

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Ageless Body, Timeless Mind

Deepak Chopra

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ABOUT THE BOOK

'Ageing is much more of a choice than people ever dream.'
In this revolutionary book, Dr Deepak Chopra shows us how we can all control the ageing process.

A million-copy worldwide bestseller, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* combines scientifically supported theory and a wealth of practical exercises to demonstrate the extent to which sickness and ageing are created by nothing more than gaps in our selfknowledge. By increasing this self-knowledge, we can master simple yet effective ways to metabolize time, and achieve our unbounded potential.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Deepak Chopra is the founder of the Chopra Center for Well Being in Carlsbad, California. He is the author of over thirty books, which have become international bestsellers and classics of their kind.

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Life After Death
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Ageless Body, Timeless Mind

A Practical Alternative to Growing Old

Deepak Chopra



RIDER

LONDON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND • JOHANNESBURG

‘Deepak Chopra is one of the most important healers of our time. *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* is a treasure’ Marianne Williamson, author of *A Woman’s Worth*

‘Ageing is much more of a choice than people ever dream.’ In this revolutionary book, Dr Deepak Chopra shows us how we can all control the ageing process.

A million-copy worldwide bestseller, *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* combines scientifically supported theory and a wealth of practical exercises to demonstrate the extent to which sickness and ageing are created by nothing more than gaps in our self-knowledge. By increasing this self-knowledge, we can master simple yet effective ways to metabolize time, and achieve our unbounded potential.

‘Drawing on both modern science and ancient wisdom, here is a model of health and illness that can stand the test of scientific scrutiny because of one simple fact: it works’ Larry Dossey, author of *Reinventing Medicine*

‘A renowned physician and author, Deepak Chopra is undoubtedly one of the most lucid and inspired philosophers of our time’ Mikhail Gorbachev

PREFACE

I look back on this as the most optimistic book I've ever written. I hope that sense of promise continues to fill these pages, because 'the new old age', as the media calls it, continues to advance, raising life expectancy and improving many of the ills and deficits of growing old. But the new old age cannot truly be new without a spiritual vision. To grow old should arrive as the crown of life - a phrase dating back to ancient Rome. Mere survival, even to the century mark, doesn't deserve that rich accolade. The crown is bestowed for wisdom, and wisdom in its purest definition means that you have learned to live the mystery of life. We have been given one of the longest life spans of any creature on earth, not for biology's sake - the moment a person's genes are passed on through having a child, the naked interest of biology has been served - but for the sake of the soul. It takes time for a soul to mature. When it does, there is no more beautiful thing in creation. Then old age is more than a crown; it is a revelation.

One unfortunate trend since this book first appeared over ten years ago is that biology has crowded out wisdom more and more. It would benefit mankind enormously if the cure for Alzheimer's were to appear, if human growth factor could be used to reverse physical deterioration, and if the most stubborn scourge of old age - cancer - could be eradicated. Yet for all this promise, what is the point of keeping the human body from wasting away if in the end it remains a machine? It is sad to watch a finely crafted machine rust slowly in the rain, I grant. We are subject to physical forces such as entropy that tempt us to see

ourselves like that. But entropy doesn't rule over spirit; decay bows before evolution, which is the master hand in creation.

I wanted this book to give a glimpse of the master hand at work. You and I are its handiwork but also its co-creators. The business of life isn't breathing, eating, and sleeping. Those are maintenance for the body - and important to attend to on their own level. The real business of life, however, is to find out who you really are. In the title of this book I called the human body ageless and the human mind timeless because they are our links to immortality. I meant that literally when this book first appeared, and now, when spiritual dignity is the single greatest need of every person, the truth must be repeated:

You are the reason for life to exist, not the other way around.

You are the goal of an eternal mystery.

You are the sleeping god ready to awaken.

Long life is worthwhile finally because, in the length of days, you and I will realize these truths together. In that belief this edition of *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* is offered.

