

# Conference on Aging

## The Best Way to Inspire your Brain



By [Deepak Chopra MD \(official\)](#)

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Although the marvels of the brain as an organ have been wondered at for decades, there's a risk that science will make us feel like brain puppets. Neuroscience runs this risk by assuming, without any proof, that our brains think, feel, perceive the world, and make choices. In reality the [brain is an instrument at the service of the mind](#). We cannot live without it, just as we cannot live without a heart, but by promoting the brain into a thinking machine (an M.I.T. professor who championed Artificial Intelligence dubbed the brain "a computer made of meat"), we demote ourselves.

You are much more in charge of your biology than you think. Your experiences constantly change your brain. Much of the time we fail to pay attention to how we relate to the brain, but no relationship is more important. One thing the human brain does, in fact, share with computers: It is programmable. We primarily use this fact the wrong way around. Instead of programming our brains to be open, creative, alert, and quiet, we program it to carry out a hundred short cuts.

For example, when a server asks you how you want your burger done or whether you want brown, white, or fried rice with your Chinese meal, it typically takes approximately one-fifth of a second to give your response. In a restaurant this trained reflex is harmless, but it also takes the same amount of time to shoot back a response if someone asks, "Do you believe in God?" or "Who are you voting for?"

In place of a dynamic relationship, being driven by habits, reflexes, conditioning, and thoughtless opinions gives the brain too much power. In sci-fi a standard plot has robots taking over the world, but right now most people are dominated by a robotic brain. The old view of the brain as fixed for life, constantly losing neurons and declining in function, has been abolished. The new brain is a process, not a thing, and the process heads in the direction you point it in.

A Buddhist monk meditating on compassion develops the brain circuitry that brings compassion into reality. Depending on the input it receives, you can create a compassionate brain, an artistic brain, a wise brain, or any other kind. That's why your brain is—or should be—your most important relationship.

The agent that makes these possibilities become real is the mind, or consciousness. The brain doesn't create its own destiny. Genetics delivers the brain in a functioning state so that the nervous system can regulate itself and the whole body. It doesn't take your personal intervention to balance hormone levels, regulate heartbeat, or do a thousand other autonomic functions. But you can have a powerful experience, such as falling in love, going to war, or winning the lottery, and your experience will alter all these processes.

If you think of everyday experience as input for your relationship with your brain, with your actions and thoughts as output, a feedback loop is formed. The old adage about computer software—garbage in, garbage out—applies to these feedback loops. Toxic experiences shape the brain quite differently from

healthy ones. Neuroscience has joined forces with genetics to reveal that right down to the level of DNA, the feedback loops that unite mind and body are profoundly changed by the input being fed the brain.

If input is everything, then happiness and well-being are created by giving the brain positive input. Without realizing it, you are here to inspire your brain to be the best it can be. This is much more than positive thinking, which is often too superficial and masks underlying negativity. The input that inspires the brain includes a wide array of things. They form a matrix with you at the center. Here's what you want in your matrix.

### Matrix for a Positive Lifestyle

Have good friends.

Don't isolate yourself.

Sustain a lifelong companionship with a spouse or partner.

Engage socially in worthwhile projects.

Be close with people who have a good lifestyle – habits are contagious.

Follow a purpose in | Leave time for play and relaxation.

Maintain satisfying sexual activity.

Address issues around anger.

Practice stress management.

Your brain will thrive in such a matrix, even as life brings its ups and downs. By the same token, the brain can't arrive at any of these things on its own. You are the leader of your brain. The whole issue of feedback loops turns out to be vital for all kinds of brain functions, including memory and the prevention of feared disorders like Alzheimer's. A healthy relationship with your brain leads to a state of peak living over a long, healthy lifetime. Society failed to teach us this invaluable lesson, but it's never too late to learn.

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