

THE BIG IDEAS

The Placebo Effect

Do you believe?

Perfectly Imperfect

<-- We all are.

Peace of Mind

That's the goal.

What Do You Want to Be?

When you grow up?

Our Bodies

Were designed to move.

Relaxation & Anxiety

Simply can't exist together.

Play, Love & Peace

That's where it's at.

Becoming Exceptional

Is required.

Your Own Person

Time to become it.

*"No one lives forever;
therefore, death is not the
issue. Life is. Death is not
a failure. Not choosing to
take on the challenge of life
is."*

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D.

Love, Medicine and Miracles

Lessons Learned about Self-Healing from a Surgeon's Experience with Exceptional Patients

BY BERNIE S. SIEGEL, M.D. · HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHER © 1990 · 272 PAGES

"We must remove the word "impossible" from our vocabularies. As David Ben-Gurion once observed in another context, "Anyone who doesn't believe in miracles is not a realist." Moreover, when we see how terms like "spontaneous remission" or "miracle" mislead and confuse us, then we will learn. Such terms imply that the patient must be lucky to be cured, but these healings occur through hard work. They are not acts of God. Remember that one generation's miracle may be another's scientific fact. Do not close your eyes to acts or events that are not always measurable. They happen by means of an inner energy available to all of us. That's why I prefer terms like "creative" or "self-induced" healing, which emphasize the patient's active role. Let me show you how exceptional patients work to heal themselves."

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D. from *Love, Medicine and Miracles*

Dr. Bernie Siegel and his book, *Love, Medicine and Miracles* are amazing.

If you or someone you love is currently facing a health crisis, I HIGHLY recommend you check out this powerful book.

It's packed with scientifically-grounded and incredibly inspiring wisdom on how we can all become exceptional survivors.

For now, I'm excited to share some of my favorite Big Ideas.

Let's jump in!

THE PLACEBO EFFECT. DO YOU BELIEVE?

"One of the best ways to make something happen is to predict it. Pooh-poohed for some twenty years by the medical establishment, the placebo effect—the fact that about one-fourth to one-third of patients will show improvement if they merely *believe* they are taking an effective medicine even if the pill they are taking has no active ingredient—has now been accepted as genuine by most of the profession."

The Placebo Effect.

25-33% percent of patients will show improvement simply by BELIEVING that their treatment will be effective—even if the medicine (or procedure) they're given has no active ingredient.

That's AMAZING.

Want to heal? (or be happy/abundant/healthy/whatever)

Belief is essential. We talked about the placebo effect in Herbert Benson's *The Relaxation Revolution* as well ([see Notes](#)).

Here's how he puts it: "Many hundreds of scientific studies have shown that an inner

"The word "hospital" comes from the Latin for "guest," but seldom is the institution truly hospitable."

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D.

"I strongly suggest that you never deliberately think negative thoughts about your body, even for a positive goal such as losing weight. The picture in your mind is likely to come much too true."

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D.

conviction, which the medical community has linked to the phenomenon called "the placebo effect," can help produce healing for scores of diseases and medical complaints. The placebo effect is a mind body mechanism that may bring about healing through a person's expectation and belief that a certain treatment will work."

Benson continues: "Scientific research now shows that the "miracles" of the self-healing powers of the mind and body are no less significant than the "miracles" wrought by many drug and surgery treatments. These well-designed scientific studies make it clear that it is at least as reasonable to believe in the healing power of the mind as it is to believe in the healing power of a given drug or surgical procedure."

Benson brings the point home by sharing an extraordinary study in which patients with knee issues were given either a real surgery or a fake surgery and, shockingly, the ones who received the fake surgery (where they just pretended to actually do the procedure) showed THE SAME benefits as those who got the real surgery. Wacky.

Benson tells us: "This study is by no means an isolated example of the power of belief and expectation. Hundreds of other investigations, involving a wide variety of diseases and health problems, have demonstrated the power of the human mind over disease. The treatment principle might be summed up this way: Just as an antibiotic drug may stop an infection or surgery may eliminate a malignancy, so the mind—your mind—has the capacity to treat or even cure many of your serious physical and emotional complaints."

Belief.

It's *extraordinarily* important.

How's yours?

WE'RE ALL PERFECTLY IMPERFECT

"The miracles come from within. You are not that unloved child anymore. You can be reborn, rejecting the old messages and their consequent diseases. When you choose to love you will have those days when you're not all you'd like to be, but you can learn to forgive yourself. You can't change your shortcomings until you accept yourself despite them. I emphasize this because many people, especially those at high risk of cancer, are prone to forgive others and crucify themselves. I see all of us as being perfectly imperfect, and ask that we accept ourselves that way. As Elizabeth Kübler-Ross says, "I'm not okay, you're not okay, but that's okay.""

I'm not okay and you're not okay. But that's okay. :)

As Siegel tells us, the first step in changing ourselves is, paradoxically, to ACCEPT ourselves.

And, it sure helps when we can let go of the silly notion that we need to be perfect.

