

THE PRACTICAL GUIDE

5 Neuroscience-Backed Mindset *Shifts* for Influence & Growth

*For Coaches, Leaders, Educators, Trainers and
Change-Agents Who Want to Use the Brain & Not
Just Talk About It*

By **Shonté Jovan Taylor, MSc, PhD(c)** • Neuroscientist • Founder, The
OptiMind Institute

Welcome In

I'm Shonté Jovan Taylor, neuroscientist, founder of the OptiMind Institute, and the person my students call their Neuro-Professor. I trained at UCLA, spent two decades in clinical and research neuroscience, from intrauterine and traumatic brain injury research to graduate-level work on dementia, and I've spent the last 12-plus years teaching coaches, leaders, and educators how to actually **use** this knowledge, not just collect it.

This guide is not a neuroscience textbook. You won't find a strategic deep dive into brain anatomy here, even though a little science will show up along the way, because I integrate it in my own way. What you will find is something more valuable: how to **think** about the brain so that whatever you already do, coaching, leading, teaching, training, consulting, gets sharper, more responsible, and more effective.

Neuroscience is becoming mainstream, and that's a good thing. But there's a real difference between having a percentage of knowledge and having the wisdom that comes from years of integrating it. My hope is that this guide moves you a few steps further down that second path, not so you sound smarter, but so you serve better.

Take your time with each shift. Do the exercises. Come back to the checklist at the end. And if something here sparks a bigger question about where you want to go next, there's a full menu of ways to keep learning with me on the last page.

Shonté

Founder, The OptiMind Institute | "Live. Love. Succeed with the Brain in Mind."



The Central Role of The Brain

Almost everything you or the people you lead are working through, health, relationships, careers, learning, sense of value, can be traced back to one place: the brain. It is the center of the human experience. That means when you're trying to help someone navigate a challenge, the most powerful place to intervene isn't the surface-level symptom. It's the source.

Neuroscience taught in this way is a maze-navigation tool, not a trivia set. Once you understand that the brain, not just willpower, personality, or circumstance, is the key lever in how someone thinks, feels, and acts, you stop guessing at surface-level fixes and start addressing what's actually driving the behavior.

It's worth noting: the **brain** and the **mind** can be thought of as two different things, hardware versus software. They influence each other constantly, but they aren't identical. Understanding that distinction is often the first "aha" that opens the door to everything else in this guide.

EXERCISE: SEE THROUGH THE BRAIN LENS

Think of three challenges you're currently facing, personally, professionally, or with a client or team member. For each one, **write down**:

What is likely happening in the brain or nervous system in this moment? (Is it a threat response? Depleted energy? A well-worn habit pathway? A learning gap?)

This single habit, pausing to ask "*What might be happening in the brain right now?*", is the foundation every other shift in this guide builds on.

Integration *with* Intention

Agreeing that the brain matters isn't the same as knowing *how* to use that knowledge responsibly. This is where a lot of well-meaning coaches and leaders get stuck: they pick up a term from a course, a podcast, or a video, and they apply it without understanding the context it actually belongs in.

Think of it like being placed in a space shuttle full of buttons and told to launch, with no map. In an emergency, you'll push *something*. But that's not a responsible way to handle a person's brain, nervous system, and heart. And that's exactly what's at stake every time you use a neuroscience concept with someone you're coaching, leading, or teaching. It will shape how they show up in their life, their job, and their relationships.

Integration with *intention* means slowing down long enough to ask:

Do I actually understand the context this strategy is meant for? Not "Do I know the term?," but "Do I know *when, how, and with whom it responsibly applies?*"

EXERCISE: CONTEXT BEFORE APPLICATION

Pick one neuroscience term or strategy you already use (e.g., "neuroplasticity," "amygdala hijack," "regulation").

Write down: *What's a real situation where this genuinely fits?*

Then write: *What's a situation where using this term or strategy would actually be irresponsible or unhelpful?*

Knowing both boundaries is what turns information into *wisdom*.

Mastering Adult Learning

If you want to teach, coach, or train other adults using neuroscience, you first have to understand how the adult brain actually learns, and it is not the same brain that learned in your teens or twenties.

Think of the adult brain like fine wine, as opposed to grapes that can be made into grape juice. A younger brain is built for rapid, broad learning, and making sense of everything as fast as possible. By the time you're deep into a career, your brain has pruned away what it doesn't use, and thickened the neural pathways tied to your profession, your interests, and your roles as a (e.g. parent or leader).

That's not a decline but a refinement, because the brain is *intentional* about where it spends its limited energy.

This is why new information that doesn't connect to something you already know feels so much harder to absorb as an adult, and why so many people wrongly interpret slower recall as "losing it," instead of recognizing it as a normal, energy-conserving feature of a mature brain.

The takeaway for you as a coach, leader, or trainer:

If you want new information to stick with an adult learner, including yourself, connect it to something already thickened and familiar in their brain, and give the learning process the grace it actually requires.

EXERCISE: ANCHOR NEW LEARNING

Think of one new skill or concept you're currently trying to learn or teach someone else.

Write down one existing skill, experience, or interest it can be anchored to, something the learner's brain has already built strong pathways for. Use that anchor the next time you introduce the new material.

Neuroscience as a Catalyst

In chemistry and biology, a catalyst speeds up a reaction, but it only fits one very specific reaction out of trillions. It has to be the right shape, the right key, and for that exact moment.

