding was I would do too much and then I would regress.

Z: Um hmm.

D: Well see as a dancer and an actress you learned to get better by pushing yourself because then you actually ... that's a learning process. But with a brain injury you have a threshold. The neurons don't work the same as muscle tissue, etc.

W: Absolutely.

D: And so it... once you go past the threshold it stops working...

W: Absolutely.

D: ... It takes on ... You can't even put in ... if you put anymore information in you're going to create a detriment.

W: Absolutely.

Z: And I'm sure knowing just your personality for a short time, you started feeling better so the moment you started feeling better you wanted to do more.

D: Right.

W: Well abso...

Z: And then that was not good.

D: This is common with people who are injured.

W: Absolutely.

D: And so it's a very hard thing. So it was lucky that you had the support. Obviously you had somebody with you that supported you and helped you come back. And you found some doctor that you could ...

W: Um hmm.

D: That's not always easy, by the way. As you probably know ... and to a few.

W: It took quite a few...

D: I bet it did.

W: Yeah, it took quite a few years for me to get to that physiatrist.

Z: And when we come back we want to talk about what happened then after the brain injury. So, did you immediately start your new business? Jelly Bean Creative Learning? Or were there... Jelly Beans... excuse me... Were there other steps before that?

W: There were other steps before that.

Z: Other steps.

D: So when we come back we're going to hear about that.

Z: All right. We're talking with Wendy Mulhauser, now a resident here of Minnesota. A good Nordic gal here in the State of Minnesota. Listen in to hear how she took her brain injury and turned her life around. This is the Big Brain Radio Show. This is Air America Minnesota.

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D: Hey, welcome back to the Big Brain Radio Show. And we've been having an interesting morning, talking to Wendy Mulhauser, an inspiring actress and future stardom, being injured with a head injury. And it changed her perception of life and her ability to perceive who she was. And we're just talking a little bit about her recovery. Now I know everybody out there does not have a brain injury, per se – like Wendy is talking about. But we all have things that have altered our personality. We do bump our head. The average person has injured their time at least two to three times. If you're in Minnesota, we know you have fallen on the ice a few times. And... so head injuries can cause changes that are not as dramatic. Hers was very obvious and in fact, it wasn't all that obvious to her at first. So people hurt themselves. So if you have some ... if you've ever hurt your head or hit your injury you should contact us and let us know... we can tell you where to go. Because there are ... and when you've noticed a change that you don't have any control over, it's like this, it just isn't as dramatic or as obvious.

Z: Well, and we want to remind people that the brain is kind of like tofu consistency...

D: Um hmm...

Z: And it's inside of a very hard protective skull, so we'll survive, but the moment that that head hits the ground, that soft stuff hits against the ridges, the axons in the brain are... and the dendrites are pulled apart ... the connections are lost.

D: Diffuse axonal injury it's called.

Z: That's right... diffuse axonal injury.

D: That's right.

Z: We want to find out how...

W: I like that.

Z: ... how Wendy created her business, Jelly Beans Creative Learning... So when you got back to Minnesota, then you started recovering... what happened on your business journey, and how did you end up here?

W: The business actually was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I came back to Minnesota, briefly, for a couple of years. And then ended up getting married and we were ... we were changing states and ended up accepting a job for my husband in Ann Arbor. Ann Arbor was a beautiful place for me to launch Jelly Beans because we lived in a college town. It was artistic, it was intellectual, it was a perfect place.

D: I can see that. That is exactly what that is.

W: Yeah, yeah. It was a really great place. I, um... you know I was going through sort of a spiritual time in a way... trying to figure out, okay, who am I now? What am I left with? I know I'm different. I know ... I had done a little bit of theatre in Minnesota, through Mankato State University's graduate program. So I did a little Shakespeare and then another one act about ... about Holocaust survivors. This is sort of interesting for me to share too... and I had shared this with you before the show ... I discovered after the brain injury ... when I did that Shakespeare play, that as I read the text, I understood it in a way that I hadn't understood it so quickly before the brain injury. I was really always an actress who was a little intimidated by Shakespeare. And I found... I found... and this doesn't surprise you, does it... I found after the brain injury that I was really able to learn in different ways and at sort of a higher level... more easily than before the brain injury. And as you said in the beginning, I relied more heavily on the creative side of myself as an actress and as a person.

