



# **Brain Changer: How Harnessing Your Brain's Power to Adapt Can Change Your Life**

*David DiSalvo*

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Let's be honest. You've tried the sticky-note inspirations, the motivational calendar, and the cute (but ineffective) "carpe diem" mug—yet your attitude hasn't changed. It's time to apply cutting-edge science to the challenges of daily life.

While everyone desires self-improvement, we are quickly frustrated when trying to implement the contradictory philosophies of self-appointed self-help gurus. Too often, their advice is based on anecdote and personal opinion, not real research.

Bestselling author of *What Makes Your Brain Happy and Why You Should Do the Opposite* David DiSalvo returns with *Brain Changer: How Harnessing Your Brain's Power to Adapt Can Change Your Life*. Drawing on the latest research in neuroscience, cognitive psychology, behavioral economics, communications, and even marketing, DiSalvo replaces self-help with "science help." He demonstrates how the brain's enormous capacity to adapt is the most crucial factor influencing how we feel and act—a factor that we can control to change our lives.

Findings show our brains are fluid and function much like a feedback loop: stimulants from both our environment and from within ourselves catalyze changes in the brain's response. That response then elicits additional inputs that the brain identifies and analyzes to further tailor its response. DiSalvo shows that the greatest internal tool we have to affect the feedback loop is metacognition ("thinking about thinking").

Littered with relatable examples and tackling major aspects of our lives including relationships, careers, physical health, and personal development, *Brain Changer* shows you how to harness metacognition to enrich your life.

## Brain Changer: How Harnessing Your Brain's Power to Adapt Can Change Your Life Details

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Author : David DiSalvo

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# From Reader Review Brain Changer: How Harnessing Your Brain's Power to Adapt Can Change Your Life for online ebook

## Grace says

I picked up this book because we are making a study skills course for my company, Insanitek, and I wanted to integrate the "magic" of metacognition. After all, we all know that if you can think yourself in circles, and even from a distance, you've got a superpower of the mind. But not all people develop metacognition, so I was looking for some ways to explain it to children, their parents, and teach them all how to utilise their own abilities.

DiSalvo did a pretty good job of simplifying the concept, and even describing it in a way that I think most people can get. He describes it as your mind acting as a *brilliant, well trained* journalist. Not a hack that writes about their experience that you'd see in a lot of the news sites today, but a real journalist that asks hard questions and asks for evidence to back it up. He also goes through the feedback loop we all create with our experiences and how they are accessed and remembered later. Awesome foundation.

The second part of the book are on a few actionables on how they might go about about training their brains to do this. The ideas range from concentration to not doping yourself up to actually developing the mental acuity to think.

Now, this is where I had some problems. DiSalvo used some general advice to small studies. Many of these things don't appear to have a larger, longitudinal study on whether or not they actually work. For example, swishing ones mouth with lemonade with real sugar. The study claims that real sugar, just a tiny amount, makes the difference in concentration. (Honestly, it never worked in grad school for me, but fresh ginger slices did.) I could not find another study verifying this, so while it's relatively harmless advice to give someone, it's still inaccurate in the way of actual science. Great for a pop-sci article, though.

The third part of the book are a list of other books on the topic of metacognition and the mind. It takes up a full 35 pages, and looks pretty inclusive as a further reading list.

So, that's it. It's great if you're just getting into the topic with an intention to actually try a few things to increase your awareness levels. Interesting ideas for exercises we might build into the class, too.

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## GONZA says

Sugli scaffali americani presto arriverà Brain Changer, dello stesso autore di "The brain in your kitchen, che utilizzando le sostanze eccitanti più comuni nel mondo occidentale, come caffeina e nicotina, un paio di anni fa aveva cominciato la sua carriera di divulgatore scientifico che con questo libro ha fatto un passo avanti. Se nel primo libro si limitava ad informare e spiegare, in Brain Changer David DiSalvo comincia a fornire utili informazioni alla portata di tutti, rispetto a metacognizione e teoria della mente (la teoria che utilizziamo in modo più o meno consapevole per cercare di capire perché alcune persone fanno o faranno determinate azioni). Dopodiché ci vengono spiegati i vari feedback che possiamo avere da un adattamento pragmatico alle situazioni sulla base della capacità innata del cervello di adattarsi e di come ci costruiamo narrative non statiche. Per finire ci vengono forniti esercizi derivati dalla psicoterapia cognitiva e una serie di consigli rispetto a libri e film che hanno come filo conduttore la metacognizione, cioè la capacità che ha il cervello di

ragionare su sé stesso.

