The Neuroscience of Retaliation: Conversations with Dr. James Kimmel

written by Dr. Ronald Hoffman | May 28, 2025

In this episode of the Intelligent Medicine podcast, Dr. Ronald Hoffman hosts Dr. James Kimmel, a lecturer in psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine, to discuss the psychology and science behind revenge. Dr. Kimmel explains how revenge operates similarly to an addiction in the brain, triggering the same pleasure and reward circuits. He recounts his own traumatic experience with bullying and how it led him to understand the destructive nature of revenge. The discussion covers the implications for criminal justice, the role of social media in exacerbating revenge behaviors, and practical strategies for managing revenge cravings, including the potential benefits of forgiveness. Dr. Kimmel’s new book, “The Science of Revenge,” explores these themes and offers insights into breaking free from the cycle of retribution.