D: And people... individuals... and we've talked about it before... the left side of our brain is more analytical ...our ability to recreate information and speak and understand. The right brain is difficult concepts, which is obviously what you were doing, so it still was working fine but your ability to articulate it and use it was...

Z: So you started accessing a different part of your brain.

W: I did. I took a graduate theatre history class at that time too when I did that Shakespeare play, and I loved it. I ate it up. And I hated history before. But anyway, I'm digressing a little bit. But I did do a little bit of theatre before I went to Ann Arbor. Went Ann Arbor, Michigan... that's where I did ... I just started doing a lot of research about... about children's theater. I started looking at my world and thinking what's the need? What's

going on? What am I left with? You know, what could I do here? And I saw that kids were killing each other, and making really poor choices in my world. And it really sort of inspired me to help children understand how to learn... to understand how to be people together. And it just got my mind going. And how beautiful and wonderful drama is. And how beautiful and wonderful the interaction that can happen between two people is when ... when theater is ... when theater is executed. It's... it is the most incredible place. When I went through acting training... When we were in those classrooms and we were trusting and caring about each other, and exploring with each other, there's nothing like it. It is expressing yourself... it is expressing every emotion. It's a beautiful, supportive, loving place.

Z: So you thought you'd bring that experience to children?

W: Yeah!

Z: Now did you have a child at the time? Or what was the interest in children all of a sudden?

W: You know I had a background in children in that I taught gymnastics to children. I had been a camp counselor through my churches I was growing up. I always sort of had an affinity and an understanding of children. So that was kind of... it was sort of a natural... natural direction to go. Yeah. Another thing that it ended up being for me too was it ended up being this wonderful safe place for me to ... to... I don't know... to sort of evolve and heal from the brain injury. Because it wasn't being with adults who would be ... who would scrutinize...

D: That's interesting.

W: Who would...

Z: You had a place to be child-like again.

W: In a way...

Z: To start again.

W: In a way. And because I had some word retrieval trouble and I wasn't as quick at times with things, it gave me this safe beautiful place to not feel like people would be hard on me.

D: That's a great strategy. That was wonderful.

W: It's an interesting...It's pretty wild...

Z: That is cool. You've got me in tears.

W: But it... but it... but it's not... but it was about... I mean... but it was first... I want you to know ... it was first about me responding to my world. And it was also about me giving up all of it... and just knowing that I'm not the same person and I said "use me." I absolutely one night just prayed about and said, "Use what I'm left with. Use me." And it was the next day that the ideas about using children... you're going to make me cry too.

D: Go ahead, everybody can cry. I'll cry with you girls.

Z: (laughter)

W: Using ... using children's theater to help children develop as people and just... just to learn about themselves... I just knew that that could happen.

D: You know we're really talking about the big brain here. Because the big brain is where these ...

Z: I'd say she ...

D: ...ideas come from.

Z: accessed the big brain for that idea.

D: I think she accessed the big brain...

Z: THE big brain.

D: ...The big brain is our metaphysical existence. Our existence that does not ... it follows the ...

Z: The spiritual...

D: ... rules...

Z: ...component.

D: It follows the rules in the order of the universe, but it's at a level that we don't perceive. Just like at one point we could never perceive the internet. Well, there is a... there is an existence past that that we are moving towards and ... and accessing that as human beings is what makes life so great. And obviously you're doing that. You know, you template... you take a look at this thing and she looks... kind of templates on one and says "well maybe if I just turn this a little bit and turn this a little bit" and all of a sudden she has an insight that sees where she wants to go. The of course you did the thing that's the most important in life, she took action, which is a motor response.

W: Yeah.

D: So you need to acknowledge yourself for doing that because you could have still looked scared. You could have used a lot of excuses, and you didn't. And that's what being a big brain is all about.

Z: Did you have a working title for your business before you called it Jelly Beans? Or was it always Jelly Beans?

W: I didn't have a working title. I just opened a dictionary one day and ... and looked for something fun and chose Jelly Beans because it was whimsical and it really relayed that... it relayed... it relayed... just...sort of a...

