



Highway Diabetes Centre Newsletter

JULY 2016

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Greetings to everyone,

Min dae..... in fact, only a few weeks to go until the big move. Next month's newsletter will be dedicated to the big move in great detail but for now I would like to introduce another new exciting team member. Helen Roome is an Occupational Therapy Consultant (BSc OT (Hons) - Wits), Health Coach and full-time friend who partners with those with chronic health conditions and lifestyle challenges to help them reach their optimal health and fulfilling participation in life! She has over 20 years of experience as an OT working with adults with physical and psychiatric disabilities; and combines this with her theological training (MA Prac. Theology) and spirituality to offer personalised, wholistic input to every client. In individual consultations, she helps clients make sense of their health and diagnoses; set health and activity goals; and overcome lifestyle challenges to meet them. Helen is also an experienced public speaker and group facilitator who presents seminars and support groups that use a wholistic approach to common health challenges. She blogs at www.liveyourwholife.co.za and this is one of her posts:

DIY brain surgery – 3 ways to switch on your health

Ever found yourself comparing yourself to others and grumpily thinking “she was lucky she was born that way” or “I wish I had his genes”? Until recently, there has been a lot of emphasis in medicine on genetics and how our genes determine what happens to our physical and mental health over the course of our lives. So we've come to believe that a lot of our health and happiness is inherited from granny or that weird uncle! And we're just stuck with it! The thinking is that your genes have completely “programmed” your health before you were even born.



This doesn't seem to leave much room for choice or change!

But the reality is that our thoughts and choices not only impact us and our whole health, but even those of the generations after us!

Opening hours:

Mon-Thurs: 7am-3pm
Fri: 7am – 1pm
(Consults by appt only)

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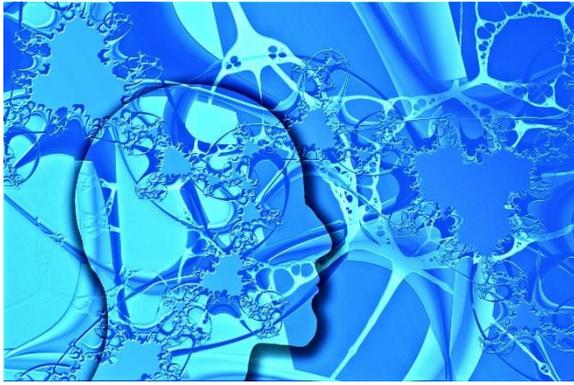
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Current Neuroscientific research in the field of Epigenetics (done by Dr Caroline Leaf and others) is confirming that what we think in our minds not only changes the physical structure of our brains (yes, they are not the same thing!), but the physical state of our bodies. In fact, it is suggesting that our thinking has more power than our DNA to determine our general health and wellbeing! The tables are turned right-side-up again - we control our genes, they do not control us!

How does this work? I recommend reading Dr Leaf's explanation*, but simply put: our thoughts and conscious choices can switch genes in our DNA on or off, with resultant positive or negative consequences for our wellbeing – illness/disorder or health/order. This means we are not (in Dr Leaf's words) “victims of our biology”. We may be “programmed” by our genes for a certain condition, illness or state of being, but how we experience these depends a lot on our thought life – what we choose to focus on and think about consistently.



Even better, the less we think certain negative thoughts (and make choices to match) the harder and harder it gets to turn on a switch-gene for a negative outcome like illness or weight-gain. Kind of like a mechanism getting rusty from disuse! Obviously then, the more we think the opposite (positive and truth-based) thoughts, the stronger the neural pathways leading to switch-genes that express positive outcomes become. When we choose to follow these pathways enough times, we are able to make them like default settings in our brain and think them automatically. Reaching and staying in a state of whole health is possible!

We can use our minds to do DIY surgery to our brains because our brains are “neuroplastic” and can experience “neurogenesis”. Neuroplasticity means our brains can change and regrow throughout our lives - even after trauma or when “learning difficulties” are present. We have the life-long capacity to learn and increase our intelligence. “Neurogenesis” is the birth of new nerve cells in your brain. This happens constantly, giving you the fresh-start ability to think new thoughts and choose new things every day! Mind-blowing stuff!

So to change your brain and your health, dismiss thoughts that are negative and untrue before they can develop (E.g. “My mother had depression, so I’m going to have it too”). Then, choose some positive truths about yourself and your whole health that you want to start with. These may be informed by your spiritual beliefs or other sources of truth (E.g. “I have life and health in abundance”)

Apply these 3 approaches to lay down these truths as thought patterns that switch on the health outcomes you want:

- **Reminders** – place visual and written reminders of these truths everywhere you look. (Post it notes, journaling etc.) Also use auditory reminders – find a song with lyrics that repeat those truths in some way and play it often. It’s a fact that you are 8x more likely to remember the words of a song than something you read. Singing those lyrics is thinking those truths and laying them down in your brain.
- **Rethink them** through meditation. Meditating is a spiritual discipline of many faiths, including Christianity, with just some differences in style and substance. Research has shown that just 5-15 minutes a day of meditation where you focus on specific truths can alter the pathways in your brain. Your brain will strengthen those pathways and even add new branches to them so that they become more complex and established in your thinking.
- **Taking action** based on those truths we have chosen also helps establish them in our brain circuitry. What one or two practical changes to diet, routine, interaction in relationships, etc can you make to act these out?

It will take about 3 weeks of consistent application of this combination of approaches to cause the truths you’ve chosen to focus on to become a default setting in your thinking and begin to have a transformative effect on your whole health. You are doing yourself (and future generations) a favour when you choose to think differently about your whole health!

* *Switch on your brain: The key to peak happiness, thinking and health* (published by Baker publishing, 2013)

Take care of yourselves and your families and loved ones. And please don’t forget to read next months’ newsletter to meet the whole new team and see what all the excitement is about.

Warm regards

Dr Paula Diab & staff

