



Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves

Sharon Begley

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Is it really possible to change the structure and function of the brain, and in so doing alter how we think and feel? The answer is a resounding yes. In late 2004, leading Western scientists joined the Dalai Lama at his home in Dharamsala, India, to address this very question—and in the process brought about a revolution in our understanding of the human mind. In this fascinating and far-reaching book, Wall Street Journal science writer Sharon Begley reports on how cutting-edge science and the ancient wisdom of Buddhism have come together to show how we all have the power to literally change our brains by changing our minds. These findings hold exciting implications for personal transformation.

For decades, the conventional wisdom of neuroscience held that the hardware of the brain is fixed and immutable—that we are stuck with what we were born with. As Begley shows, however, recent pioneering experiments in neuroplasticity, a new science that investigates whether and how the brain can undergo wholesale change, reveal that the brain is capable not only of altering its structure but also of generating new neurons, even into old age. The brain can adapt, heal, renew itself after trauma, and compensate for disability.

Begley documents how this fundamental paradigm shift is transforming both our understanding of the human mind and our approach to deep-seated emotional, cognitive, and behavioral problems. These breakthroughs show that it is possible to reset our happiness meter, regain the use of limbs disabled by stroke, train the mind to break cycles of depression and OCD, and reverse age-related changes in the brain. They also suggest that it is possible to teach and learn compassion, a key step in the Dalai Lama's quest for a more peaceful world. But as we learn from studies performed on Buddhist monks, an important component in changing the brain is to tap the power of mind and, in particular, focused attention. This is the classic Buddhist practice of mindfulness, a technique that has become popular in the West and that is immediately available to everyone.

With her extraordinary gift for making science accessible, meaningful, and compelling, Sharon Begley illuminates a profound shift in our understanding of how the brain and the mind interact. This tremendously hopeful book takes us to the leading edge of a revolution in what it means to be human.

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