

Beyond “Self-Help”: Psycho-Cybernetic Science for the Skeptic in Times of Change

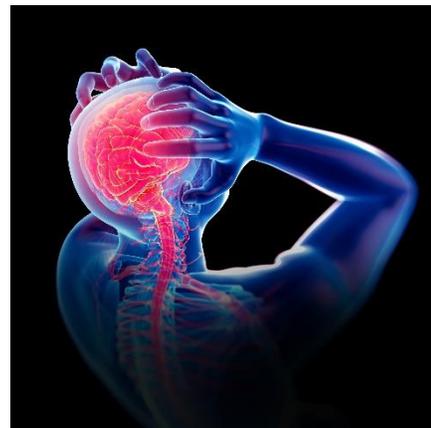
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Summary

Change can feel unwelcome and disruptive but embracing change can transform your life if you learn how to use your neuroplasticity to train your brain to help you succeed in an environment of change and uncertainty.

All too often we are our own worst enemy by frustrating or sabotaging our talents by allowing fear, anxiety, and self-condemnation, literally inhibiting our creative problem-solving gifts that would allow solutions and constructive action to happen in times of transition or change.

With the personal development industry continuing to grow there is no shortage of “self-help” and coaching to guide those going through transition and change, or just simply looking for more in life. The challenge is finding methods and approaches that work for the long term.



You have a growth mindset if you believe that you can change and grow your talents over time; a belief that one's talents, intellect, and abilities can developed with time. A growth mindset is impossible without change. Change in one's mindset and a change in outcomes. And change occurs partly as a result of imagination. We first imagine what we're after or what we need to do and only then do we put it into practice.

This paper will discuss how you can shift operating from unconscious automatic behaviors to conscious deliberate behaviors. You will learn how to rewire your brain for success and shift out of habitual negative thinking patterns that get in your way and keep you stuck. You can literally rewire your brain to better serve your ideal future and the best version of you.

We will discuss the principals of mindset training and psycho-cybernetics and how to apply them such that you can meet transition and uncertainty with resilience and adapt to change successfully. The methodologies taught will provide reliable neuroscience-based tools that make positive change stick for the long term.

The Foundations of Psycho-Cybernetics

“Nothing Splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance.” – Bruce Barton

Maltz and Lecky

Cybernetics is the science of communication as it relates to living things and machines (Norbert Wiener, November 26, 1894 – March 18, 1964). In the field of personal development, Psycho-Cybernetics teaches that that machine is your brain, and the automation of that machine is your sub-conscious mind.

Dr. Maxwell Maltz (March 10, 1899 – April 7, 1975) used theories developed by Prescott Lecky (November 1, 1892 – May 30, 1941), a lecturer of Psychology at Columbia University, who developed this concept as a method in psychotherapy in the 1920s. Lecky was well known as a psychologist and counseled John F. Kennedy when he was having trouble at preparatory school.

From the work of Lecky, Maltz developed a system of ideas that he claimed could improve one's self-image leading to a more successful and fulfilling life. “The word cybernetics comes from a Greek term that means ‘a helmsman who steers his ship to port.’ Psycho-Cybernetics is a term I coined which means, ‘Steering your mind to a productive, useful goal so you can reach the greatest port in the world ... peace of mind.” – Dr. Maxwell Maltz.

Psycho-Cybernetic Theory

Psycho-Cybernetics theory leans on having a growth mindset and teaches the power of self-affirmation and mental visualization techniques as a connection between the mind and the body. Techniques are used to develop a positive inner goal, with an emphasis on inner attitudes, as a means of achieving a positive outer goal. Psycho-Cybernetics teaches us that a person's outer success can never rise above the one visualized internally; that we act on our mental representation of things, not the things themselves. The approach teaches an individual how to regulate their self-concept and uses the mind-body connection as the core for attaining personal success.

The Brain is a Goal Achieving Machine

The subconscious will achieve the goal we feed it, negative or positive. Maltz viewed worry, or focusing on negative possibilities, as generating negative goal images that cause the subconscious to drive toward it. In contrast, you could instead generate positive goal imagery, to generate positive results. To achieve positive goals, we need a self-image that recognizes these goals as possible and consistent with an ideal self.

Lecky theorized that the defense mechanism of resistance as an individual's method of regulating his self-concept. Based on Prescott Lecky's idea, if a person's self-image is not consistent with the ideas a person has, the idea will get rejected. One must have positive goals that the subconscious will move toward, and the self-image needs to be set so that the positive goal image will be consistent with the other ideas. This will allow a person to keep the goal image in mind, which the subconscious will act on.

