Dear Body – The Well Within

Not just another mindfulness book

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All the examples within this book are real life examples. **However,** all names have been changed and so have identifying details such as age, gender, professions, family relationships, and place of residence. The only exception **is the** author's own family.

Here is a comment from a client via email: *I can't tell you how much your tips and practices have helped me through this time. Before the one-on-one session with you, I was having significant issues with stress, fear and high heart rate. After the session I worked on Dear Body and practised saying it frequently with hand over heart until it came more naturally. I'm now better able to calm my heartbeat before (and during) doing the magic breaths or the mindfulness sessions and have noticed I now don't experience the same extremes of emotion and mood as I did before.*

PART 1

Welcome to Dear Body

When a living system is suffering from ill health, the remedy is found by connecting with more of itself.
Francisco Varela

When did you last feel realy connected to your body? When did you last appreciate your body? Not for how it looks but for the living organism that it is?

I know I used to miss the body as I just lived inside my head. I was lost in thought and disconnected from the body. I aslo saw the body as less than, as the primitive part of me.

I paid for it with anxiety, overwhelm and moodswings. Being lost in thought and disconnected from the body has a huge cost for your mental well-being, for our stress levels. But I was surprised to find that body connection and appreciation bring the gifts of insight and wisdom. I thought those as a result of a mental pursuit.

We live in an anxiousness soup. In disconnect from life. We tend to live at odds with life.

The heartbeat of this book is bringing you back to your body, cultivating kind collaboration with your body. "Dear Body" is the way to connect with the living organism that we call the body. It changes the relationship you have with the body, yourself and the world. This is partly because it changes the relationship you have with yourself.

I work with Dear Body every day, and every day I see the relief, the soothing, the letting go and the wisdom it opens up. This is one of the most powerful missing links in well-being, as well as emotional and spiritual development, that I know.

Dear Body is based on thousands of cases and experience spanning three decades of dealing with anxiety, difficult emotions, trauma, eating disorders and ultimately finding calm and ease in our day-to-day lives. My experience is also personal: I know the power of this from a granular insight perspective. I didn't invent it. The Buddha declared that:

There is one thing that, when cultivated and regularly practiced, leads to deep spiritual intention, to peace, to mindfulness and clear comprehension, to vision and knowledge, to a happy life here and now, and to the culmination of wisdom and awakening. And what is that one thing? It is mindfulness centred on the body.
The Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya

Connecting with the body is like learning a new language so it doesn't happen overnight, but you have an advantage—you have already started without realising it!

With love and gratitude

Charlotte

Introduction

We tend to miss the point

You might know your inner critic very well. The one that takes you on the ride of the Imposter Experience believing that any minute someone is going to call out that it is a mistake that you are in the job. The one that plays on repeat the mistake you made or the thoughtless comment you made. The one that gobbles away at your confidence finding any reason for why you are not right, not smart, not good, or not lovely. The one that comments on everything you eat, what you weigh, how good a parent you are, everything all the time!

You might have been in therapy, you might meditate, do yoga, you might have mantras on the inside of your toilet door or use them as passwords on your laptop. Yet the pesky thoughts are still there, they chase you irrespective of what you achieve, where you are and who you are with. They are part of being human, at least in the West at this time in history.

For most of us we are very outward focussed for reassurance, for comfort, for success but also for the indicators of what might be wrong with us or not good enough in us. Yet it is our inner relationship with self that is the foundation of our life experience. We are facing the wrong way. We need to come home.

We are relational beings. We develop through relationships. Our early experiences become the template for our life. The expectations and voices of our parents and other early influencers in our life become the voices that play in our heads. Their rules, their view of us and of the world, their praise and their wrath. This becomes the place from which we view ourselves.

The relationship within is the well from which our life experience flows. What if the voices can be replaced with kinder, gentler internal voices?

