

*Evolve the Brain: The Science
of Changing Your Mind*
By: Dr. Joe Dispenza

I first learned about Dr. Joe Dispenza when watching the movie *What the Bleep?* My wife and her girlfriend, who are both chiropractors, said that he was awesome. *Evolve the Brain* is an awesome book. Dr. Dispenza has an interesting story of personal recovery from a debilitating automobile accident incurred while competing in a triathlon. He healed himself and refused surgery despite the fact the medical community told him that he would most likely be paralyzed if he did not have the surgery. His journey into self-healing motivated him to learn even more about the human body and how it works.

Here are some of the insights gathered from *Evolve the Brain*:

1. *There is more than one way to look at it.* So much is perception. In the end, it's what we pay attention to that matters. For example, after the end of a very difficult business relationship, I chose to pay attention to what I would have to do to make sure I never enter into a relationship like that again. That's what I chose to pay attention to: learn my lesson and move on.
2. *Practice, practice, practice.* Dr. Dispenza gives a great scientific explanation as to why it is important to practice. He also digs into the importance of visualization as part of practice. Through practice we build neurological connections that allow us to eventually become expert. It is comforting to know you can be good at something as long as you practice it enough.
3. *Rehearsal, repetition, and reinvention.* A corollary of the above, if we are to reinvent ourselves, we must be disciplined about it. You get the mantra, whether you call it practice, rehearsal, repetition, it's important to build those neuron connections.
4. *Knowledge, instruction, and feedback.* Of course, all of these concepts are interrelated. Dr. Deming taught us that profound knowledge comes from outside of a system. That's because we can't see the forest for the trees. I have found, as has Dr. Dispenza, that you can tap into a field of knowledge outside of yourself through meditation. It's one of the most powerful things about the practice. Just because we have knowledge doesn't mean we have to employ it. That's where instruction comes in. Instruction should involve not just what we're doing, but how we're doing it. A simple example, it's not just that it's your job to answer the phone, it's your job to answer the phone in this manner. Absent sound instruction, we can expect a wide range of variation. Lastly, we need feedback. The more contemporaneous it is, the better. For example, when I have surveyed the workplace, most employees state they want performance evaluations at least every six months and what they want more than anything else is constant feedback. So, does your company's performance management system involve knowledge, instruction, and feedback? If not, how do you expect employees to evolve?

5. *"You just have to make up your mind."* This is a statement made by one of Dr. Dispenza's patients, Dean, who was also able to heal himself. When asked what his secret was he said, "You just have to make up your mind." When I asked my grandfather how he quit smoking after forty years, he said it was simple, he had just decided to quit. Now that's discipline. It really is that simple. But of course, it's only of the hardest things to do. I find it's difficult to make up your mind unless you have a powerful overriding "why" to do it.
6. *Create positive attachments.* When we do well for ourselves or others, we should create a positive attachment to it. Unfortunately, we spend most of our time creating negative attachments. Putting our emotions into what doesn't feel fair to us. And of course, what we pay attention to will dominate our perception. This echoes the point made in the excellent book *Leadership and Self-Deception*. As leaders, we deceive ourselves into believing it's about "them" when, in fact, it's about us. As the Buddha would say, "What comes to you comes from you." If all that comes from you are negative attachments, then that's all you're going to get back in return.
7. *Thoughts are things.* This comes right out of the study of quantum physics. What they have learned is that at the quantum level the appearance of particles is, in large part, caused by the observer. This is also one of the big messages in the book and movie *The Secret* or as Napoleon Hill stated, that which we can conceive of, we can achieve. So, what are your dominant thoughts? What are the dominant thoughts in your workplace? How would I know it if I spoke to you or took a walk around the work environment?
8. *The brain matures in our mid-twenties.* I would agree with this statement and add that our soul doesn't begin maturing until our late thirties or early forties. The point is to understand we may be dealing with immature brains when working with younger employees and we may be dealing with immature souls as well. We also have the potential to generate a great deal of influence in these areas in the growth stage.
9. *The brain is "plastic."* The brain has an inherent ability to change itself. Its ability to adapt to numerous mental and physical challenges is amazing. We can, in fact, create new neural connections should we chose to do so. Old dogs can learn new tricks—they just have to really want to. But the point is this—there's no physical excuse for not doing so.
10. *We can get addicted.* The flipside of our plasticity is the brain's desire to have certainty. Most of our addictions are positive ones. We're addicted to our families, to having fun, to enjoying the great outdoors, and so on. We can also be addicted to poor health habits, drugs, conflict, and career sabotage. My study of neuron-linguistic programming tells us that it's very hard to break our addictions until we're in so much pain that we can't take it anymore. Many people have to "bottom out" before they have the leverage necessary to change. That leverage is known as pain. So, for example, I learned how to manage money after going broke, how to be a good husband after getting divorced, how to build a career by design after quitting my legal practice, and so on. So, what's the answer? Very simple: bring the future pain to the present. What will your lungs be like in thirty years from now if you don't stop smoking? Feel that in the now. What will your bank account look like in twenty years from now if you don't save 10% of everything you earn? Feel that pain now. What will happen to your most important relationship if you don't get a grip on your emotional state now? And so on. Now, super smart folks like to engage in what

Tony Robbins calls “modeling.” They model successful practices and adopt them before they hit pain thresholds—so they never have to hit pain thresholds.

11. *Convergence and divergence.* Things converge when they come together. They diverge when they come apart. Dr. Dispenza explained how our body and, in particular, the brain works through convergence and divergence. Here’s the point: we have to engage in convergence in our organizations. In other words, we can’t just start at the top and engage in divergence and spread down the gospel. We also have to make a bottom-up approach and learn from our entire workforce including the rank and file. This is how natural systems work. How natural is the system at your company? Are you taking advantage of convergence as well as divergence? Do you allow for input? Do you truly have an open door or is it more like open season?

I found the book extremely well written. Because I’ve read in this area so much, I gained no real “ahas.” Since I already understand the basics of body mechanics, brain function, and quantum physics, so there is no real insight for me there either. If you haven’t read about recent research in body sciences lately, this book will help bring you fully up to speed.

Most importantly, what Dispenza talks about in terms of generating change has been known for centuries. Most recently it has been glamorized in *The Secret*. Napoleon Hill wrote about it better than anyone has ever written about it back in 1934 in *Think and Grow Rich*. Very simply, the biology, physics, and chemistry help better explain what we already know. The foundation for evolving our brain has been there all along. We just have to want it bad enough.