

**NEUROSCULPTING TO IMPROVE YOUR
BRAIN AND LIFE
THE BEST BRAIN POSSIBLE**



DR SUSAN KRIEGLER

Neurosculpting to Improve Your Brain and Life

- THE BEST BRAIN POSSIBLE

The key to overcoming depression and anxiety is in your head. Literally.

Until a few decades ago, science told us that our brains were capable of growth and change in childhood and that it was pretty much downhill from there.

Now we know that the story of a static brain is not true. Not true at all.

Your Changing Brain

Neuroscience has proven that our brains are constantly changing in response to incoming stimuli from birth to death. In every moment of your life, everything of which you are aware – sounds, sights, thoughts, feelings – and even that of which you are not aware – unconscious mental and physical processes – are based in and can be directly mapped to neural activity in your brain. What you do, experience, think, hope and imagine physically changes your brain through what is called neuroplasticity. The neurological explanation of neuroplasticity gets involved, but the basic concept is simple: every minute of every day you are shaping your brain.

While it's true that the brain is much more plastic in the early years and capacity declines with age, neuroplastic change happens all throughout your life. Harnessing neuroplasticity as an adult does require extra effort and specific circumstances, but it can be done.

This is the opportunity you have to intentionally change your brain and life.

Neuroplasticity Can Help and Hurt You

Neuroplasticity follows what's known as the "Hebbian rule." Neurons that fire together wire together, meaning the connections between neurons get more easily activated and new neurons grow when they are repeatedly stimulated in a coordinated pattern. The reverse is also true. Neurons that don't, won't. You've got a "use it or lose it" brain. Information rarely accessed and behaviours seldom practiced cause neural pathways to weaken until connections may be completely lost in a process called "synaptic pruning."

Neuroplasticity can hurt or help your brain and your mental health. It's just as easy to degrade your brain's function as it is to improve it, intentionally or unintentionally.

Dr. Michael Merzenich, one of the original UCSF scientists confirming neuroplasticity and author of *Soft-Wired: How the New Science of Brain Plasticity Can Change Your Life* calls backward neuroplastic change “negative learning” and writes:

“It is almost just as easy to drive changes that can impair one’s memory or slow down one’s mental or physical control as it is to improve one’s memory or speed up the brain’s actions.”

Neuroplastic change occurs in response to stimuli processed in the brain which can originate either internally, with mindfulness, meditation, visualization or externally, with behaviors and experiences.

You can harness neuroplasticity at any age to improve your brain, mental health, and life.

Neurosculpting

At fifteen, Lisa Wimberger, who had been a healthy, active teenager woke up confused and scared on the bathroom floor after her first blackout. These blackouts continued undiagnosed until her thirties when she just happened to have one during a doctor’s appointment for a routine exam.

It was determined that she had a condition where her vagus nerve, responsible for regulating breathing and heart rate in the brain stem, would randomly trigger the freeze response. When this happened, Lisa’s heart rate dropped to the point it stopped beating, then her brain, deprived of oxygen and blood, would shut down.

When conventional medicine offered no answers or help for her episodes, Lisa harnessed the power of neuroplasticity through a regimen of meditation and life practices to heal herself. Her episodes of seizures and flatlining disappeared. She calls the practice she developed and teaches others “neurosculpting.”

In her book, “*Neurosculpting*,” Lisa explains the practice like this:

“Neurosculpting is a mental training process that quiets our fight or flight centre and activates our prefrontal cortex, which is the mind’s seat of compassion and empathy. It also engages left- and right-brain stimulation and incorporates somatic awareness for a whole-brain and whole-body approach to meditation and rewiring. It’s a lifestyle of day-to-day exercises, nutritional tenets, and meditations designed to allow dialogue between compartmentalized and silenced parts of ourselves. It involves learning about a brain supportive diet, exercising, and identifying and enhancing opportunities for neuroplasticity throughout your day...”