Deepak Chopra

PART ONE

The Land Where No One Is Old

*People don't grow old.
When they stop growing, they become old.*
ANONYMOUS

*If you were to destroy in mankind the belief in immortality,
not only love but every living force maintaining the life of
the world would at once be dried up.*
DOSTOEVSKY

*I move with the infinite in Nature's power
I hold the fire of the soul
I hold life and healing*
RIG VEDA

*Look at these worlds spinning out of nothingness
That is within your power*
RUMI

I WOULD LIKE you to join me on a journey of discovery. We will explore a place where the rules of everyday existence do not apply. These rules explicitly state that to grow old, become frail, and die is the ultimate destiny of all. And so it has been for century after century. However, I want you to suspend your assumptions about what we call reality so that we can become pioneers in a land where youthful vigor, renewal, creativity, joy, fulfillment, and timelessness are the common experience of everyday life, where old age, senility, infirmity, and death do not exist and are not even entertained as a possibility.

If there is such a place, what is preventing us from going there? It is not some dark continental landmass or dangerous uncharted sea. It is our conditioning, our current collective worldview that we were taught by our parents, teachers, and society. This way of seeing things—the old paradigm—has aptly been called “the hypnosis of social conditioning,” an induced fiction in which we have collectively agreed to participate.

Your body is aging beyond your control because it has been programmed to live out the rules of that collective conditioning. If there is anything natural and inevitable about the aging process, it cannot be known until the chains of our old beliefs are broken. In order to create the experience of ageless body and timeless mind, which is the promise of this book, you must discard ten assumptions about who you are and what the true nature of the mind and body is. These assumptions form the bedrock of our shared worldview.

They are:

1. There is an objective world independent of the observer, and our bodies are an aspect of this objective world.
2. The body is composed of clumps of matter separated from one another in time and space.

3. Mind and body are separate and independent from each other.
4. Materialism is primary, consciousness is secondary. In other words, we are physical machines that have learned to think.
5. Human awareness can be completely explained as the product of biochemistry.
6. As individuals, we are disconnected, self-contained entities.
7. Our perception of the world is automatic and gives us an accurate picture of how things really are.
8. Our true nature is totally defined by the body, ego, and personality. We are wisps of memories and desires enclosed in packages of flesh and bones.
9. Time exists as an absolute, and we are captives of that absolute. No one escapes the ravages of time.
10. Suffering is necessary—it is part of reality. We are inevitable victims of sickness, aging, and death.

These assumptions reach far beyond aging to define a world of separation, decay, and death. Time is seen as a prison that no one escapes; our bodies are biochemical machines that, like all machines, must run down. “At a certain age,” Lewis Thomas once affirmed, “it is in our nature to wear out, to come unhinged, and to die, and that is that.” This position, the hard line of materialistic science, overlooks much about human nature. We are the only creatures on earth who can change our biology by what we think and feel. We possess the only nervous system that is aware of the phenomenon of aging. Old lions and tigers do not realize what is happening to them—but we do. And because we are aware, our mental state influences what we are aware of.

It would be impossible to isolate a single thought or feeling, a single belief or assumption, that doesn't have some effect on aging, either directly or indirectly. Our cells are constantly eavesdropping on our thoughts and being

changed by them. A bout of depression can wreak havoc with the immune system; falling in love can boost it. Despair and hopelessness raise the risk of heart attacks and cancer, thereby shortening life. Joy and fulfillment keep us healthy and extend life. This means that the line between biology and psychology can't really be drawn with any certainty. A remembered stress, which is only a wisp of thought, releases the same flood of destructive hormones as the stress itself.

Because the mind influences every cell in the body, human aging is fluid and changeable; it can speed up, slow down, stop for a time, and even reverse itself. Hundreds of research findings from the last three decades have verified that aging is much more dependent on the individual than was ever dreamed of in the past.

However, the most significant breakthrough is not contained in isolated findings but in a completely new worldview. The ten assumptions of the old paradigm do not accurately describe our reality. They are inventions of the human mind that we have turned into rules. To challenge aging at its core, this entire worldview must be challenged first, for nothing holds more power over the body than beliefs of the mind.