I have worked in the space of self and organisational transformation for close to thirty years, have trained in many modalities and yet the repeated feedback I get is very much about a little practice and an attitude within the self that I call Dear Body.

This book highlights what it costs to be disconnected from the body, in terms of anxiety, how we treat the body, not being able to say 'no', spiralling into panic attacks, being beholden to old trauma. But also how this change in the inner relationship can bring more joy, calm, insight and wisdom.

My aim is for this book to be your guide in bringing you home, back to gentleness and tenderness for your dear body, and your self experience to a calmer state. But also for you to know a way home to calm when you feel lost in overwhelm. At the end of each chapter you will see work pages with exercises, exercises that take you step by step through what Dear Body offers.

I am the proof in the pudding but so are so many clients. But also research and science now tell us why it is so.

Your body has a life of its own, it belongs to the universe, it holds wisdom your mind can only dream of. It is connected to the stars, to the oceans, to the wheat fields, to the moon and the sun. It is connected to other humans in a way that you can only observe. Your job is to honour it, to tune in and listen. Charlotte Thaarup

What is Dear Body?

I have been the midwife of Dear Body, it has been a slow birth and I am still learning from the 'child' Dear Body. This is why this is the forth version of the book 'Dear Body', it has evolved along the way. And changed me and hundreds of others along the way. I started training psychologist in mindfulness, have run literally hundreds of retreats and now run Mindful Leadership within the university system. In all these programs Dear Body is at the core and it does not matter who it is, everyone finds it a useful, insightful and a simple way to calm down. But that is just the beginning to what it has to offer.

The term "Dear Body" arose during a pilot program on mindful eating. This term encapsulated a feeling of compassion for the body having to cope with the violence and abuse of overeating and dieting. The groups soon noticed that the term "Dear Body" brought calm. In fact it was very effective in changing our state at any time, whether in the boardroom, the family Sunday dinner or life in general.

Scientifically, Dear Body would be described as kind introception or neurosomatic mindfulness and self compassion. Science has shown us that introception, paying attention to body sensations, is one of the key elements in increasing our ability to regulate our emotions.

How to travel through this book

You will soon realise that Dear Body is selfcompassion sneaking in the back door and that it brings with it tenderness for your human experience. Dear body is about befriending yourself. It is an act of love, bringing love to the most important relationship in your life, the relationship with yourself.

Start by considering the idea that you are perfect and yet there is room for improvement. This is the context of the practice: you are an expression of life and in that you are perfect. Reading this book will not "fix" you simply because there is nothing wrong with you. You will never be more perfect than you are now, but you can make some changes so that you can experience this perfection, so you get to know it.

In other words this is not self improvement, there is an assumption in much self help that we are not right, not good enough. Here we start reminding ourselves that we are good enough. You are enough, good enough.

> I used to think that to become free you had to practise like a samurai warrior, but now I understand that you have to practise like a devoted mother of a new-born child. It takes the same energy but has a completely different quality. It's compassion and presence rather than having to defeat the enemy in battle.
> Jack Kornfield, "The Question"

One of the most respected Buddhist teachers is Jack Kornfield. His beautiful statement above is a source of inspiration. We connect with the body in kind, soothing curiosity and sense what is going on, how the body is reacting to the moment, just like you would check in with someone you love dearly.

How do we do Dear Body?

You can do it by simply placing the hand over the heart or an area that is of pain to you, closing the eyes, noticing the warmth and the connection, and then silently saying "Dear Body". Dear Body is simply taking a moment to soothe, connect and reassure the body that you are safe and all is well.

It is also an ongoing practice based in mindfulness and self-compassion, of being aware of what arises in the body, where the body is at, and what it is trying to tell you.

If you know a little about mindfulness you will note that the paying attention to the sensation and knowing it not as me, but as something passing is part of a mindfulness practice. Dear Body, is a mix of mindfulness, particularly mindfulness of the body, self compassion and old wisdom that says; all life is precious. But it is more than that. As we travel through this book together using the practice you will notice that the body starts to become your teacher.

