

Lynne McTaggart: Moving from "me" to "we"

Ode

FOR INTELLIGENT OPTIMISTS

Why collaboration is the
secret to success

How we change our minds
when we choose our words

The link between good
food and the good life

Hidden persuaders

The promise
and perils
of the new
unconscious



Spirit





The honeymoon effect

Biologist Bruce Lipton on how to use the creative wishes of the conscious mind to lead a healthier, happier life.

BY JURRIAN KAMP

“I WANT PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND that we are creating this world. That we are creating our own lives. That our realities and experiences are not accidents.”

At the end of a long conversation about cell membranes, evolution and (sub)consciousness, I ask Bruce Lipton what his most important message is. The response comes without a moment's hesitation, and with his characteristically enthusiastic voice, he sounds like yet another self-help guru or motivational speaker. But he isn't.

Bruce Lipton is a stem-cell biologist who taught at the University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and performed pioneering research at Stanford University before writing his bestselling book, *The Biology of Belief*, in 2005. His message does not come from quick pop interpretations of quantum mechanics but from work with cell cultures in a lab. These experiments showed that environments and circumstances not genetic makeup, dictate how cells behave. For Lipton, genes don't control our lives; our environment does, and more importantly, our perception of that environment.

Preparing for my meeting with Lipton, I was struck by various reports in newspapers and magazines about pharmaceutical companies developing drugs that target mutations in specific genes



BIOLOGIST BRUCE LIPTON IS CONVINCED WE ARE MASTERS OF OUR FATE, NOT VICTIMS OF OUR GENES.

and about collaborations between big pharma corporations and biotech startups promising a new growth market for medicine. The message was very different from Lipton's: Now we're cracking the genome; we're about to discover the causes of many diseases. The time for even smarter—and even more profitable—medicines has come. Lipton call this “the central dogma”: DNA controls all biological life as we know it.

“I used to embrace the central dogma, and I taught genetic determinism at medical school,” says Lipton. The argument, first stated by the English molecular biologist Francis Crick in 1958, swung the pendulum in the nature-versus-nurture debate decidedly toward nature. It was a depressing concept to Lipton. “We don’t pick our genes. Genetic determinism basically says whatever happens to us is a consequence of the genes we received at birth. That means my fate is not in my hands anymore. We become victims of our genes.”

Apart from that fatalistic outcome and despite all the pharmaceutical claims of individually based genetic medicine, genetic determinism may have had its day. Lipton’s research shows a different perspective. He took genetically identical stem cells and put them into separate Petri dishes and then changed the environment. He saw cell cultures crashing in bad environments and instantaneously recovering

their health when they were moved back to good and supportive environments. Identical cells developed in different directions when the environment was changed. Different information led genes to evolve in different ways. So genes don’t control life; they respond to information.

“It’s the environment, stupid,” Lipton writes of his experiments in *The Biology of Belief*. Lipton’s discoveries are part of an emerging new biological paradigm that presents a radically different view of the evolution of life: epigenetics. *Epi* means “above” in Greek, so epigenetics means control above the genes. “It turns out that as we move from one environment to another environment, we change our genetic read-out,” Lipton says. “Or if we perceive that our environment is not supporting us, then that perception also changes our genetics.”

THE IMPLICATIONS ARE PROFOUND.

Change your environment, and you can change how you think. “We are not locked into our fate, because we have the freedom to change the way we respond to the world,” he explains. “We are masters of our genetics rather than victims of our hereditary traits. Our fate is really based on how we see the world or on how we have been programmed to experience it.”

When he fully grasped the meaning of epigenetics, Lipton’s life took a radical turn. He left the lab and the academic

world, wrote his book and began to teach. He realized that whereas the scientific community is gradually embracing epigenetics as an alternative to the “central dogma,” the general public is largely unaware of the impact these new insights could have on our daily lives. “The media worsens the situation by misleading the public with a never-ending onslaught of stories presumably identifying a gene that controls this cancer or that malady,” Lipton writes in *The Biology of Belief*.

So Lipton is on a mission to explain how our realities are created by our beliefs. “We know from science that our genes don’t control our lives, but if we believe that they do, they do,” Lipton says. To change our reality, we need to change our beliefs. That’s why the subtitle of *The Biology of Belief* is *Unlocking the Power of Consciousness, Matter and Miracles*. That’s also why Lipton operates in a field seemingly populated by self-help gurus who talk about the New Age “law of attraction,” which states that focused positive thought will lead to the desired outcome. Same message, different—non-scientific—inspiration.