Each assumption of the old paradigm can be replaced with a more complete and expanded version of the truth. These new assumptions are also just ideas created by the human mind, but they allow us much more freedom and power. They give us the ability to rewrite the program of aging that now directs our cells.

The ten new assumptions are:

1. The physical world, including our bodies, is a response of the observer. We create our bodies as we create the experience of our world.
2. In their essential state, our bodies are composed of energy and information, not solid matter. This energy

and information is an outcropping of infinite fields of energy and information spanning the universe.

3. The mind and body are inseparably one. The unity that is “me” separates into two streams of experience. I experience the subjective stream as thoughts, feelings, and desires. I experience the objective stream as my body. At a deeper level, however, the two streams meet at a single creative source. It is from this source that we are meant to live.
4. The biochemistry of the body is a product of awareness. Beliefs, thoughts, and emotions create the chemical reactions that uphold life in every cell. An aging cell is the end product of awareness that has forgotten how to remain new.
5. Perception appears to be automatic, but in fact it is a learned phenomenon. The world you live in, including the experience of your body, is completely dictated by how you learned to perceive it. If you change your perception, you change the experience of your body and your world.
6. Impulses of intelligence create your body in new forms every second. What you are is the sum total of these impulses, and by changing their patterns, you will change.
7. Although each person seems separate and independent, all of us are connected to patterns of intelligence that govern the whole cosmos. Our bodies are part of a universal body, our minds an aspect of a universal mind.
8. Time does not exist as an absolute, but only eternity. Time is quantified eternity, timelessness chopped up into bits and pieces (seconds, hours, days, years) by us. What we call linear time is a reflection of how we perceive change. If we could perceive the changeless, time would cease to exist as we know it. We can learn to start metabolizing non-change, eternity, the absolute.

By doing that, we will be ready to create the physiology of immortality.

9. Each of us inhabits a reality lying beyond all change. Deep inside us, unknown to the five senses, is an innermost core of being, a field of non-change that creates personality, ego, and body. This being is our essential state—it is who we really are.
10. We are not victims of aging, sickness, and death. These are part of the scenery, not the seer, who is immune to any form of change. This seer is the spirit, the expression of eternal being.

These are vast assumptions, the makings of a new reality, yet all are grounded in the discoveries of quantum physics made almost a hundred years ago. The seeds of this new paradigm were planted by Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, and the other pioneers of quantum physics, who realized that the accepted way of viewing the physical world was false. Although things “out there” appear to be real, there is no proof of reality apart from the observer. No two people share exactly the same universe. Every worldview creates its own world.

I want to convince you that you are much more than your limited body, ego, and personality. The rules of cause and effect as you accept them have squeezed you into the volume of a body and the span of a lifetime. In reality, the field of human life is open and unbounded. At its deepest level, your body is ageless, your mind timeless. Once you identify with that reality, which is consistent with the quantum worldview, aging will fundamentally change.

Ending the Tyranny of the Senses

Why do we accept anything as real? Because we can see and touch it. Everyone has a prejudice in favor of things that are reassuringly three-dimensional, as reported to us by our

five senses. Sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell serve to reinforce the same message: things are what they seem. According to this reality, the Earth is flat, the ground beneath your feet is stationary, the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, all because it seems that way to the senses. As long as the five senses were accepted without question, such facts were immutable.

Einstein realized that time and space are also products of our five senses; we see and touch things that occupy three dimensions, and we experience events as happening in sequential order. Yet Einstein and his colleagues were able to remove this mask of appearances. They reassembled time and space into a new geometry that had no beginning or end, no edges, no solidity. Every solid particle in the universe turned out to be a ghostly bundle of energy vibrating in an immense void.

The old space-time model was smashed, replaced by a timeless, flowing field of constant transformation. This quantum field isn't separate from us—it *is* us. Where Nature goes to create stars, galaxies, quarks, and leptons, you and I go to create ourselves. The great advantage of this new worldview is that it is so immensely creative—the human body, like everything else in the cosmos, is constantly being made anew every second. Although your senses report that you inhabit a solid body in time and space, this is only the most superficial layer of reality. Your body is something far more miraculous—a flowing organism empowered by millions of years of intelligence. This intelligence is dedicated to overseeing the constant change that takes place inside you. Every cell is a miniature terminal connected to the cosmic computer.