Small steps – big changes (how to use this book)

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. Buckminster Fuller

Science shows that the connection between knowing and doing is not very strong, it is stronger for some than others, but understanding something tends to bring only limited and slow change.

Your brain is a pattern-making machine, full of habits that you have created. The tendency is that we are drawn back into the old habits time after time. This is why the book regularly suggests little habits for making changes small steps at a time.

It's essential to establish new habits one by one. Just a few minutes a day add up to many hours over a year, and this is how change occurs. You've already done this many times in your life, like the habit of brushing your teeth! The art is to see establishing new habits as a process. If you don't stick to your initial plan, don't conclude that you're hopeless or blame the process. Observe with curiosity and kindness. The motto is: 'Back on the horse.'

So, set yourself up for getting the most out of this book. Make your commitment time defined. You might commit to two weeks of saying 'Dear Body' at least five times a day and doing ten minutes of daily mindfulness practice. Then take stock.

Engage with the exercises and suggestions. There is a direct correlation between the amount of time you practise and the effects you get.

I have chosen to do many repeats of key points, the important thing here is reinforcement, so enjoy the repetition, when you notice it, know that you are really getting this point, and that is great!

This is a journey of discovery.

There are four attitudes that I invite you to adopt during your mindfulness exploration as they are all stress antidotes and when we cultivate one, we naturally enhance them all. The acronym to remember them by is **NACK - Non-judging, Acceptance, Curiosity and Kindness.**

Non-judging - The mind tends to categorise experiences into like, dislike and indifferent. The art is to catch yourself judging and then simply observing and suspending it with an internal 'hmm, interesting.' Once we no longer identify with our judgments, we have the ability to zoom out, access multiple perspectives or just give them some space. Our judgments are often unwise and are only expressions of a temporary experience and perspective; they emerge as a result of our past experiences and biases. In essence, judging is messages from our past self. Pay particularly careful attention to the judging of yourself.

Acceptance – Acceptance is saying 'yes' to this moment with all that it holds, even if we don't like it, we just notice that also and accept that we don't like it! Acceptance is not passivity; it is a courageous and essential step in the process of transformation. Acceptance is a prerequisite for any change - first awareness, then acceptance. Often, we sit in tension between how we would like things to be and how we perceive them to be - our stories hold the tension. Acceptance is the key to dropping this tension. At times we don't want to be with where we are at, so we step into avoidance. Acceptance is the opposite of that.

Curiosity - Our 'beginner's mind' is about seeing things with a child's mind. Curiosity and openness of mind means less identification with our past. When we are truly curious, we experience life beyond the labels and constructions imposed by the thinking mind.

Kindness - Kindness is the neurological antidote to negative mind states like envy, hatred, anger, miserliness, stress and so on. Kindness not only pacifies negative tendencies, it uproots them. Kindness has scientifically proven positive effects on your psychological and physical wellbeing. The first step in cultivating kindness is to be kind to yourself. When you do mindfulness training or any of the exercises do it with kindness, embrace any experience you are having with kindness.

Your general task during the program is to:

- Do daily 10 minute mindfulness training
- Move a minimum of 30 minutes a day
- Engage with the material with kind curiosity!
- As often as you can place your hand over the heart, notice the warmth and say: 'Dear Body'.

Key Points for getting the most out of this book:

- Remind yourself that you are on a journey, so take one step at a time. Most change happens gradually.
- The trick is hanging in there, outsmarting the mind when it sabotages the change. Remind yourself that it isn't payday every day!
- Think of something that you've achieved and how you did it; use the same model for this process.
- See if you can share the journey with a friend. Being accountable to someone else is a powerful motivation.

- Know that you are not something that has to be fixed. Whatever is bothering us provides and opportunity for transformation, for new understandings.

The Context

A story of the dedicated body

This story took place in 2017 in a corporate office in NSW Australia.

