

Our Minds are So Powerful: They Can Make us Happy or Miserable, Healthy or Ill

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For decades we've heard talk of the mind-body connection, but what does it really mean? It means there is a very strong relationship between the mental world and the physical world, that negative thoughts and destructive emotions harm your health.

So today, thanks to the emerging science of epigenetics, scientists can now look at the biggest picture instead of following only the path of genetic disposition. Biologists studying epigenetics understand that environmental factors such as chronic exposure to stressful events and having negative thoughts and destructive emotions affect your genetic expression which in turn dictates whether you develop certain diseases, both mental and physical. In other words, one man has the "cancer" or "depression" gene, but if nothing in the environment triggers that gene, it will never express as cancer or depression.

This further means that how you perceive and respond to what is happening in your environment whether it is stress at work, emotional abuse, destructive emotions, has a far greater effect than the event itself.

So, the intersection between psychology and brain behavior is concerned with how the environment, our perceptions and our belief system exert influence on bodily systems namely the brain.

The brain has long enjoyed a privileged status as psychology's favorite body organ given the fact that the brain is responsible for all mental operations and cognitive processes. Mind and body are so intertwined.

Our mind or psyche i.e. our thoughts, perceptions and feelings, influence our brain's functions through the neurotransmitters. Thinking affects brain chemistry. It's been proven over and over again that just thinking about something causes your brain to release neurotransmitters.

The neurotransmitters are endogenous chemicals that transmit signals or messages between neurons. The neurons use neurotransmitters to send messages to the brain. Every neurotransmitter has a function and is released by different thoughts and emotions. Because of the wide variety of ways to think about neurotransmitters, it is important to understand both their functions and the problems associated with their surplus or deficit.

Every minute of every day, our body reacts and thus change in response to the thoughts and emotions that run in our mind.

Neurotransmitters control virtually all of your body's functions and emotions, from feeling happy, sad, anxious and stressed.

The power of negative thoughts has been shown to change brain chemistry and circuitry which results in real physiological and cognitive outcomes and can damage the neural structures that regulate emotions, memory and feelings.

Even when our stress and worry is completely hypothetical and not based on any real or current situation, a peak of cortisol (a stress hormone) and a dozen of stress producing neurotransmitters are released in response to negative experiences and thoughts. These chemicals immediately interrupt the normal functioning of the brain disrupting sleep, appetite, ability to experience long term happiness and satisfaction.

Negative thinking and negative words are self-perpetuating, and the more negative thoughts you have, and the more your internal self dialogue is negative, the more likely you are to experience emotional turmoil and the more damage it causes to your body.

We need to change our thought patterns, our perceptions and our reactions and remove the chemicals that interrupt the normal functioning of our brain that interfere with logic reasoning, decision making, concentration and rational behavior.

Until you have your thoughts and attitudes under control, no amount of knowledge, skill or medication can help you to truly detox your brain. You will need courage and perseverance to confront and control your thoughts. Look at your thoughts and the feelings they generate before deciding whether or not they deserve to be discarded as toxic or retained as life-enhancing.

Never let thoughts wander through your mind unchecked if they are toxic, they will eventually make you sick. Thoughts are real things, they can change the physical structure of your brain. Every thought you have causes neurological changes in the mind-body connection. The power of a healthy attitude therefore cannot be underestimated.

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