From this perspective, it hardly seems possible that human beings could age at all. Weak and helpless as a newborn baby appears, it is superbly defended against time's ravages. If a baby could preserve its nearly invulnerable immune status, we would all live at least two

hundred years, according to physiologists' estimates. If a baby could preserve its glistening smooth arteries, as supple as silk, cholesterol would not find anywhere to lodge, and heart disease would be unknown. Each of a newborn's 50 trillion cells is limpid as a raindrop, without a trace of toxic debris; such cells have no reason to age, because nothing inside them has begun to disrupt their perfect functioning. A baby's cells are not really new, however—the atoms in them have been circulating through the cosmos for billions of years. But the baby is made new by an invisible intelligence that has come together to shape a unique life-form. The timeless field has invented a new dance step, the pulsating rhythms of a newborn's body.

Aging is a mask for the loss of this intelligence. Quantum physics tells us that there is no end to the cosmic dance—the universal field of energy and information never stops transforming itself, becoming new at every second. Our bodies obey this same creative impulse. An estimated 6 trillion reactions are taking place in each cell every second. If this stream of transformation ever stopped, your cells would fall into disorder, which is synonymous with aging.

Day-old bread goes stale because it just sits there, prey to humidity, fungus, oxidation, and various destructive chemical processes. A chalk cliff crumbles over time because wind and rain beat it down, and it has no power to rebuild itself. Our bodies also undergo the process of oxidation and are attacked by fungi and various germs; they are exposed to the same wind and rain. But unlike a loaf of bread or a chalk cliff, we can renew ourselves. Our bones don't just store calcium the way chalk does—they circulate it. Fresh atoms of calcium constantly enter our bones and leave them again to become part of blood, skin, or other cells as the body's needs demand it.

In order to stay alive, your body must live on the wings of change. At this moment you are exhaling atoms of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen that just an instant

before were locked up in solid matter; your stomach, liver, heart, lungs, and brain are vanishing into thin air, being replaced as quickly and endlessly as they are being broken down. The skin replaces itself once a month, the stomach lining every five days, the liver every six weeks, and the skeleton every three months. To the naked eye, these organs look the same from moment to moment, but they are always in flux. By the end of this year, 98 percent of the atoms in your body will have been exchanged for new ones.

A huge proportion of this endless change works to your benefit. Only one enzyme out of millions reacts with an amino acid less than perfectly; the rarest neuron among billions misfires; on a strand of DNA coded with billions of pieces of genetic information, just one might fail to repair itself correctly when damage occurs. These rare mistakes are imperceptible, and you would think that they could not count for much. The human body is like a great Shakespearean actor who can play Hamlet a thousand times and stumble over just one syllable. But the invisible cracks in the body's perfection do count. The precision of our cells falters by slow degrees. The ever-new becomes slightly less new. And we age.

Beginning at age 30 and moving at the snail's pace of 1 percent per year, the average human body starts to come unhinged: wrinkles appear, the skin loses its tone and freshness, muscles start to sag. Instead of indicating three times more muscle than fat, the ratio starts to become equal, eyesight and hearing taper off, bones thin and become brittle. Stamina and endurance steadily decline, making it harder to perform as much work as before. Blood pressure rises, and many biochemicals shift away from their optimal levels; the most worrisome to doctors is cholesterol, which gradually rises over the years, marking the insidious progress of heart disease, which kills more people than any other affliction. On other fronts, cellular mutations begin to

run out of control, creating malignant tumors that strike one person in three, mostly after age 65.

Over time, these various “age changes,” as gerontologists call them, exert massive influence. They are the thousand tiny waves that bring in the tide of old age. But at any given moment, aging accounts for only 1 percent per year of the total change taking place inside your body. In other words, 99 percent of the energy and intelligence that you are composed of is untouched by the aging process. In terms of the body as process, eliminating this 1 percent of dysfunction would wipe out aging. But how do we get at this 1 percent? To answer that, we must find the control switch that manipulates the body’s inner intelligence.