Fact is, we're all a little wacky. :)

We hit on this all the time, but let's remember that there simply are NO (!!!) perfect human beings. We *all* have issues.

And, that's okay.

Back to you: What part of yourself are you having a tough time accepting?

You think you can give yourself a little love and make it be okay that you're messed up that way?

Good answer.

Remember: Acceptance is the first step in change.

"Psychologists estimate that less than 20 percent of the population has an 'inner locus of control,' the kind of self-possession in which persons are guided by their own standards rather than beliefs about what others may think."

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D.

THE GOAL: PEACE OF MIND

"William James wrote, 'The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.' Years of experience have taught me that cancer and indeed nearly all diseases are psychosomatic. This may sound strange to people accustomed to thinking that psychosomatic ailments are not truly 'real,' but, believe me, they are. The new concept is not a cop-out, but rather a source of tremendous hope. David Bohm, the physicist, suggests the word 'soma-significance' as a better way of thinking of the relationship. The body knows only what the mind tells it. To accept some of the responsibility for disease, to realize that one has participated, is actually a very positive step. If one has taken part in getting sick, one can also take part in getting well.

However, as I'll discuss in more detail later, getting well isn't the main objective. That can set you up for failure. If you set a physical goal, then you may fail, but if you make peace of mind your goal, you *can* achieve it. My message is peace of mind, not curing cancer, blindness, or paraplegia. In achieving peace of mind, cancer may be healed, sight may be restored, and paralysis may disappear. All of these things may occur through peace of mind, which creates a healing environment in the body. Anyone who is willing to work at it can achieve it, and the first step is understanding—realistically, without guilt or self-pity—how the mind has contributed to the body's ills. This understanding can show you how you must change to be at peace with yourself."

Lots of good stuff in there.

First: As William James so beautifully says: *"The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives."*

We CAN change our lives via the power of our minds.

And, that power can be used in the wrong direction! When that happens, we're contributing to the illnesses we experience. :/

The good news, as Siegel tells us, is that if we're contributing to its appearance, we can also contribute to its DISappearance.

That's part one.

Part two: We don't want to set the goal of "getting well."

Rather, we want to set a goal that is 100% within our control and that we can, with diligent effort, be sure to achieve: Peace of mind.

Now, when we set peace of mind as our goal, we've created the very conditions that will enable our bodies to heal—letting that be a by-product of the goal that's within our control.

P.S. In *Flourish* ([see Notes](#)), Martin Seligman tells us that our minds are so powerful that "We estimate that being in the upper quartile of optimism seems to have a beneficial effect on cardiovascular risk roughly equivalent to not smoking two packs of cigarettes daily."

P.P.S. Wow.

P.P.P.S. Let's get our minds right!

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

"To resolve to do whatever is necessary, including opening up the unconscious, is one of the first requirements for being an exceptional patient... But no prescription for change will do any good without the courage to accept the challenge—to take control of your life, find your true path, sing

*Speaking about meditation:
"I know of no other single activity that by itself can produce such a great improvement in the quality of life."*

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D.

"Here's a test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you're alive, it isn't."

~ Richard Bach

your song, and regardless of your age, decide what you want to be when you grow up."

Courage.

From the Latin word for "heart," courage is the virtue that pumps blood to all the other virtues.

No prescription for change will do any good without the courage to accept the challenge!

As Rollo May tells us in *The Courage to Create* ([see Notes](#)): *"The acorn becomes an oak by means of automatic growth; no commitment is necessary. The kitten similarly becomes a cat on the basis of instinct. Nature and being are identical in creatures like them. But a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and his or her commitment to them. People attain worth and dignity by the multitude of decisions they make from day by day. These decisions require courage."*

We need to remember that it's NOT about getting rid of all of our fear. It's about moving ahead in **spite** of the fear we may feel.

As May tells us: *"What is courage? This courage will not be the opposite of despair. We shall often be faced with despair, as indeed every sensitive person has been during the last several decades in this country. Hence Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and Camus and Sartre have proclaimed that courage is not the absence of despair; it is, rather, the capacity to move ahead in spite of despair."*

Here's to embracing our ideals and having the courage to go for it!!!

OUR BODIES WERE DESIGNED TO MOVE

"Our bodies were designed to move, and they can't stay healthy if we spend all our time sitting or lying down. People who exercise regularly have fewer illnesses than sedentary persons. In the hospital, those who get up and walk as soon as possible are the ones who recover most quickly from surgery.

Vigorous exercise benefits the body both directly and indirectly. It stimulates the immune system and enables us to cope with stress. Many experiments have shown that, when animals are stressed and not allowed physical activity, their bodies degenerate. When given the same stresses and the freedom to exercise, however, they remain healthy. Back in the 1930s, two researchers were able to vary the incidence of tumors in a strain of cancer-prone mice from 16 to 88 percent merely by raising some on calorie-restricted diets and plentiful exercise, while giving others unlimited food and little opportunity for physical activity. In 1960, another group of scientists found that an extract of exercised muscle, when injected into mice with cancer, slowed the growth of tumors and sometimes eliminated them entirely. An extract of nonexercised muscle had no effect.

