

# Taking Time Out from Technology to Change

by Dr Joe Dispenza

Technological advances in the delivery of information have presented the world with countless opportunities to send and receive news tailored to the demands and desires of the recipients. The prospects appear unlimited to communicate positions, to create and mobilize communities, and to generate inspiration and motivation for new ideas. Change would seem inevitable in the Information Age. But is it? Is it possible that our technological culture is creating an addiction to the external world and homogenized communities? Is a society committed to finding satisfaction from external stimuli prone to the comfort of conformity and less likely to seek, much less embrace, change? Let's take a look at what neuroscience and biology have to say about change.

Current neuro-scientific theory tells us that the brain is organized to reflect everything we know in our environment. The different relationships with people we have met, the variety of things we own and are familiar with, the cumulative places we have visited and have lived at different times in our lives, and the myriad of experiences we have embraced throughout our years are all configured in the soft plastic tissues of the brain. Even the vast array of actions and behaviors that we've repeatedly performed throughout our lifetime is also tattooed in the intricate folds of our gray matter. For the most part, our brain is equal to our environment.

Therefore, in our waking day, as we interact with all of the diverse stimuli in our external world, it is the environment that activates different circuits in the brain and, as a result, we begin to think (and react) equal to the environment. As this process occurs, our brains will then fire familiar circuits that reflect past known experiences already wired in our brain. When we associate with the external world we think in familiar automatic hardwired ways. If we believe the notion that our thoughts or our actions have anything to do with our future, how can we ever be in control of our destiny?

In other words, in a normal day, as we consciously or unconsciously respond to familiar people, as we recognize the host of common things in different known places at certain predictable times, and when we experience the same conditions in our personal world, we will, more than likely, think and behave in automatic memorized ways. To change then is to think and act greater than our present circumstances. It is to think greater than our environment.

We have been told that our brains are essentially hardwired with unchangeable circuitry – that we possess, or better put, are possessed by, a kind of neuro-rigidity that is reflected in the type of inflexible and habitual behavior we often see exhibited. The truth is that we are marvels of flexibility, adaptability and a neuroplasticity that allow us to reformulate and re-pattern our neural connections to produce the kind of behaviors that we want. The truth is that we have far more power to alter our own brains, our behaviors, our personalities, and ultimately our reality, than previously thought possible. How about those individuals in history that have risen above their present circumstances, stood up to the onslaught of reality as it presented itself to them, and made significant changes?

For example, the Civil Rights Movement would not have had its far-reaching effects if someone like Martin Luther King, Jr., had not, despite all the evidence around him (Jim Crow laws, separate but equal accommodations, snarling attack dogs, and powerful fire hoses), believed in the possibility of another reality. Though Dr. King phrased it in his famous speech as a 'dream', what he was really promoting and living was a better world where everyone was equal. How was he able to do that? Simply put in his mind, he saw, felt, heard, smelled, lived and breathed a different reality

from most other people at that time. It was the power of his vision that convinced millions of his cause. The world has changed because of his ability to think and act greater than conventional beliefs.

Not only did King consistently keep his dream alive in his mind, he lived his life as if his dream was already unfolding. He was uncompromising to a vision greater than his circumstances. Therefore, even though he hadn't embraced the physical experience of freedom yet, the idea was so alive in his mind that there was a good possibility that his brain 'looked like the experience already happened'.

Neuroscience has proven that we can change our brains just by thinking differently. Through the concept of mental rehearsal (to repeatedly imagine performing an action in the mind or to think about something over and over again), the circuits in our brains can reorganize themselves to reflect our very intentions. People who were taught to mentally rehearse one handed finger exercises for two hours a day for five days demonstrated the same brain changes as the people who physically performed the same movements. (1) To put this into perspective, when we are truly focused and single-minded, the brain does not know the difference between the internal world of the mind and the external environment.