The new reality ushered in by quantum physics made it possible for the first time to manipulate the invisible intelligence that underlies the visible world. Einstein taught us that the physical body, like all material objects, is an illusion, and trying to manipulate it can be like grasping the shadow and missing the substance. The unseen world is the real world, and when we are willing to explore the unseen levels of our bodies, we can tap in to the immense creative power that lies at our source. Let me expand on the ten principles of the new paradigm in light of this hidden potential waiting beneath the surface of life.

1. There is no objective world independent of the observer.

The world you accept as real seems to have definite qualities. Some things are large, others small; some things are hard, others soft. Yet none of these qualities means anything outside of your perception. Take any object, such as a folding chair. To you the chair isn’t very large, but to an ant it is immense. To you the chair feels hard, but a neutrino would whiz through it without slowing down, because to a

subatomic particle the chair's atoms are miles apart. The chair seems stationary to you, but if you observed it from outer space, you would see it revolving past you, along with everything else on Earth, at a thousand miles per hour. Likewise, anything else you can describe about the chair can be completely altered simply by changing your perception. If the chair is red, you can make it appear black by looking at it through green glasses. If the chair weighs five pounds, you can make it weigh two pounds by putting it on the moon or a hundred thousand pounds by putting it in the gravitational field of a dense star.

Because there are no absolute qualities in the material world, it is false to say that there even is an independent world "out there." The world is a reflection of the sensory apparatus that registers it. The human nervous system takes in only the most minute fraction, less than one part per billion, of the total energy vibrating in the environment. Other nervous systems, such as that of a bat or a snake, reflect a different world, coexisting with ours. The bat senses a world of ultrasound, the snake a world of infrared light, both of which are hidden from us.

All that is really "out there" is raw, unformed data waiting to be interpreted by you, the perceiver. You take "a radically ambiguous, flowing quantum soup," as physicists call it, and use your senses to congeal the soup into the solid three-dimensional world. The eminent British neurologist Sir John Eccles pierces the sensory illusion with one startling but irrefutable assertion: "I want you to realize that there is no color in the natural world and no sound—nothing of this kind; no textures, no patterns, no beauty, no scent. . . ." In short, none of the objective facts upon which we usually base our reality is fundamentally valid.

As disturbing as this may sound, there is incredible liberation in realizing that you can change your world—including your body—*simply by changing your perception*. How you perceive yourself is causing immense changes in

your body right now. To give an example: In America and England, mandatory retirement at age 65 sets an arbitrary cutoff date for social usefulness. The day before a worker turns 65, he contributes labor and value to society; the day after, he becomes one of society's dependents. Medically, the results of this perceptual shift can be disastrous. In the first few years after retirement, heart attack and cancer rates soar, and early death overtakes men who were otherwise healthy before they retired. "Early retirement death," as the syndrome is called, depends on the perception that one's useful days are over; this is only a perception, but for someone who holds it firmly, it is enough to create disease and death. By comparison, in societies where old age is accepted as part of the social fabric, elders remain extremely vigorous—lifting, climbing, and bending in ways that we do not accept as normal in our elderly.

If you examine old cells, such as ones that form liver spots on the skin, through a high-powered microscope, the scene is as devastated as a war zone. Fibrous streaks run here and there; deposits of fat and undiscarded metabolic wastes form unsightly clumps; dark, yellowish pigments called lipofuscin have accumulated to the point where they litter 10 to 30 percent of the cell's interior.

This scene of devastation was created by subcellular processes that went wrong, but if you look through less materialistic lenses, you will see that old cells are like maps of a person's experience. Things that made you suffer are imprinted there, along with things that brought you joy. Stresses you long ago forgot on the conscious level are still sending out signals, like buried microchips, making you anxious, tense, fatigued, apprehensive, resentful, doubtful, disappointed—these reactions cross the mind-body barrier to become part of you. The clogged, toxic deposits in old cells don't appear uniformly; some people acquire much more than others, even when there is little genetic difference between them. By the time you reach age 70,

your cells will look unique, mirroring the unique experiences you processed and metabolized into your tissues and organs.

