

Ideas from *Change Your Brain:*
***Change Your Life* by Daniel G. Amen**
By Patricia Morgan © 2006

Endless numbers of books exist telling us how to care for our bodies, emotions, often with “healing” titles and, of course, spirituality is a hot topic with popular authors such as Marianne Williamson, Deepak Chopra and Shakti Gwain. Daniel Amen, author of ***Change Your Brain: Change Your Life*** has amassed neuroscientific research in an effort to convince us we need to care about our brains and mental capacity.

Amen explains that thoughts really matter. “When you have a thought your brain releases chemicals, an electrical transmission goes across your brain. You become aware of what you’re thinking. Thoughts are real, and they have a real impact on how you feel and how you behave.” He warns about problematic thoughts--thinking in terms of *always, never, should, must* and *have to* as well as blaming, guilt, personalizing and mind reading tendencies. Like the book ***Taming your Gremlins*** by Richard David Carson, Amen recommends catching your harmful thoughts, writing them down and talking back to them. In other words, *stand up to your crap talk!*

In agreement with the author of the ***Power of Focus***, Les Hewitt, Amen is a proponent of teaching the brain to focus on goals. “Developing an ability to stay totally focused will help guide your thoughts and behaviour and give an ‘auxiliary prefrontal cortex.’ It will help strengthen the conscious part of your brain.” He recommends developing a list of short and long term goals as well as establishing for relationships, work or career, money and balance of body, mind and spirit.

Best of all for those of us with a pragmatic bent, Amen concludes his book with a list of Brain Do’s and Don’ts. The following is a sampling so you might start to sharpen your razor edge thinking:

Brain Do’s:

- Drink water to stay hydrated, the usual 8 glasses a day.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Think positive thoughts. Martin Seligman, of ***Learned Optimism*** would approve.
- Watch the movie Pollyanna.
- Learn to breathe deeply.
- Learn something new each day.
- Use an EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing) therapist to deal with trauma. Just so you know, I am a certified EMDR therapist.

- Consider underlying brain problems in substance abusers.
- Sing and hum.
- Smile frequently at others.

Brain Don'ts

- Ignore erratic behaviour.
- Skip meals or miss eating nutritious foods.
- Never exercise.
- Smoke or use drugs.
- Drink much caffeine or alcohol.
- Hit your head when frustrated or with a soccer ball.
- Argue with someone who is stuck.
- Listen to toxic music.
- Be around toxic people, places or smells.
- Self-medicate.
- Refuse to listen to the people who love you.

Love your brain by reading *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life* and following its advise. Your mind will be more apt to think grateful thoughts and be better able to help get what you want out of life.

Patricia Morgan is an author, speaker and workshop leader. She helps people develop light hearted strategies for strengthening resilience. She can be reached at 403-242-7796, patricia@lightheartedconcepts.com or www.lightheartedconcepts.com