The psychological benefits are just as important. Just the act of setting aside a regular time for this fundamental and rewarding activity gives a greater sense of self-esteem and control over one's life. Moreover, all forms of exercise help you "hear" your body and its needs, while shutting out other concerns. Exercise, especially running, walking, swimming, and other repetitive types, offers a chance to meditate, because we don't have to think about what we're doing. This will benefit anyone, as long as the exercise doesn't become a way to "run away" from problems or an excuse to stay away from one's family. Exercise has been successfully used to treat depression, and for the same reasons it is a potent weapon against physical afflictions."

Exercise. (Again. :)

How amazing are those studies?! Inject mice with an exercised muscle and you can slow the growth of tumors? Wah wah? Wow.

Check out the Note on [Spark](#) by John Ratey for more on the science of exercise.

"Most of all, we seek to help them rise to what for most is the supreme challenge of their lives, by developing and enjoying their unique personalities to the fullest."

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D.

"We've come to believe that the resolution of conflicts, the realization of the authentic self, spiritual awareness, and love release incredible energy that promotes the biochemistry of healing."

~ Bernie Siegel, M.D.

And remember how Dr. Walter M. Bortz puts it in *Dare to Be 100!* ([see Notes](#)): *"The tremendous value that physical exercise provides to your body is established beyond any reasonable doubt. Dr. Bob Butler said, "If there was a drug that provided all the benefits that exercise does, the whole world would be taking it." Of course, there is no such drug; the value of exercise must come from an activity program of your own devising and accomplishment. You cannot delegate exercise, and you can't get something for nothing."*

I just love this: *"If there was a drug that provided all the benefits that exercise does, the whole world would be taking it."*

How's your exercise?

How can you step it up a notch or three?

RELAXATION AND ANXIETY

"Physiologists have found that muscle relaxation and anxiety cannot exist together, and the relaxation response after a good laugh has been measured as lasting as long as forty-five minutes."

Relaxation and anxiety simple CANNOT exist together.

So, if you're feeling stressed, relax your body. See how the anxiety melts.

(Try it the next time you're stressed! The hard part will be getting yourself to actually breathe and relax but if you can get yourself to do that you'll be amazed. :)

PLAY & LOVE & PEACE

"We must learn to give fun a high priority in life. Like all other positive change, this also develops from the essential first step—learning to love ourselves. Each of us must take the time to find humorous books or movies, play the games we enjoy, tell jokes to friends, doodle, or have fun with coloring books, whatever the choice is of the child inside you. Not only does play make you feel good; it's also a disinhibitor that opens the door to creativity, an essential element of inner change... Choose to love and make others happy, and your life will change, because you will find happiness and love in the process. The first step towards inner peace is to decide to give love not receive it."

Lots of goodness in there.

First: Play!

Second: Give love.

BECOMING EXCEPTIONAL

"Throughout his career Siebert has continued to study survivors. He has found that one of their most prominent characteristics is a complexity of character, a union of many opposites that he has termed biphasic traits. They are both serious *and* playful, tough *and* gentle, logical *and* intuitive, hard-working *and* lazy, shy *and* aggressive, introspective *and* outgoing, and so forth. They are paradoxical people who don't fit neatly into the usual psychological categories. This makes them more flexible than most people, with a wider array of resources to draw upon."

Survivors.

They tend to be complex, paradoxical characters.

Reminds me of how Maslow describes his "self-actualizing" individuals ([see Notes on Motivation and Personality](#)). He tells us: *"The dichotomy between selfishness and unselfishness disappears altogether in healthy people because in principle every act is both selfish and unselfish."*

"What matters is what you think about yourself. You must find the part in life that fits you and then give up acting; your profession is being."

~ Quentin Crisp

Here's some more on what survivors look like: "They are generally successful at careers they like, and they remain employed during illness or return to work soon. They are receptive and creative, but sometimes hostile, having strong egos and a sense of their own adequacy. They have a high degree of self-esteem and self-love. They are rarely docile. They retain control of their lives. They are intelligent, with a strong sense of reality. They are self-reliant: they don't *need* to be included among others although they *value* interactions with others. Although concerned with their own welfare, they are also tolerant and concerned with others. They tend to be nonconformists with a permissive morality—they are unprejudiced, and they appreciate diversity among other people."

Love it.

How can YOU embrace your apparent dichotomies and allow for the fullest expression of yourself?

BECOMING YOUR OWN PERSON

"Becoming your own person releases your creativity. Freed from the bonds of convention and the fear of what others may think, the mind responds with new solutions, new goals, and an awareness that beauty and peace come from within. You become able to take risks, to experiment with your own life."

That's beautiful.

If we want to experience Love and Miracles, we need to know that it all starts with daring to be exceptional. Daring to be our own person.

Here's to experimenting with our lives and creating a masterpiece!

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

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About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.