Being able to process the raw, chaotic vibrations of the “quantum soup” and turn them into meaningful, orderly bits of reality opens up enormous creative possibilities. However, these possibilities exist only when you are aware of them. While you are reading this book, a huge portion of your consciousness is engaged in creating your body without your participation. The so-called involuntary or autonomic nervous system was designed to control functions that have slipped out of your awareness. If you began walking down the street in a daze, the involuntary centers in your brain would still be coping with the world, keeping on the lookout for danger, poised to activate the stress response at a moment’s notice.

A hundred things you pay no attention to—breathing, digesting, growing new cells, repairing damaged old ones, purifying toxins, preserving hormonal balance, converting stored energy from fat to blood sugar, dilating the pupils of the eyes, raising and lowering blood pressure, maintaining steady body temperature, balancing as you walk, shunting blood to and from the muscle groups that are doing the most work, and sensing movements and sounds in the surrounding environment—continue ceaselessly.

These automatic processes play a huge part in aging, for as we age, our ability to coordinate these functions declines. A lifetime of unconscious living leads to numerous deteriorations, while a lifetime of conscious participation prevents them. The very act of paying conscious attention to bodily functions instead of leaving them on automatic pilot will change how you age. Every so-called involuntary function, from heartbeat and breathing to digestion and hormone regulation, can be consciously controlled. The era of biofeedback and meditation has taught us that—heart patients have been trained in mind-body laboratories to

lower their blood pressure at will or to reduce the acid secretions that create ulcers, among dozens of other things. Why not put this ability to use in the aging process? Why not exchange old patterns of perception for new ones? There are abundant techniques, as we will see, for influencing the involuntary nervous system to our advantage.

2. Our bodies are composed of energy and information.

To transform the patterns of the past you must know what they are made of. Your body appears to be composed of solid matter that can be broken down into molecules and atoms, but quantum physics tells us that every atom is more than 99.9999 percent empty space, and the subatomic particles moving at lightning speed through this space are actually bundles of vibrating energy. These vibrations aren't random and meaningless, however; they carry information. Thus, one bundle of vibrations is coded as a hydrogen atom, another as oxygen; each element is in fact its own unique code.

Codes are abstract, and so ultimately is our cosmos and everything in it. Chasing the physical structure of the body down to its ultimate source dead-ends as molecules give way to atoms, atoms to subatomic particles, and these particles to ghosts of energy dissolving into an empty void. This void is mysteriously imprinted with information even before any information is expressed. Just as thousands of words exit silently in your memory without being spoken, the quantum field holds the entire universe in unexpressed form; it has been that way since the Big Bang, when billions of galaxies were compressed into a space millions of times smaller than the period at the end of this sentence. Yet even

before that infinitesimal dot, the structure of the universe existed in unmanifest form.

The essential stuff of the universe, including your body, is non-stuff, but it isn't ordinary non-stuff. It is thinking non-stuff. The void inside every atom is pulsating with unseen intelligence. Geneticists locate this intelligence primarily inside DNA, but that is only for the sake of convenience. Life unfolds as DNA imparts its coded intelligence to its active twin, RNA, which in turn goes out into the cell and imparts bits of intelligence to thousands of enzymes, which then use their specific bit of intelligence to make proteins. At every point in this sequence, energy and information have to be exchanged or there could be no building life from lifeless matter.

The human body derives its primary energy by burning sugar, which is transported to the cells in the form of glucose, or blood sugar. The chemical structure of glucose is closely related to common table sugar, sucrose. But if you burn table sugar, you don't get the exquisite, complex structures of a living cell; you just get a charred lump of ash and traces of water and carbon dioxide in the air.

