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Insights

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Message from the Publisher, Viki Winterton:

Insights Magazine brings you leading experts in coaching and empowerment, sharing their wisdom, vision, secrets of success and personal defining moments of inspiration. We hope you will enjoy our new Insights each month.



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Brain–Mind–Body Connection Series Part 1, featuring: Dr. Joan King

The path to her purpose in life has been filled with more accomplishments than most people would realize in several lifetimes. Dr. King, who began her career life as a Dominion nun in her native New Orleans, and then spent the next three decades as a neuroscientist, professor, and department chair at Tufts University School of Medicine, had already led a full life before a life-changing sabbatical she took in the late 1990s.

During that personal time out, she discovered her true life's calling and purpose. The term she coined for this body of knowledge is "cellular wisdom" which is a blend of science research and spiritual training. Her latest book, *The Code of Authentic Living*, has already helped thousands of people around the world. This information helps men and women find their true purpose and live their life fully, just as it has for Joan King.

I: What do you mean when you say you go beyond success to greatness – what is greatness?

JK: I believe that within each of us, the energy that keeps us alive, which I call the life force, has within it the wisdom of all of the ages, the wisdom of cells forming into the entity called a cell rather than separate molecules, so that the DNA could be encased by a membrane, so it wouldn't be destroyed as soon as it was congealed.

*and Dr.
Kevin Fleming*

is President and CEO of Grey Matters International, Inc., and international neuroleadership consultancy and coaching firm. He is also the founder of Assumptive Coaching, an integrative model aimed at challenging the thinking underneath one's thinking around change, complex systems inherent in decision-making.

He received his BA, MA, and Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame in clinical psychology.

Fleming's work for the past ten years has been devoted to refining the neuroscience of leadership and behavior change in society, and assisting people in having the critical conversations that are driven by the internal dialogue within.

In his spare time, Dr. Fleming is an accomplished singer, songwriter, guitarist, and studio drummer, having worked on recording projects with top artists in L.A., Austin, and Nashville.

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Brain—Mind—Body Connection Series Part 1,
featuring Dr. Joan King & Dr. Kevin Fleming continued...

JK: It was protected, and I think that in that life force, that knowledge, which took a billion years for a cell to form, and it took another billion years for our cells to learn how that each cell didn't have to do everything, that cells could then begin to specialize – some for reproduction, some for digestion, some for strength like bone, some for flexibility like muscle, but that meant they had to learn how to collaborate and how to integrate their actions, and I think all of that wisdom is within the force that keeps each of us alive.

I think the issue in their lives is greatness. When we connect to that, to our own unique knowledge that is within our life force, and we are aligned with it and we live in accordance with that inner blueprint, we create meaningful and satisfying lives, and we bring forth our greatness.

I: I see. Is there a model for the process of tapping into your greatness?

JK: Yes, and the model is understanding, number one, that our wisdom, our deeper inner wisdom in which our greatness lies, is not verbal. It's preverbal, because at the level of energy it isn't encased in a particular kind of a language. We use language to communicate among us, and the body uses a different kind of language. For example, for muscle cells and nerve cells to communicate in order for the muscle to contract.

The language of this inner wisdom is a knowing that isn't in words. It's a knowing that is in a sense of something. How many times did you begin to do something, and you have a sense of it, like this is going to really work out, or a foreboding sense of I'm not so sure about this working out. I really think we should pay attention to that, because that is an integrative knowledge that comes from both the unconscious level and this deep wisdom within us. I'm not saying that we should follow it blindly, but I'm saying that we should open to it and take a look at it and see what might it be pointing to that we had overlooked, that we had failed to explore. I think when we do that, we lead deeper, richer, and fuller lives.

I: That makes sense because it sounds like you're talking about our basic intuition, our survival instincts. I know that when I ignore my gut feeling or those feelings, I find out the hard way why I should have listened.

JK: Exactly. We have many words to try to encapsulate what that means, and none of them really does it justice. We don't know what to call it. We call it by many different names, and I really think that in that, I call it an energy, because I think it is an energy and I think within that energy is the wisdom.

I: I agree. Do you really believe, Dr. King, that we can all be great?

JK: Absolutely. If we are alive, we have this life force within us. One of the things I love about this concept is that nobody has more life force than another person. We all have the life force that keeps us alive. It is simply a question of being quiet, because it doesn't shout at us. This language, the way it communicates, is a very quiet language, and so I think that time out has to happen.

