

Paula's Update

This past month I've been thinking about the human brain. Yes, I am an odd sort - just ask my family;-) A couple of things pointed me in this direction. One is a recent article I read on *neuroplasticity*, the ability of the human brain to re-sculpt or structurally rearrange itself in response to a wide variety of positive and negative events. More about that later...

The other thing that's fueled my fascination with the brain is my recent craniosacral class. We learned techniques for balancing the membranes inside the head, along with the lateral ventricles. The ventricles are curve-shaped cavities in the cerebrum that protect the head from trauma and provide a pathway for the circulation of cerebrospinal fluid. Which is all very interesting if you like anatomy, but... the really cool thing is that when you work with these structures, you feel as if your hands are deep inside the head, and you experience a sense of oneness, peace and expansion of consciousness, both as a practitioner and as a client.

News on Health & Wellness

The article on neuroplasticity led me to a very interesting book "[How God Changes Your Brain](#)" by Andrew Newberg, M.D. and Mark Robert Waldman. Newberg, a neuroscientist, is also apparently fascinated with the brain, and has been taking pictures of living brains in action. He describes a research study published in 2007 and funded by the Alzheimer's foundation that looked at how meditation changes the structure of the brain and affects cognitive function.

In this study, the subjects had never meditated before, but were experiencing memory loss, and motivated to try something new. They were introduced to a simple meditation called Kirtan Kriya that integrates the elements of breathing, sound and movement. Brain scans and cognitive evaluations were done before and after the 8-week study. For eight weeks, subjects meditated for 12 minutes daily. Guess what!? Participants enjoyed their morning meditation and planned to continue after the study. Their scans showed significant positive changes in the areas of the brain involved with emotional regulation, learning and memory. And subjects demonstrated an average of 20% memory improvement. All in 8 weeks with only 12 minutes a day.

If you'd like to re-sculpt your brain with this meditation, [click here](#) for a simple description. In his book, Newberg also encourages you to design your own memory-enhancing meditation, with mantras and movements that are meaningful to you, and incorporate these elements:

1. Set a specific goal
2. Stay focused on your intention and goal
3. Regulate your breathing, posture and body movements
4. Practice the meditation over a period of time

I don't know about you, but I'm willing to devote 12 minutes a day to keeping my neural circuits lively and happy. If you're on Facebook, please check out my [Inner Balance Page](#) and let me know your thoughts and/or experiences with meditation.

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"Every man can, of he so desires, become the sculptor of his own brain."
— Santiago Ramon y Cajal

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