Metabolism is more than a burning process; it is an intelligent act. The same sugar that remains inert in a sugar cube supports life with its energy because the body's cells infuse it with new information. The sugar may contribute its energy to a kidney, heart, or brain cell, for example. All of these cells contain completely unique forms of intelligence—the rhythmic twitching of a heart cell is completely different from the electrical discharges of a brain cell or the sodium exchanges of a kidney cell.

As marvelous as this wealth of diverse intelligence is, at bottom there is one single intelligence shared by the whole body. The flow of this intelligence keeps you alive, and when it ceases to flow, at the moment of death, all the knowledge stored in your DNA is rendered useless. As we age, this flow of intelligence becomes compromised in various ways. The

specific intelligence of the immune system, the nervous system, and the endocrine system all start falling off; these three systems are now known by physiologists to function as the master controls of the body. Your immune cells and endocrine glands are outfitted with the same receptors for brain signals as your neurons are; therefore, they are like an extended brain. Senility cannot be looked upon, then, simply as a disease confined to our gray matter; when intelligence is lost in the immune or the endocrine system, senility of the whole body is creeping in.

Since all this happens at an unseen, unmanifest level, the losses go unnoticed until they have progressed to a very late stage and are expressed as a physical symptom. The five senses cannot go deep enough to experience the billions of quantum exchanges that create aging. The rate of change is at once too fast and too slow: too fast because individual chemical reactions take less than 1/10,000th of a second, too slow because their cumulative effect will not show up for years. These reactions involve information and energy on a scale millions of times smaller than a single atom.

Age deterioration would be unavoidable if the body was simply material, because all material things are prey to entropy, the tendency of orderly systems to become disorderly. The classic example of entropy is a car rusting in a junkyard; entropy breaks down the orderly machinery into crumbling rust. There is no chance that the process will work the other way—that a rusty scrap heap will reassemble itself into a new car. But entropy doesn't apply to intelligence—an invisible part of us is immune to the ravages of time. Modern science is just discovering the implications of all this, but it has been imparted for centuries through spiritual traditions in which masters have preserved the youthfulness of their bodies far into old age.

India, China, Japan, and to a lesser extent the Christian West have given birth to sages who realized their essential

nature as a flow of intelligence. By preserving that flow and nurturing it year after year, they overcame entropy from a deeper level of Nature. In India, the flow of intelligence is called *Prana* (usually translated as “life force”), which can be increased and decreased at will, moved here and there, and manipulated to keep the physical body orderly and young. As we will see, the ability to contact and use Prana is within all of us. A yogi moves Prana using nothing more than attention, for at a deep level, attention and Prana are the same—life is awareness, awareness is life.

3. Mind and body are inseparably one.

Intelligence is much more flexible than the mask of matter that hides it. Intelligence can express itself either as thoughts or as molecules. A basic emotion such as fear can be described as an abstract feeling or as a tangible molecule of the hormone adrenaline. Without the feeling there is no hormone; without the hormone there is no feeling. In the same way, there is no pain without nerve signals that transmit pain; there is no relief from pain without endorphins that fit into the pain receptors to block those signals. The revolution we call mind-body medicine was based on this simple discovery: Wherever thought goes, a chemical goes with it. This insight has turned into a powerful tool that allows us to understand, for example, why recent widows are twice as likely to develop breast cancer, and why the chronically depressed are four times more likely to get sick. In both cases, distressed mental states get converted into the biochemicals that create disease.

In my medical practice, I can see two heart patients afflicted with angina pectoris, the typical squeezing, breathless pain that is typical of heart disease. One patient will be able to run, swim, and perhaps even mountain-climb, totally ignoring his pain or not even having any, while the

other nearly faints with pain when he gets up out of his armchair.

My first instinct will be to look for a physical difference between them, but I might or might not find anything. Cardiologists expect anginal pain to appear when at least one of the three coronary arteries is 50 percent blocked. This blockage is almost always in the form of an atheroma, a lesion on the inside of the arterial wall built up by dead cells, blood clots, and fatty plaque. The 50 percent blockage is only a rule of thumb, however. Some angina patients are disabled by pain when they have only a single small lesion barely obstructing blood flow in one artery, while other patients suffering from massive, multiple blockages of up to 85 percent have been known to run marathons. (Angina is not always caused by physical blockage, I should add. Arteries are lined with a layer of muscle cells that can go into spasm and squeeze the vessel closed, but this is a highly individual reaction.)