In the frantic pace of our lives, we build in very little time out, and I think when we fail to build in time out, we don't have time to access our wisdom. We're so fast in getting it done that we don't consult the inner portion of our being that knows whether that's an action that really is wonderful for us to hold forth or go forth, or not. When we ignore that, look at what we're doing. We're ignoring this huge base of knowledge that is within us, and we're rushing forward. We might have to redo it, it might collapse, it may not be the right direction for us, but we think that we don't have the time to consider, and I just would point out that look at how many times we have to redo something or retrace our steps or undo that decision that we wouldn't have to do, had we stayed in connection with that deeper wisdom that every single person has.

I: What do you mean by, "Who are you to deprive the world of your genius?"

JK: Each of us is a unique combination. Look at our DNA – it's so unique that we use it to identify criminals and even put them to death on the basis of that identification. Not only is our DNA unique, but the entire expression of who we are is unique, and we need all the pieces, and when one person doesn't step out to be who they really are and bring their contribution to the world. You must realize that no one else can, and therefore there will be a hole there of something that you did not contribute to the world, and we will all suffer, and that's why I say "Who are you to deprive the world of your genius?"

I: Dr. Fleming, what are your current thoughts on coach training as it relates to the frontiers of neuroscience?

KF: That's a good question. In my opinion, coaching is certainly a very important development in the training and personal transformational world. However, I think we're seeing a trend towards best practices becoming a lot more critical. Obviously that's been driven as a force in the business world and high performance consulting with athletes and such – we're starting to see that same trend move over to coaching and personal transformation type efforts.



There's a great quote by an author, Eduardo Punset, who wrote a book called *The Happiness Trip*, and said, "At no other point in human history has it been so critical as right now to determine what is essential from what is important." I find that distinction being really critical even in evaluating coaching effectiveness; the difference between what is essential in human behavior change and what is merely important.

(Continued next page.)

Brain—Mind—Body Connection Series Part 1,
featuring Dr. Joan King & Dr. Kevin Fleming continued...

KF: In my opinion, having worked as a coach of coaches and a new way of looking at the thinking underneath their well-intentioned programs, I'm seeing a lot of decisional illusions out there when it comes to working with people who want to change, So I think the trend is to really get deeper and to really get highly critical of our assumptions around what it takes to get people to achieve excellence, because it's very easy to speak very positively, motivationally around excellence and greatness and things like that, but the actual achievement of it is pretty tricky and at times can delude the best of us.

I: I see. Well, what exactly does Grey Matters International do?

KF: We started out as a coaching company and pretty early on I realized that this was coming from my therapeutic days when I was doing psychotherapy, but the rational model of decision-making really didn't seem to work. There were many days I'd be sitting in psychotherapy trying to assist someone with a certain problem or a problematic emotion or pain, and what we were doing verbally or linguistically in this exchange for 50 minutes seemed to be very different than what was going on at a mental level between both of us,. Certainly we had training and psychotherapy around how to handle those transferences and such, but at the end of the day there were these bubbles above both of our heads, the patient and the doctor, around what really matters, and I found that at times the brain was really wired to be right, not be effective. It was really wired to kind of protect its own illusion.

By virtue of this sort of neuroscience aspect, I found that what was needed in the coaching end, or even in the therapeutic world too, but certainly when I moved in the coaching world, what was needed was not merely another coaching company, but someone to inform the thinking behind the coaching. Grey Matters International is a thinking, advising company, so basically we go in and we look at whether it's a corporate training program or a coach who comes in with their own program content, or someone who personally wants to develop themselves, and we are basically the distillers of the illusions to their thinking or into that program, so we can close the gap between what is hoped for and what actually is. I work on that space in between. It's very rewarding.

The metaphor I use with people is it's basically like the trunk of a tree. We're selling the trunk, we're selling the thinking that is actually the root, and then all these other branches are just other content that you can choose from out there in this world. Obviously, they have various levels of effectiveness. People are attracted to their own models.

I: What are your thoughts of empowerment as it relates to the brain?

KF: I think empowerment to me, when I look at a lot of the thinking going on right now in terms of getting people to be more excellent and growing and developing and really empowering their best self, I find that one of the greatest leveraging pieces is to look at the questioning of the reality within us.

KF: I think that's very critical. It's very ironic. I think you do more to empower yourself when you look at how you're disempowering yourself through the acceptance of reality that you create as stones, concrete.