> *Alana called me after she had been crying for two weeks, unable to leave the house. I knew her as a strong, positive, outgoing woman. We had met the year before when she had participated in an eight-session Mindfulness at Work program with me. She had really taken to mindfulness in every way and had become an ambassador for it at her workplace. Between the tears she told me about an incident at work. Her manager had called her to a one-on-one meeting. He started by stating her competencies but then berated her for her size, saying that it was obvious that she did not fit the corporate brand. He then pointed to slender girls walking by, saying, "Look at their waist and then look at you."*
>
> *Alana felt herself melt away as her attempts to stop him were ignored. Within a few moments, all she was left with was a weeping, weak, tired, version of herself that had no confidence and was unable to do the most basic tasks—pick up the phone, go out the front door. It was as if who she thought she was had vanished. There was no doubt that the body had experienced the interaction with her manager as a violation. As a result, she was traumatised and couldn't think, work, or do any of the things she loved.*
>
> *We started addressing the trauma in the dear body and after each session she was a little clearer and less teary. During the fourth session, we addressed her recent panic attacks at the gym, which had commenced after the incident. They were puzzling to her because she didn't understand why they were happening. This was affecting her greatly as she had loved going to the gym and saw it as a bit of a sanctuary. Yet now it brought up fear and panic. What was going on?*
>
> *Ten days later when she came back for the fifth session, she couldn't wait to share her experience at the gym the day before. She had had no anxiety while she parked, nor when she had walked in through the door. On the treadmill, all still good. Suddenly, one of her earphones popped out and immediately her heart rate accelerated, and she felt acutely anxious. She popped the earphones back in again while she soothed the heart: "Dear heart, it is OK, dear body, it is OK." The heart rate steadied, and she wondered what the trigger could have been. She pulled out the earphone again and listened. She noticed the subtle clicking sound of the electric door. It was the same sound as the door at work. This sound above all the others—the music, people talking, weights clinking—had been picked up by her dear body. The body had associated this sound with her not being safe and therefore mobilized itself for dealing with the threat.*

This story tells us that the body is always on the lookout for you, always wanting you to be safe. It stores much more information about that than you will ever rationally know. Everything that has happened to you has been stored so that moments that are somehow similar to previous moments will be recognised for the danger or the delight that they might offer.

The predicting program is laid down throughout our lives, but most powerfully during the first 1000 days, meaning that some of it will be preverbal. Without this capacity we would be lost in a seemingly

brand new world every minute but it is also a curse. It is clear that we were designed to survive, to pass on our genes rather than to be contented or conscious—we have to claim and cultivate that.

This means that situations that we should avoid are tagged with a fear, flee or freeze tag and those that will bring us reward like food, feeling good and nice interpersonal exchanges are tagged with a 'approach' go for it! This is done through a complete system of hormones released that not only guide our behavior but also habituate our behavior. This habituation is the subconscious and it is our main operating system. 95% of what goes on for us is from this place. That, according to American Biologist Dr Bruce Lipton, means that we are only really conscious of about 5% of what is going on.

The subconscious runs the show and we can be grateful for that because if we were to be aware of everything as if for the first time we would quickly go mad. So the subconsious is there to help us navigate the present with the help of what we have experienced in the past.

Another word for the subconsious is the reactive.

In other words our past experiences are stored as cellular memories. In this way the body is your ultimate servant, ready to hijack your attention to keep you safe and direct you to what will bring you to safety or that which will feel good.

This is what Alana's body did, alerting her to the stored danger memory of the doors that had been linked to the assault. This is because the neurons that fire together wire together. Freud called this 'simultanous association.' The sounds, smells, what is seen, thought, heard and felt all fuse into one memory and all when activated will alert us to the danger or the delight.

Alana knew this and she saw it as her job to soothe and reassure the body. She was not frightened of the panic attack but curious and able to soothe it quickly by giving it the kind attention that it needed to come home to calm.