Neuroscience works the same way in your practice. Used well, it isn't just information, it's a catalyst that saves you, your clients and those you train both time and energy, by helping you reach for the **precise** strategy that fits the moment in front of you, instead of randomly trying whatever you remember until something sticks.

Without that precision, people burn energy just *deciding* what to try, and often the moment passes before anyone is actually served. With it, you move faster, with less wasted effort, toward real breakthroughs, for yourself and for the people you're helping.

EXERCISE: FIND THE PRECISE FIT

Think of a recurring challenge a client, team member, learner or you yourself keeps facing. Instead of reaching for your usual go-to strategy, **write down**:

What is the specific shape of this exact moment? (What's actually happening: a threat response, a motivation gap, a learning barrier?)

Then choose the one strategy built to fit that precise shape, and not a generic default.

Personalized Application

The same brain structure can, and should, be described differently depending on who's in front of you. Not because the science changes, but because **relevance** is what makes information stick.

Talking to a **spiritual** coach or client about the amygdala? Call it the **inner sentinel** or the **guardian**, because its job is to watch for threat, and that language resonates with a spiritual frame.

Talking to **artists** or **creatives** about the prefrontal cortex? Call it the **producer**, the part that edits, focuses, and makes the final call, just like a producer does on a set.

Talking to **health-focused** clients about the insula? Try the **gut brain** or the **disgust-feeling brain**.

Teaching about **bias**? Frame it as an **iceberg**, with different levels, mostly out of view.

This isn't about dumbing anything down. That would be an insult to a person's intelligence, gained knowledge, and lived experiences. This *mindset shift*, using **relevant** terms for your specific audience, is about *translation* and taking rigorous science and finding the analogy that lets that audience actually **feel why it matters**. That's what turns a fact into something memorable, usable, and trusted.

EXERCISE: BUILD YOUR TRANSLATION TABLE

Choose one core brain concept you use often (e.g., the amygdala, the prefrontal cortex, neuroplasticity). Now **write three different ways** to introduce that same concept: one for a spiritual audience, one for a corporate or leadership audience, and one for a creative or artistic audience.

Keep this list. It's the beginning of your own personal "translation table."

Proven Tips for Building Credibility with Brain-Based Insights

Take the ego out of it.

- 1 It's not about how smart you sound. It's about whether the person in front of you is actually served. Every time you're tempted to reach for a bigger word, ask what the person actually *needs to hear* instead.
- 2 **Talk like a human, not a textbook.**
Nobody trusts a doctor who buries them in jargon. The same is true of brain science. Say the "sciencey" thing only when it clarifies, otherwise, translate it.
- 3 **Let your own learning journey show.**
Being willing to say, "*I'm still learning this too*," even as the expert in the room, builds more trust than pretending to have it all figured out. *Vulnerability* is part of good teaching.
- 4 **Ground insight in years, not just information.**
Anyone can repeat a fact they read yesterday. *Credibility* comes from having wrestled with the concept, researched it, tested it, seen it work (and not work), over real time.
- 5 **Match the strategy to the moment, not the audience's expectations.**
Resist the pressure to always have "a technique" ready. Sometimes the most credible thing you can do is say a strategy doesn't fit yet, and take the time to find one that does.

A Checklist for Your Own Learning & Growth Practice

Use this checklist to periodically evaluate whether you're building real neuroscience wisdom, or just collecting terms.

- ☐ Am I learning something my brain can build on with *existing knowledge*, or is it disconnected from anything I already know?
- ☐ Am I giving myself *grace* as an adult learner, instead of treating slower recall as a personal failure?
- ☐ Am I *learning from someone* who has genuinely integrated this knowledge over years, or just from quick clips and secondhand summaries?
- ☐ Do I understand not just the term, but the responsible context for using it with a *real* person?
- ☐ Can I translate what I know into language that actually fits the *audience* in front of me?
- ☐ Am I choosing strategies that precisely fit the *moment*, or defaulting to the same go-to regardless of the situation?
- ☐ Am I *tracking* whether what I'm applying is actually working, or just repeating a habit because it's familiar?

"Insight doesn't shout. It whispers. And it only whispers in a regulated mind."

READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

Step Up as a Next-Level, Brain-Based Coach, Leader, Educator, Trainer & Consultant

Everyone learns differently, and everyone's time, budget, and bandwidth are different too. Here's the full menu of ways to keep going with the OptiMind Institute, no guessing required.

NeuroCoach & NeuroLeader Certification

\$3,500 – \$5,000

12-weeks · (prior) ICF-approved · self-study + 8 live weekly calls, or add 6 one-on-one coaching calls

Neuroscience Certificate Courses

\$199 – \$499

1–2 weeks · NeuroHealth, NeuroSpirituality, NeuroEducation, NeuroRelationship, NeuroEntrepreneurship, Self-Awareness, Unconscious Bias, etc.

Masterclasses, Webinars & Trainings

\$49 – \$999

Ranges: 1-hour–4-days · live or on-demand

1-on-1 NeuroCoaching & NeuroLeadership

\$1,000 – \$15,000+

Hourly, weekly, or monthly · individual or organizational

Consulting, Keynotes & Panels

Consulting from \$5,000 · Keynotes from \$10,000 · Panels from \$5,000

For organizations ready to bring brain-based thinking to their teams

[Enroll in a Course](#)

[Book a 15-Minute Discovery Call](#)

Live. Love. Succeed with the Brain in Mind.