D: Well you can't think of kids without thinking of jelly beans.

W: Yeah...

Z: I'm starving for jelly beans right now.

W: Sort of ... sort of a levity... and just ... just a funness about it.

Z: That's great. Well, if you don't have any jelly beans nearby, I know I'm going to Lunds after this to get some.

D: I'm thinking about getting...

Z: We're going to be right back. This is the Big Brain Radio Show and this is Air America Minnesota.

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D: Hey, welcome back to the Big Brain Radio Show. And we are having a wonderful day... morning... I guess it's still morning, isn't it? Yeah, we've still got some time left. So we are talking about recovering from a brain injury, but we're actually talking about something much higher than that, which is using our brain and accessing the different areas. And Wendy, I know we talked yesterday about... I asked you this question... that when you noticed that you were able to learn better and there was some things that you noticed and we kind of decided it could be your left brain more in compensation to your right brain ... I asked you if you were still that person over there... that woman who was this actress and had this certain personality. And then you had this other persona developing, so you kind of had like two personas... In order to be able to do that you had to have a certain pattern of thinking, which we earlier called critical thinking, which you kind of called very, very important to us. It had a lot to do with this program you developed. Can you tell us about that?

W: Absolutely. Absolutely. I know that I feel so strongly about the work that I do with children in helping them develop their critical thinking ability because when I had that accident, if I hadn't had the ability of critical thinking, when I hit a metaphorical brick wall with my life, I would not have been able to take... take who I was... what I was left with, what my world needed and all of these different things and figure out a way to make a vocation for myself and find... fill the need that I saw in my world. That's pretty...

Z: So tell me, what is critical thinking? Because that sounds pretty... like you'd have to have a high functioning brain to do critical thinking. So what do you mean by critical thinking?

W: Now brain injured people can have critical thinking ability too... we all do. Critical thinking is... is having the ability to not regurgitate information. Okay? It's an ability to be able to look at a lot of different pieces of information, a lot of different t...

Z: But if your brain is hurt, how can you do that?

W: Well obviously...

Z: That sounds hard to me.

W: No... no... it's...

Z: Versus inspirational thinking...

W: No...

Z: Versus creative thinking? Versus what other kinds of thinking?

D: Critical thinking is looking at the actual critical facts. There are varied factors that are giving _____ result and you have to be able to distinguish those critical facts.

W: Um hmm... absolutely. No I appreciate that. And that's ... that's absolutely it. That's a wonderful way of describing it. Critical thinking is... is just ... it's the polar opposite of just regurgitating information in skull. Okay? I'm sorry but this is just pet peeve.

D: We got to the key of your program. Go ahead, go with it.

W: Yes. It's just... you know... it's so important for our children to have a place to use their own creative resources and to have a place to develop their brains in that way.

D: Aren't they doing that now in the schools today?

W: Not by...

D: You can answer this honestly.

W: No, not by and large, they are not. I ... I know ... Do you know I have a graduate level class that I... that I've had the good fortune to teach through Hamline, and when I have those teachers in my midst, boy do I introduce to them the history of our educational system in America. Carnegie created schools...

D: Better tell people who Carnegie is.

W: Carnegie... well, Carnegie...

D: Not Dale Carnegie, right?

W: No, not Dale Carnegie. Carnegie was one of the big business giants of the past.

D: He was the Bill Gates of today.

W: Yeah, that's a great way of describing it. He... he wanted a school system to create worker bees. He was creating workers for himself and the other big business people at the time. He didn't want people to know how to think ... at all. And we have sort of ... well not sort of ... we have perpetuated that same school system ever since. It makes no sense. We have such a complex world. We need children who know how to think and figure things out. Who can look at information. Who can make considerations. Who can take a look at a number of different things and formulate an opinion based on that... not based on, okay that's in my booklet, now I need to answer that question that way.

D: You know, we were talking earlier and Dr. Z your daughter went to school where there was a little bit...

Z: Have you ever heard of Waldorf School?

W: Oh absolutely, I love...

Z: It's a very creative learning school.

W: I love that school.

Z: So I have a sense of what you're talking about.

W: I know you do.

D: Right.