On the *Neurosculpting Institute* website, she continues to explain:

“The practice can be as simple as some daily meditations and mental exercises, and as comprehensive as a full life-plan to include nutrition, exercise, sleep hygiene, and one-on-one support.”

A Typical Neurosculpting Day

For example from the book, *Neurosculpting*, a simple daily plan incorporating the five steps might be as follows:

Morning Regimen

1. Brush your teeth with your nondominant hand and think about one of your favourite mantras.
2. Do a five-minute gratitude meditation in the shower that looks something like this:
 - a. Breathe deeply with attention for a few rounds, noticing the way the lungs effortlessly fill and empty.
 - b. Think of the concept of gratitude. I imagine what it looks like to be in gratitude, I spell it in my mind, and I remember a time in which I was filled with that sentiment.
 - c. Assign a colour, texture, or vibration to the concept of gratitude and imagine it located and vibrating in the centre of your palms.
 - d. Wash each part of your body while imagining the colour of gratitude pouring out of your palms and filling up each body part.
3. Eat a balanced breakfast on a plate at the table after saying a brief statement of gratitude for the food.

Afternoon Regimen

1. Shake for a few minutes in the afternoon to help normalize excess stress from the morning.
2. Brush your hair with your nondominant hand.
3. Eat a balanced lunch on a plate at the table.
4. Look or walk in an outside environment for at least five minutes.

Evening Regimen

1. Exercise in a way you enjoy, such as taking a brisk walk or a fitness class you love. (You might prefer to do this in the morning.)
2. Engage in a nondominant hand gesture or activity while choosing a mantra to think about.
3. Eat a balanced dinner on a plate at a table at least a few hours before bedtime. Minimize carbohydrates in order to support a full and deep night's sleep.
4. Shake for a few minutes in the evening to help normalize excess stress from the afternoon.
5. Shut off electronics or television an hour before bedtime.
6. Do a ten-minute evening meditation that goes something like this:

- a. Breathe deeply with attention for a few rounds, noticing the way the lungs effortlessly fill and empty.
- b. Think of your daily stressors. That might be conversations you've had, people you interacted with, or emotions that came up and seem unresolved.
- c. Assign a colour, texture, or even a vibration to each of these.
- d. Imagine where you might be holding these colours or textures in your own body.
- e. Create a receptacle in your mind's eye in front of you and imagine your body releasing these colours into it.
- f. When you're done notice if you perceive you've made more space in your body.
- g. Imagine a concept that works well for you, like restfulness, ease, grace, joy, or any other idea. You might remember a time when you felt this, or maybe you focus on the concept and its definition, maybe you even spell it out in your mind's eye.
- h. Assign a colour, texture, or vibration to this concept and imagine your body filling up with this as you prepare for sleep.

The book has meditations to deal with specific emotions, exercises, mantras, and “brain changer” practices to support neuroplasticity.

Putting Neuroplasticity to Work

You can rewire your brain, through daily exercise, mental health tools, meditation, visualization, and mindfulness practices, to function optimally, think more positively, be more resilient, and stay consistently calm and happy.

Neuroplasticity has implications for every aspect of human nature and culture including medicine, psychiatry, psychology, relationships, education, and more. Where it stands to have the most potential is for the individual in their own life. Because you can learn to consciously control your thinking, reactions, and behaviour, and some of the experiences you have, you can oversee your own “self-directed neuroplasticity” and invite change and healing into your life.

This booklet on Neurosculpting is also available electronically on my website. To download this booklet as well as a collection of other booklets and CD's, please visit my website – www.susankriegler.com - or scan the QR Code below. If you would like to schedule an appointment, please contact my reception.

-Susan-

Dr Susan Kriegler
Educational Psychologist

181 Beckett Street
Arcadia
Pretoria
0083

Tel: 060 6215 398
Email: reception.smk@yebo.co.za

www.susankriegler.com
www.facebook.com/DrSusanKriegler
www.cribnotesSA.co.za



WEBSITE



FACEBOOK



**THE CRIBNOTES
PROGRAMME**