Because of the size of the human frontal lobe and our natural ability to make thought more real than anything else, this type of internal processing allows us to become so involved in our dreams and internal representations that the brain will modify its wiring without having experienced the actual event. This means that when we can change our minds independent of environmental cues, and then steadfastly insist on an ideal with sustained concentration, the brain will be ahead of the actual external experience. In other words, the brain will look like the experience already happened. As the brain changes before the future event actually occurs, and we embrace the very circumstances that challenge our mind because there is no evidence of the particular reality we are insisting on, we will have created the appropriate circuits in place to behave equal with our intentions. Simply said, the hardware has been installed so that it can handle the challenge. When we change our mind, our brain changes and when we change our brain, our mind changes.

What made Dr. King unique, or any great leader for that matter that changed the course of history and the world, was that his mind and body were united to the same cause. In other words, he did not think and say one thing and then behave contrary to his intentions. His thoughts and actions were completely aligned to the same outcome. This is not a bad working definition of true leadership. When we can place our mind on a desired goal and then we discipline the body to consistently act in alignment with that end, we are now demonstrating greatness. We are literally living in the future and, even though we cannot physically experience that reality yet with our senses, the vision is so alive in our minds that the brain and the body will begin to change in order to prepare us for the new experience. In one study, men who mentally rehearsed doing bicep curls with dumbbells for a short period of time every day, showed (on the average) a 13 per cent increase in muscle size without ever touching the weights. Their bodies were changed to match their intentions. (2)

So when the time comes to demonstrate a vision contrary to the environmental conditions at hand, it is quite possible for us to be already prepared to think and act, with a conviction that is steadfast and unwavering. In fact, the more we think about or formulate an image of our behavior in a future event, the easier it will be for us to execute a new way of being, because the mind and body are unified to that end.

So what is it then that talks us out of true change? The answer is: our feelings and our emotions. Feelings and emotions are the end-products of an experience. When we are in the midst of any experience, all of our five senses are gathering sensory data and a rush of information is sent back to the brain through those five different pathways. As this occurs, gangs of neurons will string into place and organize themselves to reflect that event. The moment that these jungles of nerve cells become patterned into networks, they fire into place and release chemicals. Those chemicals that are released are called emotions.

Emotions and feelings then are neuro-chemical memories of past events. We can remember experiences better because we can remember how they feel. For example, do you remember where you were on 9/11? You probably can clearly recall very well where we were that day at the exact time interacting with certain people, because you can remember that novel feeling that woke you up enough to pay attention to whatever was causing that unique internal change in chemistry. More than likely, it was a different feeling from one you had in a long time.

Back to the concept of change. If emotions brand experiences into long-term memory, then, when we are faced with current obstacles in our life that require thinking and acting in new ways, when we use familiar feelings as a barometer for change, we will most certainly talk ourselves out of our ideal. Think about this. Our feelings reflect the past. They are familiar to us in the sense that they have already been experienced. To change is to abandon past ways of thinking, acting and feeling so that we can move into the future with a new outcome. To change is to think (and act) greater than how we feel, to be greater than past familiar feelings that root us back to the past behaviours and attitudes. Emotions like fear, worry, frustration, sadness, greed, and self-importance are familiar feelings that, if in the midst of transformation we decide to succumb to, will surely point us in the wrong direction. Most likely, we will return to the old self, driven by those same emotions and performing the same behaviors.

Can we then begin to contemplate change for ourselves? To take the time and begin to think independent of the barrage of environmental stimuli, is a skill that when properly executed, will change the brain, the mind, and the body to prepare us for the future. The art of self-reflection is dying in a technological culture that saturates us with so much information that we become addicted to the external world and we rely on the outer conditions to stimulate our own thinking. How free are we? Most are lost without the thrill of entertainment, text messaging, phone calls, and the internet. To make the time to meditate, to remind ourselves of new ways to live independent of the external world, to plan our future, to mentally rehearse the behaviors we want to change and to think about new ways of being, will surely set us apart from our predictable genetic destiny.

#### **References:**

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