Z: What you're talking about is the reason I didn't put my daughter immediately into public school because I wanted her to have that experience.

W: Good... good. It was a great choice.

D: So you're bringing... you're bringing that thinking because not everybody can do to Waldorf School ... it has some certain structure that would make it work for certain people.

W: Absolutely.

D: So the public schools ... you're desire... I can see you're very passionate about it... so ... you're critical thinking and then the social, emotional... is that a by-product of that? Of the interaction that it takes to do that?

W: To a point. All three of those things are just components within the curriculum that I've developed. It facilitates all three of those things. Because the activity is based in creative dramatics ... it's based in creative dramatics activities. Okay? And drama... drama is basically interacting. Acting is interacting. Okay? So when kids interact together the social and emotional possibility for growth is just inherent in ... in it. It's just there. It's so beautiful in that way because kids have to look at each other. They have to tune into each other. They have to take cues in from another person. They have to respect another person's ideas. They have to learn to collaborate. It's... it's just another form of play. So that's all there. The critical thinking piece is me taking away making plays and product, and imposing my kind of adult esthetic standard of their end thing needs to look like for the stage, but allowing them to create things themselves... using their own ideas... using their own genius. I mean, just using... using their own innovation.

D: You know I can think...

W: Giving them permission.

D: When I went to school, I can think of three or four different things that did that in the school that I went to.

W: Okay.

D: You know, small town, we just did that kind of stuff.

W: Neat.

D: We ... we sat out and we wrote the whole play together.

W: Neat.

D: And did stuff like that.

W: Neat.

D: But that doesn't take place now, is that what you're saying?

W: It is exactly what I'm saying. We ... as a result of the world being the way it is ... technology is taking away opportunities for kids to interact and be creative as people. The fact that it's a dangerous world lends itself to all of us parents not giving our kids as much freedom out in the world to explore and to be in the neighborhoods. To have that healthy place to develop as people and have ... just have that wonderful creative play happen. Do you know?

D: The playground... or the playground creative ... games we used to make up...

W: Yeah.

Z: We used to go out at night and play kick the can and you can't do any of that anymore.

W: Yeah! Do you know what? Yes!

D: And make up games.

W: Yes. And that absolutely was such an important part of your child development, and mine, and yours, and that isn't happening. And as a result of that, kids are not developing in a social and emotional way, or in critical thinking ways, to the same degree that they were years ago. And with the world being as complex as it is, this is a necessity. This is absolutely a necessity... not only for our children to be able to be fully developed as people, but we need people who can think and figure things out.

D: I just realized why some employees of mine all have trouble figuring...

Z: Yeah, really. Like I want to go play right now. So tell us... what do you do? So give us an example of how you would provide this. If a parent is hearing this and wants their children to experience this, what do you do? How can they find you?

W: Right. Well, the child programming that I have in the world is through community education centers and then community censures. So Chaska, Eden Prairie, Edina and Minnetonka and Waconia. It used to be eight, but it just was a little bit too much and I wanted to pull back to make sure that I could do... I just always want to do as good a job as I can on everything. Also... so they can find me there. And then I guess examples, to answer that question... When I have these kids in class with me, it's about...it's about keeping the class size really size. It's only 12 kids. So it's me being able to tune into every child and love every child, and then celebrate and... not reward them ... celebrate and appreciate all their ideas and all that they are and nurture that and give them permission to do it. So as we're doing activities it's warm up activities to get them playing with improvisation and playing with creating scenes, and playing with trusting their own choices. And do you know sometimes it's sort of interesting to get them to that point because they are so used to in school having a teacher say now you do this. Do you know?

Z: You have to kind of kick start them.

W: In a way...

Z: Their brain... to get them thinking again.

W: And to give them permi...

Z: They just kind of stand there.

W: Yeah. And give them permission. That's the main thing.

D: You told me you don't give them scripts, they have to make up their own stories.

W: Yes! Yes.

Z: (laughter) I'm having this flashback. You know... you want everything provided. You know like you want to watch TV and all this passive thing... and I remember when I was a kid I'd go to my grandmother's for a week every summer and I'd say, "It's so boring. There's nothing to do." Because she didn't have the technology. She'd give me a couple of cans and some rope and I'd have to make these little... what do you call those things?