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### **Karolina says**

I won this book in a goodreads giveaway.

I thoroughly enjoyed the premise of this book, and how practicing feedback loops can strengthen neural pathways and make the brain function better. There is a section called, "do" where the author lists several exercises to accomplish this, though I felt like more examples could have been shared. As someone who has not read upon this subject before, I'm not quite sure what to "do" specifically.

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### **Jane Potter says**

Two stars is a bit harsh because I do feel somewhat inspired for change, but I do think you could just read pages 70 to 140 and be fine.

His point- meta cognition and control over ones thought is the key to potential and happy life.

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### **Jim Witkins says**

Useful overview. Resources for further exploration.

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### **Bob says**

I loved DiSalvo's "What Makes Your Brain Happy and Why You Should Do the Opposite", but this book disappoints. In Part 1 DiSalvo has created (or adapted) jargon to describe things that could have been more easily explained with simpler language, and in the process distances the reader from what is essentially worthy material. And I couldn't read the "Reporter" chapter without feeling patronized.

Part 2 is a collection of 30 "tools" that are designed to help transform behavior and break through old patterns. The first he suggests is using the "Awareness Wedge." As he points out, other authors refer to a "tactical pause" or "contemplative pause" or even a "cognitive pause." But he comes up with a new term, the "awareness wedge," which, while perhaps more colorful, is not as descriptive, and is certainly unnecessary. Why reinvent sliced bread (to mix my metaphors)?

Some other tools are helpful ("Write Your Own Obituary"), and I used the gum chewing suggestion on my class before they took their first diagnostic. And the quotes are sometimes inspirational. After all, he quotes Seneca and Marcus Aurelius and Meister Eckhart -- how could he go wrong?

Part 3 is a collection of suggested books to read (both fiction and nonfiction) and movies to watch.

There are some great things to take away from this book, but mostly it made me want to go to his sources and read, for example, "Mindhacker" and "Your Creative Brain" and "The Developing Mind", all by authors

he refers to quite a bit.

DO read WMYBH&WYSDTO, but skip this one. Or skim it quickly for the nuggets buried deep within.

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### **Nadine says**

It was okay but I was expecting more. Good introduction if you have never read anything on the subject before, had some interesting studies included, but I do not feel like my brain is anywhere near changing and the book didn't really give me any real clues on how to change. The DO section didn't really tell me what to actually DO. My main take aways from the book are 1. Think about what you think and 2. Think before you speak oh and 3. try some books from the EXPAND chapter.

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### **LemontreeLime says**

This had all kinds of fascinating information tidbits in it, but it's one of those books you later wish you had read in a hard copy paper form rather than listen to the audio. It's soo hard to go back and reread in an audio, and it's really hard to quick write down notes to self about future readings as the narrator races on. Good pop sci reading satisfaction. Loved the 8\$ term for using chewing gum as an antidepressant, which i \_would\_ type here if i could remember it.

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### **Stu Hunter says**

Okay. Wouldn't read it again tho

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### **Erin says**

Less helpful than expected. More of an elaborated list of a mixture of neuro studies

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### **Sarah White says**

This fascinating book on why we think the way we think is full of advice on how to harness the power of the brain, from things as simple as chewing gum or swishing a sweet drink to getting more sleep, being more assertive and watching challenging movies and reading engaging books (a list is included).

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### **Valerie Ishida says**

This is a straightforward introduction to the meta-cognition concepts of CBT. I highly recommend it for anyone with anxiety.

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**Liz says**

Interesting to read a self help book that doesn't claim to have all the answers to your life. Very refreshing, if somehow less motivating. Interesting brain science here. Quick read.

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