Personal development experts such as Zig Ziglar, Tony Robbins, Brian Tracy, and David Bayer have based their teachings on the Psycho-Cybernetics theories of Maxwell Maltz.



A Mindset Method of Reprogramming your Brain

You are who you view yourself as: your self-image has an impact on your ability to achieve (or inability to achieve) any goal and to overcome any obstacles. The instructions that we give our sub-conscious mind do matter and do have an impact.

Our view of ourselves comes largely from critical life experiences, particularly from our youth. These critical experiences shaped our beliefs in who and how we are, who and how others are, and how life works. Einstein said, "*The most important decision we make is whether we believe we live in a friendly or hostile universe.*"

If you live through the lens of a friendly universe, you will be more likely to have a happy and successful life. If you believe you live in a hostile universe, your subconscious will be attuned to having and creating the negative life experiences.

Imagination Is A Lot Like Reality

A 2018 paper titled "Your Brain On Imagination: It's A Lot Like Reality" describes a brain imaging study by Tor Wager, director of the Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory at CU Boulder, stated: "This research confirms that imagination is a neurological reality that can impact our brains and bodies in ways that matter for our wellbeing". Essentially, in this study, it was proven that the brain had unlearned to be afraid.

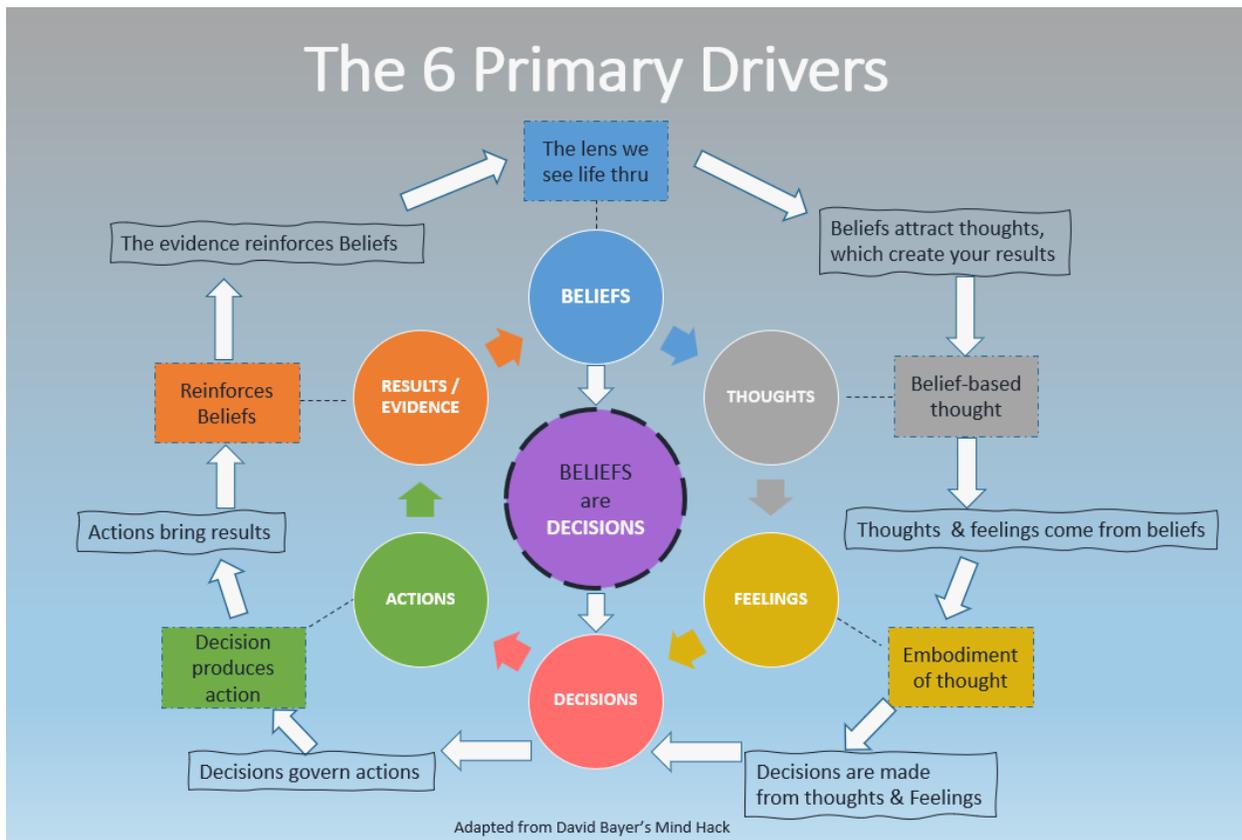
"Statistically, real and imagined exposure to the threat were not different at the whole brain level, and imagination worked just as well suggesting that imagination may be a more powerful tool than previously believed for updating our thinking."