W: Bongos?

D: No, you walk on them.

W: Oh!

Z: She would give me like cans and string... go play and make things.

W: Yes.

Z: It's like it took me a while to figure that out but then that was so fun.

W: It's so important. Another thing that I wanted to share too ... you know when you asked where parents find me... I'm also within schools. Schools hire me to teach teachers how to use what I've developed as a learning technique. I've been out in the world teaching camps based on science too, using the same thing, but as the kids are learning science because they're going through the information actively, kid esthetically with creative dramatics, all those same benefits are there. The social and emotional and critical thinking ... it's all there at the same time. So that's why I'm teaching the teachers how to do it, because I want as many people

who have children in their care or who they're teaching to get kids interacting and learning and playing through things together so that they have the opportunity to develop in ways I know that they are not and that they need to be.

Z: I wish somebody would have taught me science that way.

W: Wouldn't that be fun?

Z: Yeah.

W: Yeah it's fun.

D: You know in order to do what you did, you have to have a certain organization and ability and I think you said as a result of the head injury you were able ... you thought you were able to be more successful commercially by having... you know creating a company, etc....

W: Yeah.

D: ...Than if you hadn't be injured, is that correct?

W: Absolutely.

D: So it's a real blessing here.

W: It is. It's an incredible blessing. And it's ... yeah, it really is. Because I don't think I had the same ability before. I really was more right-brain.

Z: So you wouldn't have created a business situation had you not had that happen.

W: Not at all. Not at all. This is ... this is ... I mean it still shocks me. I mean it's...

D: She's still trying to be on Days of Our Lives.

W: No, I'm not. No, I'm not. And bless the hearts of everybody who wants to be an actress. Now, do you know I can't even imagine doing that

because I just ... I find so much joy in doing this and feeling... just feeling how important it is for my world. I just feel so much more satisfaction in helping ... in a bigger way in my world... than just acting... do you know? And I don't mean any disrespect against anybody who wants to act.

D: I don't think you said that, but I think what you're saying is we have artistic abilities and be able to express it in such a different way has created a unique situation for you. Anything else you want to say about your program in terms of ... you said you went back and you checked the history of ... you were talking about the history of education... why did you do that?

W: Well... it's... it's me probably post brain injury again. I love research, I love reading. I want to make sure that... I want to make sure that I'm as prepared as I can for things. I wanted to know... I wanted to know about the history. I wanted to... I wanted to have enough information to be able to effectively motivate teachers to look at things the way I was looking at them and to influence in an effective way. Do you know?

D: In case you were challenged a little bit about it?

W: Absolutely. I mean you always have ... you're more effective as a communicator if you ... if you have research and you have history ... so that's what I've done too as I introduce things in the world to clients and to parents. Me handing out information about all the educational benefits was such an important piece for me about re-educating the world with how I was using this. If I hadn't done that, people wouldn't have understood it in the same way... and they wouldn't have embraced it. Do you know?

Z: Um hmm. I think that you're working on your masters in education at Hamline, is that correct?

W: I am. I have postponed that a touch because I just recently went through a divorce so I might change to Metro State University because they'll give me one quicker. So bless the hearts of Hamline, but I may... we'll see.

Z: But you're still working on a masters... you're still committed to that.

W: Yes.

Z: So what is your thesis? Or what will your paper be for your masters?

W: Oh, I was going to call you Mrs. Z. Dr. Z, couldn't you guess? It will be ... it will be social and... it will be establishing that there's a need for kids to develop in a social and emotional way because they're not, and the importance of critical thinking. So it's all based on the work of Jelly Beans. And... and I really thought ... here's the interesting piece... I really thought that in order to write a book I had to go get my masters first... that I had to do the degree first. And I figured my thesis would be the book, okay? And a really interesting thing happened. I had publishers... I had publishers express interest in me before that happened. So that's what's going on right now too... that I'm.... I'm in the process of writing a book.

Z: Do you have a working title for your book?

W: I have seven because... I have seven.

Z: Oh that's exciting.

D: That's the right brain coming back.

Z: Well we've been listening and visiting with Wendy Mulhauser and she is the executive director, founder, teacher and trainer of Jelly Beans Creative Learning. So Dr. D... anything else from a brain point of view that you wanted to ask Wendy at this point?