That's one of the best ways you empower yourself, to actually confront what you think is fully true. To make a discernment between what makes sense in your life and what's actually fully virtuous and amazing and sustainably excellent and things like that. So to me empowerment becomes a conversation to really look at yourself and to break down so those things that you think are unbreakable.

I: Dr. King, what attracted you to this arena as your life work?

JK: I'd been doing research at Tufts as a neuroscientist from 1979 until 1997, when I took a sabbatical. The last five years I was chair of anatomy for the veterinary, medical, dental, and graduate school, and also researched on three campuses of Tufts – Boston, Bedford, and Grafton, and I told myself when five years were up, I would consider what I wanted to do with the rest of my life,. So what I did was I took a sabbatical, and I took writing courses, and I went off the coast of Maine, and also on the big island in Hawaii,. The first question I asked myself is who's there? If you take away all the titles and you take away all the roles, who is the person that is there?



I began to realize that when I was in the convent I taught chemistry, when I was in the medical school I taught neuroscience. I've always believed that people have more potential and more capacity than we could ever possibly enrich our lives within the course of our lifetime, and so I became devoted to helping people evoke their greatness.

As I learned about coaching, it was oh my goodness, this is a discipline that is actually based on the philosophy that I had believed, and so I hired a coach to be a post-doctoral advisor to me for a year before taking my own coach training, and now I train coaches as well, and Master Coaches, I give continuing ed classes.

I'm just so fulfilled by seeing people look at possibility because before you ever can make a change, you have to imagine that the change is possible. I think one of the things that coaches do is they create a space where people are not judged by oh, that's not you, you've never done that before, or what makes you think you can do that? Instead, they're offered a space of advocacy, of safety, of exploration, and of examining what has worked that they can use and expand in their lives. I don't think I have been happier in my life than in the role that I currently have of writing and speaking and training coaches and coaching.

*Brain—Mind—Body Connection Series Part 1,
featuring Dr. Joan King & Dr. Kevin Fleming continued...*

I: That's excellent. Thank you for sharing that. Dr. Fleming, could you also share what attracted you to this arena for your life work?

KF: Yes. What attracted me to the coaching world basically was sort of the unfulfillment I felt in psychotherapy, which was really my world of training and I worked there for over 10 years. What I started realizing in the context of helping people through pain was that there's a big difference between reducing pain and improving the quality of life, and yet linguistically both came out the same way from the patient's mouth. Unless you were really oriented internally to drill down and confront some illusions of the dialogue, then you could end up blocked and frustrated, and therefore blocking the intentions of the client. Many times, people come in not knowing what they don't know, so you can really get down in these kind of goal-directed dialogues that are really more neurotic than anything else.

I think for me, I felt trapped for a while there and really decided to look towards the development side of the fence. I went into some entrepreneurial work in the corporate arena, which is really exciting. We started a health coaching company right out of my therapy years, which was a nice little bridge into coaching. It was a health behavior change company, which I loved. We worked with really resistant behaviors where the rational model of decision-making didn't work, or doctors were giving information to these people who have chronic illness that didn't do what they were supposed to do.

I found that very rewarding to look at different ways to get people to the next level of life and there was more freedom, a lot more creativity, and never looked back. Certainly right now I feel quite fulfilled as a coach and like Joan, the coach have coaches, so enjoying the ride.

I: Dr. King, where do you see the field of mind and body connection going in the coming years?

JK: One of the things that surprises me is the enormous growth of neuroscience. When I joined a society for neuroscience as an neuroscience graduate student in 1972, there were 200 members. Today, there are more than 39,000 members of the same society, and it consists of neuroanatomists, neurophysiologists, neurologist, etc.

As the field explodes, the boundaries that used to so separate the components of neuroscience have begun to blur, which means that there is a great collaborative kind of thinking that is starting to emerge that is no longer defined by self-discipline. As that happens, we do begin to have a more holistic view of how we operate. I think, however, that the miracle of life, very frankly, is beyond the capacity of the mind to understand, and I think that whereas we will learn more and more about, for example, we know that exercises causes the birth of new blood vessels in the brain. Well, if you've got more blood vessels and you've got more nutrients, you could support neurons much better.