The challenge of changing beliefs has become a key part of Lipton’s work. He talks as much about consciousness and the mind as about his past experiments in the lab. “The function of the mind is to create coherence between our beliefs and the reality that we experience,” he says. “So whatever we have programmed into our minds, those beliefs will shape not just our genetics but our behavior to conform to those beliefs as well. If we have positive beliefs built in our minds, then our behavior and our genes will lead us to health and happiness.”

Still, the way to health and happiness à la Lipton is more than positive thinking. “We generally perceive that we are running our lives with our wishes and our desires,” Lipton continues. “But neuroscience reveals a startling fact: We only run our lives with our creative, conscious mind about 5 percent of the time. Ninety-five percent of the time, our life is controlled by the beliefs and habits that are programmed in the subconscious mind. You may hold some positive thoughts but that has very little influence on your life because of the limited amount of time you actually run with your conscious mind.”

Even though we may embrace the message that we can change our reality by changing our beliefs, it is hard for us to change our beliefs because we mostly run our lives on autopilot.

Lipton explains that there is a good reason for the automatic "autoplay" function of the subconscious mind. As children, we learn to walk. While we do so, our lives are determined by the process. It takes all our energy and attention. The same happens when we learn to drive later in life. But once we have acquired these new habits, the subconscious mind automates the procedure. Whatever seemed almost overwhelmingly difficult at one point now is simple. We don't even think about it anymore when we put one foot in front of the other or drive home from work.

However, we don't just record simple motor functions like walking or driving. In the same way, we also record perceptions and behaviors. And we do most of this recording in the womb, during the second trimester of pregnancy, and during the first six years of our lives. "The fundamental programs in your subconscious mind are not your own wishes and desires," Lipton points out. "They are behaviors you copied from other people, primarily your parents and your family and community. Your beliefs are actually their beliefs, their wishes and desires. You are 'playing' behaviors that were downloaded into you when you were a small child. And it is not very likely that these behaviors are what you are looking for today. You are sabotaging yourself!"

This is, of course, not a new discovery. Sigmund Freud used psychoanalysis to uncover these programmed patterns. Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy may have brought a better understanding of why we behave as we do, but people rarely succeed in fundamentally changing their lives through these methods.

Lipton points to the different ways in which the conscious and the subconscious minds learn. The conscious mind learns through inspiration: reading a book, going to a movie, having an exciting conversation with a friend or a teacher. The subconscious mind is not creative and it automates procedures, or forms habits, at low frequencies in different parts of the brain. "You can talk to a tape recorder all you want; you won't

be able to change the program. You have to re-record to change the program," Lipton says. This explains why insights one may gain from a good psychotherapy session do not necessarily translate into different behavior, different fundamental beliefs and therefore a different reality. His insights speak to the wrong mind.

The good news is that more and more promising techniques to deal with the subconscious mind are being discovered at this moment. Lipton speaks about good results with hypnosis, subliminal tapes and "super learning" techniques. He dedicates a special section in his book *The Biology of Belief* to a simple energy-psychology technique called PSYCH-K that personally helped him undo "self-limiting beliefs." All these techniques feed information directly into the subconscious. "Using these modalities, you can rewrite beliefs that you may have held in your subconscious mind for already 45 years in a matter of just minutes," Lipton explains. "In 15 minutes, you can change a belief that has been affecting your whole life."

The impact on medicine is profound. "Our health is really based on our perception and our beliefs and attitudes," he says. "When we find ourselves in a negative environment, or we perceive ourselves in a negative environment or we are running from behavioral programs that are self-sabotaging, these beliefs generally contribute to disease. If you want to recover health, you don't need to add medicine. You actually have to return yourself to a supportive, healthy environment. I have seen in the lab that cell cultures can crash and then recover when their environment is improved."

To illustrate his point, he adds that research has shown that 90 percent of the cases of cancer and heart disease, the two biggest killers on the planet, have nothing to do with genes but everything to do with lifestyle. "A lot of medicine comes down to adding chemicals to support unhealthy lifestyles," Lipton argues. "It is not about healing people but about helping people to maintain a lifestyle. You don't need these drugs. What you need to change is your lifestyle. You don't need a doctor, you need a coach. That's what the new medicine is all about."

Yet that radical vision faces a major



Three ways to change your mind

Bruce Lipton believes in the importance of "reprogramming" the subconscious mind to replace habits and beliefs acquired during early childhood with wishes and desires that serve current needs. Here are three potential techniques:

PSYCH-K

Lipton says this program has helped him undo "self-limiting beliefs." PSYCH-K, established in 1988 by Robert Williams, is a simple and direct way to change unhelpful subconscious patterns. Find out more: psych-k.com

Primal therapy

Psychologist Arthur Janov, author of *Life Before Birth*, developed primal therapy to allow people to re-experience early memories and consciously integrate them into their lives.