Perhaps you wonder how Alana realised that the issue was the sound? In one way it doesn't matter; you will never know all the triggers that your body has. All you have to do is trust that your body is looking out for you.

It took three elements for Alana to catch her experience and to soothe it. First, she had to be aware, she had to notice that her heart was racing. That might sound obvious but surprisingly it is not. Our body has all sorts of different things happening that we miss, all the time. So we need to learn to tune into the body.

Secondly, she knew how to soothe the body. The practice of Dear Body is a perfect, powerful and yet simple way to do just that. She immediately put her hand over hear heart and gave all her attention to soothing the heart. 'Dear heart, it is ok, we are safe and all is well.'

Thirdly Alana had to be able to maintain her attention on the pounding heart rather than get lost in the story of why this was happening, how awful it was or the fear of how she would calm down again.

The bodily organism takes over in moments of great threat: it takes over and guides during childbirth, it is constantly tuning in to the world, checking to see if you are safe and then, before you have a clue what is going on, it has started the "keeping you safe" process.

Does this not bring up gratitude and the spirit of collaboration for you in relation to your body? It is your dear body. When you are next anxious, thank the body and trust that from its perspective there is a danger. It is not your enemy, it is your very best ally.

It is not your fault but your responsibility to manage

How you have internalised your early experiences is not your fault. Neither is it your fault what has happened to you. However for a quality of life it is up to you to try to manage these experiences or these ‘arisings’.

You might also note that we now have split the experience from the experiencer? There is the reactive arising and then there is awareness observing this arising. Two parts.

The emergence of Dear Body

This is how Dear Body emerged for me.

I was working as a facilitator and mediator and increasingly found that what I had to offer clients was not good enough. I kept thinking that our assumptions of the importance of goals or that once you do x or z you will be happy, were not only too narrow but in fact delusional. As a consequence, I was looking for something wiser than our traditional Western paradigms.

That brought me to Mindfully-Based Stress Reduction and immediately I knew that this was something with much more resonance to “truth” or to how things actually are. Interestingly it was also amazingly backed up by neuroscience.

I had taken the training on for clients, not for myself, as I was looking for something better for them. What I found was something that was to change my life.

Once someone asked me if I was anxious and I responded, “No, not at all. I just need to get this and that done, then I will be fine”. I really believed that. I didn’t realise this was anxiety. Because I was disconnected from my body and merged with thinking, I had no idea that I was anxious. Also, anxiety was not much talked about twenty years ago.

Over time I started to connect with the body, to listen to it. I noticed that triggers showed up in the body first and I was able to soothe them . I found that keeping attention within the body when difficult emotions were visiting was the most powerful way to avoid feeding unnecessary pain. I became an absolute fan of mindfulness of the body, and its significance within the foundational practice of mindfulness. If I feel a charge within the body, that something is activated, then that gets my undivided attention.

I started passing this new way focus of mindfulness onto clients and it has paid off, endlessly.

Its relationship to eating and body issues came via a corporate program where a participant provided certain feedback—that she had lost four kilos during the program simply by noticing the “wanting” of chocolate as she watched TV at night. She would notice the sensation, pay full attention to the sensation and then notice that it would dissipate. She then had a choice about whether she had a chocolate or not. Sometimes she did and sometimes she didn't.

This made me think back to my own eating disorder—first anorexia and then bulimia, followed by constantly gaining or losing weight. Always either on a diet or eating too much, never just in harmony with intake of food and the body.

Funnily enough, in all my years working with mindfulness, I had never thought of it in relation to eating and the relationship I had with my body. Perhaps I was blind to the link due to my own issues which were safely stored away in my box of shame.

The comments made in the corporate session led me to train in Mindful Eating with Dr Jean Kresteller at apowerful retreat in Belgium. When I returned to Australia I started to run pilot programs on Mindful Eating as I wanted the programs suited to where Australian women were at. I also wanted to learn more, what was going on with our relationship with food and the body. I discovered that our relationship with food and the body mirrors our relationship with life itself. Good and bad.