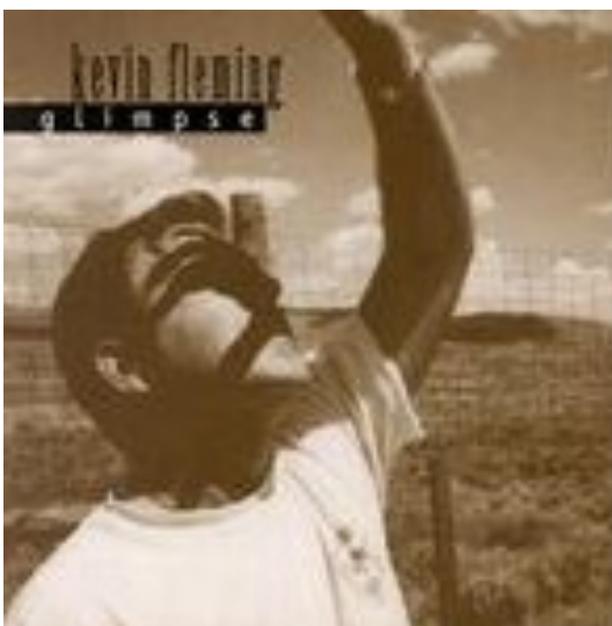
JK: Beyond that, I think there's an appreciation of how far knowledge can take us and there is even a study of what we know that we don't know that we know – unconscious knowledge, and I think we become aware of our unconscious knowledge when we're talking to other, and you all of a sudden hear yourself say something you never knew you knew, and yet it came out of your mouth. I think we're beginning to understand that there was this interplay that happens between the energy of life and the functioning of the brain that probably will take many, many centuries to begin to truly understand, but I do think we're moving in that direction.

I: I think it's interesting what you just said, because it just verifies that it's very important that we talk to each other, that neuroscientists talk to each other.

JK: Absolutely.

I: Dr. Fleming, where do you see the field of mind and body connection in the next couple of years?

KF: Very good question. As more of a philosopher of science by training, I am very intrigued by paradigm shifting and how we move from one dominant mode of thinking to another. I think we are in the crux of one of those right now where neuroscience, like we just heard, it is indeed booming, and as we know with any new idea or new model of thinking, we have to be careful in that explosion as well.



I was just talking to another colleague of mine who literally was trying to ask me how he could improve his seminar rate and content delivered. He had heard that if he used the word "brain" in your seminar, you could increase your rate by \$3,000 or whatever, and I thought, oh boy ... it's one of these things in my opinion that we also have to be very mindful of.

It's very refreshing to be a panel with such great minds here, that I think there's amazing solid training in this. I think in any pendulum shift, the paradigm thinking of a process like this, we're going to end up really seeing what ends up rising to the surface over the time here is what the brain is not, versus what it is.

I think essentially that can become as critical, and we're going to start finding out that we see a lot more lumbering inefficiencies and confusions between causations statements and correlation statements. All that stuff I think is going to grow more as people start really getting inside the brain a bit more – and that's good; that shouldn't be something we push back from because at the end of the day we want the best estimate of reality of what this organ on our shoulders is doing. I think the negation of learning is going to become as critical as learning, when we look at what the brain is doing. That's my thoughts on that.

Brain—Mind—Body Connection Series Part 1,
featuring Dr. Joan King & Dr. Kevin Fleming continued...

I: Dr. King, what is the most important thing a client seeking coaching should know?

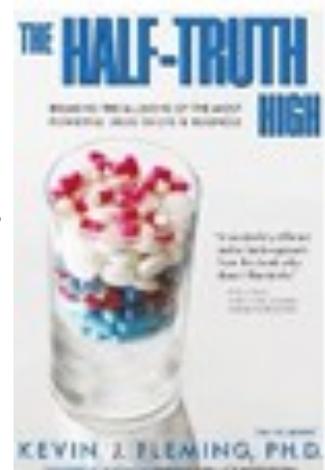
JK: That number one, change is possible. There are all kinds of conditions that are important to allow it to happen, but if a client is engaging a coach to make change in their lives, it's imperative that they understand that's a possibility. The second thing is that, and almost equally as important – it's going to take work. I can remember once a football player called me, and he said he wanted to be an actor. I said, "Great! So how do you envision yourself making this transformation? How can I help you the most? What about your life has suggested to you ... how long as this desire been there?"

He never answered my questions, and he never called me back. I got the idea that what this was about was that I was supposed to turn him into the actor. The philosophy of coaching is that the client does know the answer. They often don't know they know the answer, so we are the expert inquirers to help kind of allow them to do the exploration that's necessary to find that, so they need to believe change is possible, and number two, that they are the ones that are going to invest the energy in the process of making change in partnership with a coach, but not with the coach making the change for them.