Hypnosis and detoxification

Lipton believes hypnosis can be used to reprogram the subconscious mind. In the March/April issue, Ode profiled holistic physician Roy Martina, who also advocates hypnosis for health and healing. OdeNow will present an event with Martina in San Francisco on Saturday, May 19. To participate online, go to odeknow.com.

Martina also offers a special ODE detox program (see page 57) that helps create a healthier environment in our bodies. In Lipton's vision, detoxing is a critical contribution to better health. | JK

obstacle: A pharmaceutical company with a mission to improve health through techniques that cannot be patented would not be very profitable for its shareholders. "Theoretically, medicine is a compassionate practice; it is about helping people," Lipton says. "But in reality, it is not. Mainstream medicine generates profits from sick people. That is by definition inhumane. Medicine has to be nonprofit. Once you put the profit motive in there, then healing people would minimize the profit of the corporation. Obviously, money doesn't create healing. It's the opposite: Money prevents healing."

A conversation with Lipton is more like a high-speed monologue. A simple question unleashes a torrent of words from his brain. Although we speak over Skype, I can sense the urgency with which he wants to tell the story of how we can lead healthier and happier lives.

He tells about the day he was 7, when he peeked through a microscope in the classroom for the first time. Afterward, he ran home and begged his mother to buy him one. Lipton had seen his future. More important, he had seen a tiny world bursting with life. What he saw through the microscope was not a "thing"; it was a community, with endless elements and pieces moving together.

"Even the most primitive organisms on the planet, bacteria, all live in community," he says. "They are always in

communication with each other. Organisms don't live alone. The more complex systems become, the more sharing of the workload, you see." He pauses briefly. "You are not an individual. You are not a single entity. That is a misperception. You are a community of 50 trillion cells."

Lipton's second book is called *Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future (and a Way to Get There from Here)*. Darwinian biology, with its focus on the survival of the fittest, has led us onto the wrong path, according to Lipton. "When you start talking about the survival of the fittest, you start talking about the individual. Nature doesn't really care about individuals." From the perspective of evolution, it is not about the individual human being; for Lipton, it is about humanity. "We are not individual entities; we are one giant collaborative superorganism," he says.

Lipton argues that a revolution will occur when we recognize that each human being is a "cell" in the sense body. "We may learn that killing or terrorizing each other or our environment is self-destructive. In fact, there is a name for what we do. When the cells in our bodies fight each other, we call that 'autoimmune disease.' What humanity is going through right now is a very bad case of autoimmune disease."

Yet Lipton is optimistic about the future. "I used to be a pessimist," he says. "When I started to understand the nature of evolution and how everything is powered

by the formation of community, then I saw that the emergence of the Internet is doing exactly that—it allows all the cells to be connected. We are beginning to see the coalition of human beings from around the world recognizing that we are all one. That's our evolutionary destiny."

Lipton takes hope from what he calls the "honeymoon effect." We all remember moments when we were deeply in love. We felt healthy and energetic. Life was so beautiful it was like heaven on Earth. "That honeymoon effect was not an accident; it was a creation," Lipton argues. "You personally created that."

When we fall in love, our conscious minds, with our wishes and desires, are running almost full-time—not 5 percent of the time, but 95 percent. That condition can be life-changing. "The only difference between heaven and hell on this planet is the difference between running on the creative wishes of the conscious mind or running on the sabotaging, disempowering beliefs of the subconscious mind."

Lipton poses, then raises a question. What if you programmed or reprogrammed your subconscious to contain the same wishes and desires from the conscious mind that created the honeymoon experience? "At that point, we would all be living in heaven on Earth all the time." ■

JURRIAN KAMP has always believed in heaven on Earth.

Odenow

OdeNow presents **Bruce Lipton**



Nothing happens to us by accident, believes biologist Bruce Lipton. On the contrary, says the respected author of *The Biology of Belief* and *Spontaneous Evolution*, conscious and subconscious programming determine who we are in the world and thus how the world reacts. But psychology, the standard tool for infusing our experience of modern life, addresses only our conscious issues, leaving our subconscious in the driver's seat. When that changes, says Lipton, it can influence everything from our health to our relationships. Come find out how to harness that debt in yourself at this inspiring event.

Date: May 31, 2012

Time: 4-7:30 p.m. PDT, 9-12:30 p.m. EDT

Location: San Francisco

Price: \$35 (incl. \$10 gratuity)

FIND OUT MORE: ODENOW.COM