Your Brain and You



Reshaping patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior
to become happier, healthier, smarter, and kinder

This course approaches the brain not as a machine to be fixed, but as a *living, adaptive system* that shapes—and is shaped by—our experience. Each class explores a different "self" that emerges from brain activity, helping participants understand how these systems work *and how to work with them intentionally* in everyday life. Sessions will combine *clear explanation, discussion, and simple experiential exercises*, with an emphasis on meaning-making rather than memorization.

The class is free and open to the general public.

Instructor: Candace Brower, Ph.D., retired Northwestern University professor (areas of specialization: cognitive science, neuroscience, linguistics, social psychology, and music cognition)

Course requirements: No prior knowledge of neuroscience is expected.

Class Meetings (see class syllabus below for specific dates and course content):

- Every other Monday, 1-2:30pm from March 2nd to July 6th.
- In person: Olympic Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship Hall, 1033 N Barr Road, Port Angeles.
- Also available via Zoom.
- Video recordings will be available to registered participants who are unable to attend a given session.
- While there is no formal attendance policy, the early classes introduce core ideas and metaphors that will be revisited throughout the course.

Registration: To register for the class, please click the link below:

REGISTRATION FORM

Class syllabus

Monday, March 2: **What is Consciousness?**

- Consciousness as lived experience, how conscious states are shaped by brainwaves, and how attention, meditation, and conceptual metaphor can be used to gently shape our experience for the better.

Monday, March 16: **Your Brain and You: Who's Driving?**

-An overview of the brain's three major layers—cortex, limbic system, and brainstem—and how they compete and cooperate to guide behavior.

Monday, March 30: **The Volitional Self**

- How “free will,” “free won’t,” and “free choice” emerge in the prefrontal cortex, and why willpower works best when it aligns with deeper neural systems.

Monday, April 13: **The Emotional Self**

- How positive and negative emotions work together in the brain, and how cultivating a healthy ratio of positive to negative emotion (often around 3:1) helps us stay emotionally balanced, cognitively flexible, and better able to navigate life’s challenges.

Monday, April 27: **The Habitual Self**

- An exploration of how habits form in the brain, why they are so persistent, and how they can be reshaped with insight and practice.

Monday, May 11: **The Sensorimotor Self**

- How physical skills are learned through action and feedback, and how entering a “flow state” by balancing challenge and skill allows the body’s intelligence to guide growth without self-judgment.

Monday, May 25: **Left and Right Selves**

- An examination of hemispheric differences in the brain and how they contribute to distinct ways of thinking, feeling, and experiencing the self.

Monday, June 8: **The Autobiographical Self**

- How our life story weaves together past, present, and future selves, and how we can engage in “time travel” to imagine future possibilities that help us gradually become the selves we want to be.

Monday, June 22: **The Social Self**

- How the right hemisphere’s social networks are wired for connection, attunement, and empathy, and how engaging our “resonance” circuits can deepen connection and make relationships more satisfying.

Monday, July 6: **The Creative Self**

- A synthesis of the course, exploring creativity as a brain state that emerges when multiple systems integrate in flexible and playful ways.