I: Dr. Fleming, what do you have to add to that?

KF: I would definitely agree. Change is possible. It is so key to make sure that our clients understand, and I would go another step further in offering my key nugget of wisdom that what I hope my clients would take away with them is this – be careful what you wish for – it make come true. That seems kind of antithetical to what I just said that change is possible, but what I'm trying to get at is I believe that a first response to a behavior change plan or a hope or a dream is usually a half-truth.

My first book was called *The Half Truth High: Breaking the Illusions of the Most Powerful Drug of What Matters in Life and Business*. What that book is about is sort of the brain spinning of something that's both hopeful and desired, but also of a self-protection type, so when we think of a dream of a behavioral plan that we're trying to work on, it's sort of true. What comes out initially is almost, sort-of there, so I always try to teach my clients be wary of that; have one pause, have another pause, and then keep turning it around, holding it up to the light, challenging it until it keeps growing. It's basically putting colors on the canvas and making the best painting possible. It's a process. It's art as much as science, and I think that's very critical for anybody changing.



I: Excellent. Thank you very much. What most inspires you about being a part of this field, Dr. King?

JK: What so excites me about coaching is I really think we are the yeast leavening the wheat of the world because we are looking for possibility, we are looking for prospective shifts, we are looking across the universe. Every year when I attend the International Coach Federation meeting, the number of countries that are represented at the meeting is incredible.

I think that we can cross the boundaries of stereotyped perspectives that have been embedded in a culture for so long, and we are beginning to do that as we make connections one-on-one, coach-to-coach. I'm going to be in Tokyo later this month working with Japanese coaches. I've worked with coaches in Istanbul. It is a magnificent interaction when you see the things that unite us as coaches, that we believe in the potential in people, and that we believe that now is the time and we are the people, and I think I find that the most exciting part.

I: Well thank you. Dr. Fleming?

KF: What inspires me to be a member of this type of community is I'd have to go to Einstein's quote, I think it was he that was attributed to this one, "No problem was ever solved in the same level of thinking the problem was originally created on." In and of itself, when you're inside neuroscience and you're inside these types of minds, you can't help but see the wisdom of that statement because you're seeing so much complexity, so much richness, so much dialectal understanding, things that seem opposite but when they come together you go wow, this change, this insight is exactly what we need to learn x, y, and z.

I believe by being a member of this type of community, we're going to solve some of the most intractable resistant-type behavior change problems out there. To me, the inspiration to really serve as a coach with a neuroscience lens is all around human behavior change. How do we get people to change things that they say they really want to do?

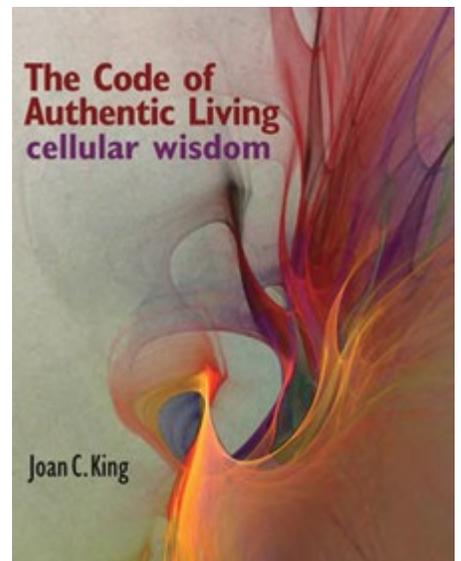
I think there was a book out a couple years ago, *Change or Die* by Alan Deutschman. I love some of the stuff that he had in there, but when you look at some of these facts around the limitations of rational models of decision-making, it's fascinating. I think it was something like 85% of triple-bypass surgery patients who were told change or die, basically, still don't change. This is a big piece. We really look at achieving dreams and achieving excellence. We've got to figure out what's going on here on this level too. When things are so salient and so immediate right in front of our eyes, while we still can't even grasp that, and so I find there's a lot of hope, and I think the answers lie in this kind of a world because they're underneath the common perception. That's what inspires me.

Brain—Mind—Body Connection Series Part 1,
featuring Dr. Joan King & Dr. Kevin Fleming continued...

I: How do you see others most motivated and inspired by what you have learned and what you shared? Dr. King?

