

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

By Sharon Begley

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In this fascinating and far-reaching book, *Newsweek* science writer Sharon Begley reports on how cutting-edge science and the ancient wisdom of Buddhism have come together to reveal that, contrary to popular belief, we have the power to literally change our brains by changing our minds. Recent pioneering experiments in neuroplasticity—the ability of the brain to change in response to experience—reveal that the brain is capable of altering its structure and function, and even of generating new neurons, a power we retain well into old age. The brain can adapt, heal, renew itself after trauma, compensate for disabilities, rewire itself to overcome dyslexia, and break cycles of depression and OCD. And as scientists are learning from studies performed on Buddhist monks, it is not only the outside world that can change the brain, so can the mind and, in particular, focused attention through the classic Buddhist practice of mindfulness.

With her 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 and takes us to the leading edge of a revolution in what it means to be human.

“There are two great things about this book. One is that it shows us how nothing about our brains is set in stone. The other is that it is written by Sharon Begley, one of the best science writers around. Begley is superb at framing the latest facts within the larger context of the field. . . . This is a terrific book.”

—Robert M. Sapolsky, author of *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*


“Excellent . . . elegant and lucid prose . . . an open mind here will be rewarded.”

—*Discover* magazine

“A strong dose of hope along with a strong dose of science and Buddhist thought.”

—*The San Diego Union-Tribune*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The Dalai Lama, Buddhist monks and some of the world's leading neuroscientists all gather once a year at a conference on the latest discoveries in neuroplasticity: the study of how the human brain can change itself. (This is the second book the subject due out in March, along with Norman Doidge's *The Brain That Changes Itself*). This remarkable conference serves as the center of *Wall Street Journal* science columnist Begley's account of neuroplasticity. Until recently, the reigning theory was that neurons in the brain didn't regenerate. Begley walks readers through the seminal experiments showing that in fact new neurons are created in the brain every day, even in people in their 70s. With frequent tangents into Buddhist philosophy, Begley surveys current knowledge of neuroplasticity. Most interesting is a series of experiments with Buddhist adepts who have spent over 10,000 hours meditating. What these experiments show is tantalizing: it might be possible to train the brain to be better at feeling certain emotions, such as compassion. No less interesting are the hurdles the scientists face in recruiting participants; yogis replied that if these scientists wanted to understand meditation, they should meditate. Despite the title, the book holds no neuroplasticity tips, but it is a fascinating exploration of the ways the mind can change the brain. (Mar. 13) Corrections: The author of *The Lie Detectors: The History of an American Obsession* (Reviews, Dec. 18, 2006) is Ken Alder. The title of Heather Ewing's biography of James Smithson is *The Lost World of James Smithson: Science, Revolution and the Foundation of the Smithsonian* (Reviews, Jan. 1).

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Review

"There are two great things about this book. One is that it shows us how nothing about our brains is set in stone. The other is that it is written by Sharon Begley, one of the best science writers around. Begley is superb at framing the latest facts within the larger context of the field. She also gives us the back stories that reveal how human the process of science research is. This is a terrific book."

—Robert Sapolsky, author of *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*

"Reading this book is like opening doors in the mind. Sharon Begley brings the reader right to the intersection of scientific and meditative understanding, a place of exciting potential for personal and global transformation. And she does it so skillfully as to seem effortless."

--Sharon Salzberg, author of *Faith: Trusting Your Own Deepest Experience*

"It is very seldom that a science in its infancy is so skillfully unpacked that it reads like a detective novel. The fact that this science includes collaborative efforts of neuroscientists, psychologists, contemplatives, philosophers, and the full engagement of the genius of the Dalai Lama is not only fascinating, but uplifting and inspiring. This book lets you know that how you pay attention to your experience can change your entire way of being."

--Jon Kabat-Zinn, author of *Coming to Our Senses*

"I have meditated for 40 years, and have long felt that the potential of mind training to improve our emotional, physical and spiritual well-being has barely been tapped. Thanks to Sharon Begley's fascinating

book, though, that is about to change. As human beings, we really do have inner powers that can make a world of difference, particularly if our goal is not merely to advance our own agendas, but to cultivate compassion for the benefit of all living beings.”

--John Robbins, author of *Healthy at 100*, and *Diet For a New America*

“This is a truly illuminating and eminently readable book on the revolutionary new insights in mind sciences. I recommend it highly to anyone interested in understanding human potential.”

--Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path with Heart*

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

Sharon Begley, science columnist for The Wall Street Journal, inaugurated the paper’s “Science Journal” in 2002. She was previously the senior science writer at Newsweek, covering neuroscience, genetics, physics, astronomy, and anthropology. The co-author of *The Mind and the Brain*, she has won many awards for her articles. She is a frequent guest on radio and television, including *The Charlie Rose Show*, *Today Weekend*, CBS’s *The Early Show*, and *Imus in the Morning*. She lives in New Jersey.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brenda Schweiger:

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Karen Wilson:

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Richard Dutton:

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