In mind-body terms, my two patients are expressing their different interpretations of pain. Every patient stamps his condition with a unique perspective, and pain (or any other symptom) emerges into awareness only after it interacts with all the past influences at work in the mind-body system. There is no single response for all people or even for the same person at two different times. Pain signals are raw data that can be turned to many purposes. High-exertion athletics, such as long-distance running, subject an athlete to pain that he interprets as a sign of accomplishment (“no pain, no gain”); but the same pain, inflicted under other circumstances, would be completely unwelcome. Track runners admire a coach who pushes them to their limits; they might hate the same treatment in boot camp.

Medicine is just beginning to use the mind-body connection for healing—defeating pain is a good example. By giving a placebo, or dummy, drug, 30 percent of patients

will experience the same pain relief as if a real painkiller had been administered. But the mind-body effect is much more holistic. The same dummy pill can be used to kill pain, to stop excessive gastric secretions in ulcer patients, to lower blood pressure, or to fight tumors. (All the side effects of chemotherapy, including hair loss and nausea, can be induced by giving cancer patients a sugar pill while assuring them that it is a powerful anticancer drug, and there have been instances where injections of sterile saline solution have actually led to remissions of advanced malignancy.)

Since the same inert pill can lead to such totally different responses, we must conclude that the body is capable of producing *any* biochemical response once the mind has been given the appropriate suggestion. The pill itself is meaningless; the power that activates the placebo effect is the power of suggestion alone. This suggestion is then converted into the body's intention to cure itself. Therefore, why not bypass the deception of the sugar pill and go directly to the intention? If we could effectively trigger the intention not to age, the body would carry it out automatically.

We have extremely exciting evidence to prove that such a possibility exists. One of the most dreaded diseases of old age is Parkinson's, a neurological disorder that produces uncontrollable muscle movements and a drastic slowing down of bodily motions such as walking, eventually resulting in a body so stiff that the patient cannot move at all. Parkinson's has been traced to an unexplained depletion of a critical brain chemical called dopamine, but there is also a simulated Parkinson's caused when the dopamine-producing cells of the brain have been destroyed chemically by certain drugs. Imagine a patient afflicted with this type of Parkinson's in an advanced stage of frozen motion. Trying to walk, he can only take a step or two before halting in place, as stiff as a statue.

However, if you draw a line on the floor and say, “Step over that,” the person will miraculously be able to walk right over it. Despite the fact that the production of dopamine is completely involuntary and its stores are seemingly exhausted (as shown by the fact that his brain cannot signal his leg muscles to take another step), merely by having the intention to walk, the brain is awakened. The person may freeze again after only a few seconds, but again you can ask him to step over an imaginary line, and his brain will respond. By extension, the infirmity and inactivity exhibited by many old people is often just dormancy. By renewing their intention to live active, purposeful lives, many elderly people can dramatically improve their motor abilities, strength, agility, and mental responses.

Intention is the active partner of attention; it is the way we convert automatic processes into conscious ones. Using simple mind-body exercises, almost any patient can learn in a few sessions to convert a racing heartbeat, asthmatic wheezing, or free-floating anxiety into a more normal response. What seems out of control can be brought back into control with the proper technique. The implications for aging are enormous. By inserting an intention into your thought processes, such as, “I want to improve in energy and vigor every day,” you can begin to assert control over those brain centers that determine how much energy will be expressed in activity. The decline of vigor in old age is largely the result of people *expecting* to decline; they have unwittingly implanted a self-defeating intention in the form of a strong belief, and the mind-body connection automatically carries out this intention.

Our past intentions create obsolete programming that seems to have control over us. In truth, the power of intention can be reawakened at any time. Long before you get old, you can prevent such losses by consciously programming your mind to remain youthful, using the power of your intention.