JK: I'm in the process of writing a series of books called Cellular Wisdom, and the first one is *The Code of Authentic Living Cellular Wisdom*, and the second is *Cellular Wisdom for Women* in a workbook. I have been told, and my concept of cellular wisdom is there is this pre-verbal knowing of who we really are that's imbedded in our life force. I would watch neurons. As soon as we would plate them in a dish, immediately they send out tendrils to connect, and if the neurons don't connect, they die.

I think as people come to understand how we are beings of such immense potential that they become inspired. For example, I tell a story in *The Code of Authentic Living* of a young woman who had about 100 epileptic seizures a day, and it was impossible for her to have a normal life. At Johns Hopkins University where the neurosurgery occurred ... the problem with epilepsy is if the activity source is on one side of the brain, because of the connections across from one side of the brain to the other, it's soon going to destroy the other side of the brain, so it's important that the place where the disturbance was localized at the moment in time was removed, which meant, believe this or not, removing her entire left brain. That's where speech is, that's where the part of the brain is that moves the right side of the body.



She was 13 years old at the time. I followed her until she was about 18. She learned how to walk, she learned how to talk, and she actually is living a normal life. I know that Dr. Greenstein, talks about plasticity, which is a concept that developed in the early seventies, but I think what we're beginning to learn is the expanse of that level of plasticity, so when people read the stories of how enormously resilient our very bodies are in ways that we never see, I would study how neuron endings would change at the base of the brain to allow hormones to flow into the blood that would cause the pituitary to kick the ovary into ovulating month after month after month, and this complex orchestration of changes that was so precise.

I think that as we come to understand the power within us, we begin to understand also the power of our spirit and the power of our being to be able to do, as so many of you have so brilliantly talked about, break all the barriers that seem to be barriers that aren't really barriers. I think that's what inspires people about both my coaching, my speaking, and my books.

I: Thank you, Dr. King. Dr. Fleming?

KF: I think some of the inspiration that I've seen clients get from this type of coaching first came from my experience as a neuropsychologist which working with head injuries and people that had traumatic instances. It's interesting to hear Dr. Conrad talk about the sport piece; we used to do a lot of that when I was a sports psychologist at Notre Dame. We'd see a lot of head injuries and things like that, and when you see these talented, talented people that were told by more traditionally trained doctors that they aren't who they are now after this injury, and certain functions will come back and others won't.

Then the neurofeedback practitioners came in and basically said, wait a minute, like we were just hearing with neuroplasticity, the brain can change itself, and when you really see the hopeless type cases change, that's what really put the smile on my face was to stumble upon technologies and approaches of change that were just beyond common sense. Whether it was somebody restoring functioning or 20-point IQs being raised or EQ functioning, all this kind of stuff was really just ... when you see that, then you know that middle part of the Bell curve, the "normal" or "stuck" person then has hope, then you believe it too. That if the brain can do it on that level, then it can be changed on a less extreme. That just continually propels me every day.

I: What do you consider your great contribution to the mind-body connection, your great work? Dr. King?

JK: I do think that my greatest contribution is my absolute conviction that each of us can evoke our greatness in our lives. It's expressed in my books, my Cellular Wisdom series of books. It's expressed in my speaking, in my coach training, in my coaching, and in the advance courses that I offer Master Coaches. It is the central theme of my life. I truly believe it, and my passion is to help people evoke their greatness, including of course my own.

I: Thank you. Dr. Fleming?

KF: I would say my greatest contribution, my greatest work of my coaching is in the assimilation and the integration of different disciplines. In terms of when I look at what I think is my gift in coaching, it's the integration of philosophy or brain science and behavioral economics, and coming out with a way to translate that in a very practical way to people so they can get out of the way themselves, which sometimes happens when you're trying to change or grow,. You're ironically getting in the way of the goal and I think that's my biggest contribution is to really give people these sort of thinking puzzles, the keys to the thinking puzzles, you know, and really get them out of their own sort of quagmire. That is immensely satisfying to me.

Discover more from Dr. Joan King: <http://www.cellular-wisdom.com/> and **Dr. Kevin Fleming:** <http://www.greymattersintl.com/>

Coming to Insights next month: *Brain—Mind—Body Connection Series Part 2*, featuring **Dr. M.A. Greenstein**, publisher and editor-in-chief of the e-zine *BodiesandSpace.com*, as well as the chief brainiac of the George Greenstein Institute and **Dr. Conrad Milne**, US Sport Advisor to Minister of Sport, The Kingdom of Bahrain.