

I was a wayward kid who grew up on the literary side of life, treating math and science as if they were pustules from the plague. So it's a little strange how I've ended up now—someone who dances daily with triple integrals, Fourier transforms, and that crown jewel of mathematics, Euler's equation. It's hard to believe I've flipped from a virtually congenital math-phobe to a professor of engineering.

One day, one of my students asked me how I did it—how I changed my brain. I wanted to answer Hell—with lots of difficulty! After all, I'd flunked my way through elementary, middle, and high school math and science. In fact, I didn't start studying remedial math until I left the Army at age 26. If there were a textbook example of the potential for adult neural plasticity, I'd be Exhibit A.