The term "Dear Body" arose during one of these pilot programs on mindful eating. This term encapsulated a feeling of compassion for the body having to cope with violence and abuse. I then noticed that the term "Dear Body" worked to bring on calm for others at any time, whether in the boardroom, the family or life in general. "Dear Body" as a practice of placing the hand over the heart or the area where the sensation is most intense, was repeatedly commented on as one of the most powerful and useful practices for calm and kindness.

"Dear body, I hear your language, I am listening"—the voice of profound intimacy with the body—arose from a very specific event.

Some years ago I was to interview a young man who had just come out of a psych ward and was suffering from drug-induced Parkinson's disease. Just five weeks earlier, he had been physically fit and well. I was shocked to see him now as she walked across the room to turn on the air-conditioning. It seemed he had aged fifty years in five weeks. He sat down opposite me to get ready for the interview but isr whole body was shaking so much that to ignore that would have seemed ridiculous. As this was a "corporate" situation, I felt nervous and unsure about introducing mindfulness of the body but I knew the situation called for it so I asked him to close isr eyes, really not knowing what would happen next.

As sometimes happens when we surrender, wisdom arose. I heard myself say, "Now say to the body, 'Dear body, I am listening, I hear your language'. With that, the tears started to flow. It was as if the body was saying, 'Finally he is listening, I have his attention'. The shaking eased as we continued to enquire about where the sensations generated from. At the same time, we were reassuring the body: "Dear body, it is OK, I hear your language." Gradually, the body settled and she became completely still. Then we commenced the interview. Dear Body had calmed her drug-induced shaking.

Scientifically, Dear Body would be described as kind introception or neurosomatic mindfulness and self compassion. Science has shown us that introception, paying attention to body sensations, is one of the key elements in increasing our ability to regulate our emotions.

The elements of Dear Body

The key elements of Dear Body are mindfulness and compassion and that includes self-compassion and all the richness this offers.

Mindfulness is many things. In the West it is increasingly seen as a technique for calming ourselves and managing difficult thoughts, but that really is a small part of what it offers. It is a bit like thinking that tapping on one string of the violin reveals all it can do without any idea of the potential it has to play a Mozart violin concerto.

Mindfulness is the core practice of Buddhism; it is what enables us to live less in autopilot and increasingly lead a conscious life. The Buddha was on a quest to find a way to reduce human suffering and mindfulness is the core practice that enables that.

You already know what mindfulness is, but perhaps you are unaware that you know. You know those moments when you notice an inclination to say or do something, but you catch yourself out, take a breath and let go of the need to say what you had in mind? This is mindfulness in action.

Mindfulness is a practice of being aware of what arises in the body, as feelings and thoughts in relation to the moment. Those sensations, feelings and thoughts are part of your reactive experience, or autopilot. It tends to live in dissatisfaction. Mindfulness is about deconditioning our mind through interrupting habitual engagement. And that is a lifelong process.

Our mindfulness practice makes us aware of what is actually going on for us, and we also start to realise that those sensations, feelings and thoughts are not us, they are just part of the 'reactive package'. Within mindfulness lies the potential for much more emotional freedom, for calm and insight. This does not mean that nothing bad or negative ever happens to us, it means that when challenges occur we don't get lost in them or at least less so.

For me mindfulness has delivered so much more than I could ever have imagined. This does not mean that I am deliriously happy all of the time but I am very rarely unhappy, depressed or anxious. I tend to be contented. Before mindfulness I had much more drama and ongoing low moods as well as much frustration and many snaps, in spite of having what from the outside looked like a good life.

Now when there are big things going on in my life I find that my many years of mindfulness practice help me experience very little drama and that also means I don't hold resentment or anger for long.