As we see more and more neuroscience studies supporting the power of imagination, the practice of positive visualization, along with a growth mindset, is now far more than a cliché in the self-help industry. When we visualize our goals and aspirations clearly and in detail, magical things start happening in your brain – we update our mindset, our software. Thus, creating an imaginal

act in your mind is akin to a boxer practicing with shadow boxing; you can shadow-box with your imagination to visualize the preferred outcome which will rewire your brain to use its subconscious to find the solution – the how. Focusing on goals that are exciting yet realistic is important in putting your imagination to work given the brain’s natural tendency to look for problems and risk.

Limiting Beliefs

Our imagination can either work against us or we can put it to use to work for us. Humans are vulnerable to having false, self-deprecating, self-sabotaging beliefs about themselves and about life. If we believe these falsehoods about ourselves, we will operate our life from Limiting Beliefs, where our beliefs dictate our thoughts, which form our feelings, which then determine our decisions and actions, thus creating our results. Our results are the evidence that then prove our belief to be “true”. This is the model of the Six Primary Drivers.



The Six Primary Drivers can have either a positive or negative impact on our lives. The brain, being a goal-striving mechanism, operates largely on our subconscious beliefs which is our programming. Think of the brain as similar to a computer and our mindset as our computer programming. Thus, it is important to understand that our algorithm is our subconscious mind which governs many if not most of the outcomes we experience in life. For example, if you believe

money is hard to make, will you not likely take inspired and creative action to make money but rather continue to find evidence that money is, indeed, hard to make.

Einstein said, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution.” Or as George Bernard Shaw said, “Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.”

Identify “The Problem”

When you are having an undesirable experience, it is important to describe your exact thoughts in order to uncover your Limiting Beliefs. Writing down and getting familiar with the exact language of the thoughts in your head is a key step in uncovering the Limiting Belief. Some examples of Limiting Beliefs are:

- I am not worthy
- Money is hard to make
- There is never enough time
- I am not good enough
- I am not smart enough
- I will fail
- I cannot handle uncertainty.
- I will lose everything
- I don't have what it takes
- People will think I am crazy
- I'll make a fool of myself
- Dreams are for fools

Managing change starts with changing your lens of perception - your mindset. Change provides opportunities - some of which we might never have conceived without a forced change. But your Limiting Beliefs are in direct conflict with the future you are wanting to create.

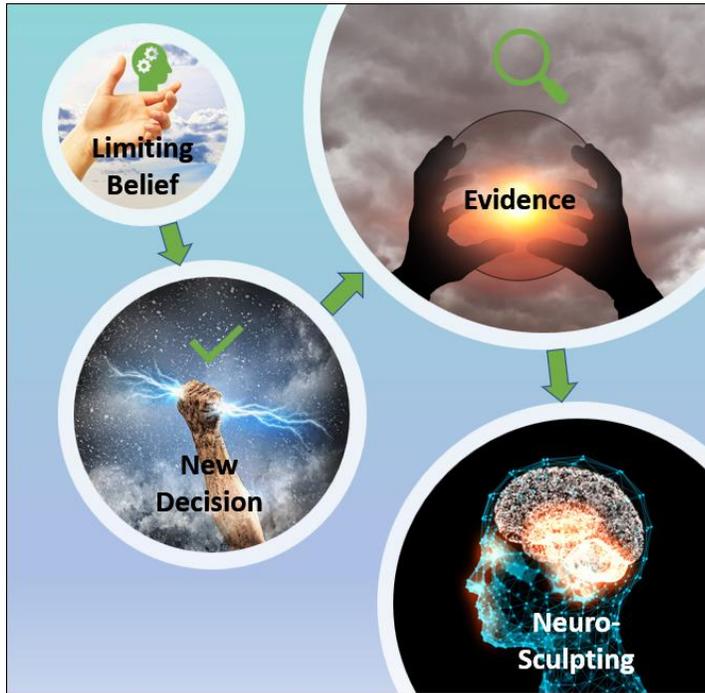
By working on our mindset (examining our beliefs and making new decisions) there is massive potential for your ideal self to be realized if we critically examine and powerfully change our beliefs.