D: Well if we just take a look at what's happened is we have a ... the brain is built for survival. It is our survival mechanism. And the fact is we probably go through and tell you to listen to the Big Brain Radio Show... you probably don't even think about your brain very much. You think about everything else that you experience, which is a result of the brain giving you that information. But the brain is our survival mechanism and of course that is the part of our body that has developed the most, in sort of the evolution of the specie as we call that. And our ability to critically think as you talked about ... our ability to be socially active... our ability to be emotionally stable... our ability to take ideas and interpret and create new ideas. So we're not only contributing to our self, which I think is important, but as a specie, we actually create a higher level of existence for future endeavors. So we're actually creating the future... and I think that's what makes the real big brains... well we're all big brains by the way. But it creates the big

brain experiences that we actually are creating out of survival for ourselves, which when we're younger is very important. But as we get older we're actually creating survival for ... and a legacy that we leave for everybody so all the big brains of the world can continue, because I think the big brain continues forever.

Z: So Wendy you're responsible for the genetic mutation that will have the human species go to the next level in creative learning. You got that?

W: I appreciate that.

Z: Okay, good. We're counting on you for that.

D: All right.

Z: (laughter) Just give her an assignment here before we go today. Make sure that part of humanity... the human species gets carried out. Meanwhile, we are the Big Brain Radio Show and we'll be right back. Just stay tuned for more big brain information. This is AM 950 Air America Minnesota.

(music)

(music)

D: Well welcome back to the Big Brain Radio Show. This is our last... what we call "Stuff that Works"... our last five minutes. And of course stuff that works is stuff that always works, no matter what, no matter where and no matter why.

Z: Ooh!

D: And we are talking to a big brain person who has stuff that works. And before we do that we should just do a little summary on anything we need to catch up ... any information...

Z: Yeah, you know the last few weeks we've been talking about the Big Brain Breakthrough... and if anybody's been following along, they've heard from Dr. John F. Demartini so we just finished that seminar. Give us a little update Dr. D.

D: Well we had a fantastic breakthrough. We had 31 people do the breakthrough and I'm sure their lives will never be the same after spending a weekend with Dr. John F. Demartini. And it was an incredible event. We have people from all over the country... people went through snow storms to get there and... people came in just off the radio. People who... who for now reason showed up. So ...

Z: And

D: At the very last minute!

Z: If you missed out on that opportunity we're having another breakthrough in March.

D: Yep, we're going to do it in March.

Z: So email us at info@bigbrainradioshow.com if you'd like to get on a mailing list or an update list for future transformational seminars, with the Big Brain Radio Show.

D: And we have our Big Brain Makeover which we're going to extend up through the end of January because of the holidays and that... so...

Z: People being away.

D: People being away... and the big brain makeover... I was just talking to one of the individuals and the changes that she has experienced is we're talking about mentally... and her intellectual abilities recovering has been one of the most outstanding parts of the big brain makeover. This woman was the leader of a large company and kind of lost her ability to do that and it's all coming back and she's ready to take a big leap... you're going to be hearing about it.

Z: Like we said... you can lose your brain function for a lot of other reasons besides having an actual physical head trauma...

D: Right and that's what we got...

Z: We'll talk more about that.

D: Restoring the nervous system.

Z: Very good.

D: And we're going to have some great big brain... oh, during the holidays we're going to have the best of the Big Brain...

Z: Best of the Big Brain show... So listen in Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve Day.

D: And we will have the best of the Big Brain. And then next year we have some outstanding people lined up. And some... world famous people who do artistic and creative things... well they're big brains so you'll have to listen to see who the big brains are.

Z: Good. So back to Wendy... and we were going to finish up with a thought that you had that you wanted to make sure that you shared with our audience. Go ahead.

W: Do you know... I guess I just wanted to share that a part of why I understand children and education the way that I do now is as a result of the brain injury. I have really had to learn how to be very patient with myself as I came through the recovery because I was a very different person. We've talked extensively on the show about how my left brain developed and I could learn at a higher level. But you know, that doesn't mean that I haven't struggled greatly and that I don't have lifelong implications that I'm constantly struggling with. So it's that... it's that learning to be patient with myself through my recovery and through my life right now that gives me the ability to teach and have the sensitivity that I do for the students... and in teaching the teachers too about having sensitivity and a certain understanding about children.