Mindfulness is something we cultivate. We can engage in it both formally—for example, when we sit on a cushion focusing on the breath—or informally, for example when we observe the body's reaction or an emotional or mental reaction to a conversation with someone.

There are four dimensions to Mindfulness, the first is mindfulness of the body, then mindfulness of feelings, mindfulness of thoughts and then mindfulness of dharma – the teachings of the Buddha. The first practice you will notice is mindfulness of the body, and that is essential, you will see that as you work your way through the book. At the end of it you will also see how we in the West tend to do it back to front making it much harder for ourselves.

Mindfulness enables us to catch and observe our reactions while compassion holds the experience in tenderness. In the tenderness we recognise the shared humanity of our experience and understand that living, being a little human, brings with it suffering. That is part of the deal. Suffering, confusion, feeling separate and at times unsafe, all require soothing and reassurance. Hence "Dear body."

When we still the mind, either vast emptiness or grand compassion arise spontaneously: they are part of our true nature, from a Buddhist perspective, our Buddha nature. This is accessible once we still the busy mind, and it is always available to us, right underneath the surface of the busy preoccupied mind. This is the realm of the pre and post-verbal and the body provides direct experiential access to it.

There is a an old story of The Buddha being asked whether he is God and he replies, "No". He is then asked if he is a reincarnation of God and again he says "No". He is then asked, "What are you?" "I am awake," he replies. Buddha means "the awakened one". The teachings are on how to awaken. Dear Body is about this : there is waking up in the moment and then there is waking up to how things actually are.

You might just want Dear Body to reduce your anxiety and feel better and it will do that for you. You might also be curious about the bigger questions in life and that is why we have the little section at the end of each chapter on waking up. The beauty of Dear Body is that when we allow the body to be our teacher it unveils great fundamental truths about life.

Understanding the word "mindfulness"

It is useful to clarify that the word "mind" is not just about thinking, it is more associated with the word "memory". To English speakers the word "mind" is usually associated with intellect, with thinking, and that is seen as separate from emotions and body sensations. We don't easily think of feelings and body sensation as part of the mind yet mind referenced in the sutras often includes all of our sensory and psychological functions, including subconscious ones. The cultures that produced the great sutras and other teachings did not separate intellect and emotions, mind and body, the way we do.

There were originally (from Pali and Sanskrit) three words for mind, "Citta" being one. Within some schools of Mahayana Buddhism, Citta is associated with the "storehouse consciousness", that which *contains all the impressions of previous experiences.* Interestingly, the Danish word "minde" means memory, so throughout this book please read mind as bodily sensations, feelings and thought, in effect mind system.

Dan Siegel is someone who has been very dedicated to define 'mind' and he has come up with the following definition: "The brain and its whole body are the embodied mechanisms of information flow, and the mind is the self-organizing process that regulates that flow."

Neuroscience and Buddhism

It is an exciting time to be a little human in many ways. One being that we are learning more and more about the brain all the time. A friend studying neuroscience in the US a couple of years ago was told that seventy five percent of what we know about the brain we have found out during the past three years. This means there is a revolution in this area.

Just the idea that the brain changes through what we pay attention to is a relatively new perspective but not to Buddhism. The understanding that we need to learn to manage our attention so that we can interrupt unhealthy mind states and encourage healthy ones goes way back.

There is nothing that I have learnt from neuroscience that is not explained by and found in Buddhism. This should not surprise us, Buddhism is more a science than it is a religion. The Buddha developed his insights through careful observation of reality, same method as science.

There are so many healthy things about Buddhism. One is the invitation to take from it what you like and throw the rest away. No need to become a Buddhist, just use it to become a better what you already are.

'Plasticity has both positive and negative outcomes. At some level plasticity is not our friend... all human beings get stuck inside the box of their thought. And that's a function of the way the brain works.'

Norman Doidge, MD

Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
Watch your words, for they become actions.

Watch your actions, for they become habits.
Watch your habits, for they become character.
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.