Relax and Get Present

Relaxation puts your whole body in a more suggestible state than usual, allowing you to shape your beliefs. Thus relation, meditation, and time to imagine are important tools to rewire your brain prior to performing an imaginal act. It is important to create your mental quiet room and to be in the present moment. Living in the past is self-limiting and living too much in the future can be anxiety-making. We can train our minds to have goals for the future without the worries. Thus, it is important to create time and space for some form of quiet mind time, to bring in optimism, and bring forward a winning attitude, thus fueling your imagination for solutions and your ideal future.

Do A Decision Matrix

Once we realize we have been making unconscious decisions based on our beliefs, we can make a choice to change our beliefs, thus changing our decisions and actions.



The 5 steps for a Decision Matrix are:

1) Identify Your Limiting Belief

- Notice it
- Connect with an example
- Use the exact language in your head
- Write it down
- Remember where it came from
- Feel the emotion

2) Realize its Conflict with future you want to create

3) Use Your Imagination & Consciously Make a New Decision

- Always some form of opposite of Limiting Belief
- Write it down

4) Find Evidence to Support New Powerful Decision (fire up your Reticular Activating System)

- Evidence in your life
- Borrow evidence from lives of others
- Write it down
- Cut off fuel (evidence) of the old (limiting) belief/decision

5) Continue to look for Evidence

- Practice daily
- Result is shedding of old connections in your brain
- Result is neuro-sculpting (and empowerment!)

We can make long-lasting changes to our brain by building new neuro-synaptic connections using the Decision Matrix. Finding evidence for the new decision to be true and correct is critical to the success of the Decision Matrix.

Finding Evidence

Once you have done steps 1 to 3 in the Decision Matrix, you then need to build your evidence. We have programmed the mindset with a new decision which then activates the Reticular Activating System (RAS) which connects subconscious thoughts with conscious thoughts. The RAS is a bundle of neurons the size of your little finger. It is the gatekeeper of information that is

let into the conscious mind – often referred to as the nightclub bouncer for your mind - and makes sure your brain doesn't have to deal with more information than it can handle. Thus, the reticular activating system plays a big role in the sensory information you perceive daily by filtering the massive amounts of information and constantly receiving and selecting the ones that are most important for your conscious mind to pay attention to. RAS is considered the primary neural structure for consciousness. We can put the RAS to use by feeding it new information (decisions) that support our success through a myriad of things, including unwanted change.

“RAS filters the data and presents only the information that is important. It seeks information that confirms self-beliefs. Thus, the RAS influences actions. RAS connects the subconscious part of the brain with the conscious part. The subconscious part contains all of the emotional and cognitive experiences of a lifetime. The RAS can be trained by visualization, affirmation, and setting an intention. Visualization is an effective technique in which a goal is visualized as if it has already happened. RAS then stores that information and makes the goal come true. Affirmation is a technique of saying positive words continuously. RAS then stores that information. Setting an intention is a method of training RAS, as it filters out unwanted information and focuses on the goal.” - Dhanalakshmi Harikrishnan.

The RAS is the reason you see the same car on the roads that you are wanting to buy. Or keep thinking of a comeback to an argument you lost a week ago. It is also the reason your brain will uncover brilliant solutions or inspirations from seemingly out of the blue. We can put the RAS to good use by feeding our minds with conscious thought that fires up our RAS in a way that serves us – where we've installed and nurtured the information in our mind that helps us thrive and succeed and where our RAS allows new discoveries, based on the new decisions, to get through to our conscious mind. Essentially, the RAS begins to find the evidence for our greater good.

Conclusions

You can learn how to unearth your Limiting Beliefs that are holding you back from thriving through change, you can use your imagination to make new powerful decisions, and you can rewire your brain for adapting the change and for success. By using this approach you will:

- Shift out of habitual thinking patterns and literally rewire your brain to better serve the ideal future version of you.
- Learn how to rise above fear, doubt, and discouragement.
- Break habits that keep you stuck.
- Tame your inner critic to be helpful rather than keeping you down.
- Move out of the fog of confusion and get crystal clear on how you will live your best life.
- Use your imagination and train your brain to move from problem-oriented to possibility-focused.
- Build a success-driven mindset to overcome any internal blocks so you can keep moving forward.
- Unearth your bigger vision and your life purpose.
- Find the courage to take big leaps towards your dreams.

With these methods, you will learn not only how to facilitate breakthroughs for yourself, but you will be equipped with the how-tos that break through unwanted change and virtually every pattern and bad habit holding you back.

Novel/Additive Information

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation...

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”

~ Aristotle

Acknowledgements

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