D: Well if any children or any teachers or any caregivers are involved with what you're giving, I think they're very lucky to have you with them.

Z: And you have a son as well.

W: I do.

Z: Tell us about your son and how he's been in this process. How it's changed your being a mother really.

W: Connor... my son Connor is 11 and he's an incredible, an incredible person. He actually was my R&D.

Z: I bet.

W: He just was. It was a really beautiful part of Jelly Beans because as I was researching certain ... understanding certain ages to work with, Connor was that same age. So it was this... you know it was this living, breathing...

Z: An organic process, right?

W: There you go. Yeah it was an example of it for me. And it was so wonderful. And because Connor is a very shy person and an introvert, it really helped me understand that personality because I didn't want parents to ... sorry to interrupt, but I didn't want parents to just bring kids to a drama class who were ...

Z: Who were extroverted.

W: Yes, yes. I wanted all children, all personalities, to be safe and comfortable to be able to learn and explore.

D: Connor's just like his mom, an introvert, right?

W: Shush! (laughter)

Z: He's the balance.

D: There's always the balance, as many parents know. We always live with our balances because our parents do reflect the parts of us that we'd rather disown sometimes. All right?

Z: Will you tell us your website and how people can find you?

W: It is www.jellybeanscreativelearning.com. And Jelly Beans is plural. And I'm in Edina, so I don't know if you want a phone number or ...

Z: Sure, go ahead. Give them your phone number.

W: It's 952-217-4441. You can reach me there. And anybody is always welcome to jump on their ...

D: You know we have this argument whether Kenwood or Edina is the center of the universe, but since we have two Edinas and one Kenwood...

Z: I think...

B: Edina's the center of the universe.

Z; That's right. So if you're interested to find out more about Jelly Beans you can find Wendy at 952-217-4441. Well thank you very much for being our guest today.

W: Thanks for having me.

Z: I've learned a lot today.

D: Well that's the purpose of the Big Brain show. You know we're going to have... for our listeners out there who ... we always change... we're always going to be having something to you about our brains and how we can be more effective. And obviously a lot of times it's from individuals who have something to share because that's just more real... because that's the educational process we were just talking about. In fact, we actually had a little discussion when we went off mic for just a minute is that life really is about people interacting and learning how to interact is part of the acting ... interact means to act between ... and so that we can express ourselves and learn what's appropriate and what's not... and how to handle our emotional reactions, which a lot of times we don't seem to have control of... so for children that would be really great because that seems to be the biggest thing that shuts them down when they get that emotional reaction... and so when they learn how to kind of overcome that and realize that's just a part of being ... emotions are who we are... and we get to learn what the good ones are and what the not-so-good ones are. Just like we're... we have a little emotion here on the Big Brain Radio Show once in a while, don't we?

Z: Oh yeah, we do.

D: Yeah...

Z: So it's 2015... it's 10 years down the road, what would you have hoped for Jelly Beans to have accomplished? Where do you see it going?

W: I see it becoming a multi-media company. I see myself getting this message out in a variety of forms. It's starting with the book and I'd like to do a children's television show based on the programming.

Z: That would be great.

D: What a great idea.

Z: Like the Sesame Street of the 2000s. We could use that.

D: I hope somebody out there hears you and picks up on that.

Z: Yeah, we're looking for a producer of the Jelly Beans television show.

D: All right... so I think we can say that we had a pretty darn good show today.

Z: I think so. Thank you very much.

D: So Wendy thanks for respond... Thank you for coming up and talking to me...

W: Thank you so much.

D: ...after the show... catching me and with your ... your intervention we were able to communicate later and have you come on the show and so that's great. And again, that's what it's all about. Right? So for the big brains out there, remember to thank all the big brains in your life, the ones you used to know, the ones you know and the ones you're going to know, by listening to the Big Brain Radio Show.

Z: That's right. Have a great week. We are the Big Brain Radio Show and this is AM 950 Air America Minnesota.

(music)