

Epigenetics

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BRUCE LIPTON, PHD - Author of *“The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter, and Miracles”*

“Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.” ... William James

Dr. Bruce Lipton is a diehard scientist. He’s devoted his life to understanding human biology and behavior. He received his PhD from the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, and then went on to the University Of Wisconsin School Of Medicine, where he was an associate professor of anatomy.

With his traditional track record, why do some people see him as controversial? Why did he step down from teaching medical students and strike out on a career path few had traveled? Simply put, Dr. Lipton has discovered that things aren’t what they seem to be. Nor are they what he was teaching in med school or what we’ve been told to believe.

“Our health is not controlled by genetics,” he told me in his characteristically upbeat and excited manner. “Conventional medicine is operating from an archaic view that we’re controlled by genes. This misunderstands the nature of how biology works.”

Medical professionals from around the globe may curl their lips and snarl, but Dr. Lipton’s research—and the empirical evidence of colleagues—is forcing the issue enough so that changes in medical-school curriculums are currently underway.

But let’s back up for a moment and sit through a blessedly unscientific explanation of Lipton’s mind-expanding logic and what is known as Epigenetics, “the study of inherited changes in phenotype (appearance) or gene expression caused by mechanisms other than changes in the underlying DNA sequence.”

“Medicine does miracles,” he said, “but it’s limited to trauma. The AMA protocol is to regard our physical body like a machine, in the same way that an auto mechanic regards a car. When the parts break, you replace them—a transplant, synthetic joints, and so on—and those are medical miracles.

“The problem is that while they have an understanding that the mechanism isn’t working, they’re blaming the vehicle for what went wrong. They believe that the vehicle, in this case our bodies, is controlled by genes.

“But guess what? They don’t take into consideration that there’s actually a driver in that car. The new science, Epigenetics, reveals that the vehicles—or the genes—aren’t responsible for the breakdown. It’s the driver.”

In essence, if you don’t know how to drive, you’re going to mess up the vehicle. In the simplest translation, we can agree that lifestyle is the key to taking care of ourselves. Think well, eat well, and exercise, and your body won’t break down and need new parts.

Dr. Lipton refers to the work of Dr. Dean Ornish to extrapolate. “Dr. Ornish has taken conventional cardiovascular patients, provided them with important lifestyle insights (better diet, stress-reduction techniques, and so on), and without drugs, the cardiovascular disease was resolved. Ornish relayed that if he’d gotten the same results with a drug, every doctor would be prescribing it.”

That’s fine and dandy for people with heart disease, diabetes, or obesity, but what about cancer? Even the strictest lifestyle changes don’t cure cancer in everyone. What about genetic predispositions to getting the disease? “It used to be that we thought a mutant gene caused cancer,” Lipton admitted, “but with Epigenetics, all of that has changed.”

Then he explained how his research revealed the science of Epigenetics. “I placed one stem cell into a culture dish, and it divided every ten hours. After two weeks, there were thousands of cells in the dish, and they were all genetically identical, having been derived from the same parent cell. I divided the cell population and inoculated them in three different culture dishes.

“Next, I manipulated the culture medium—the cell’s equivalent of the environment—in each dish. In one dish, the cells became bone, in another, muscle, and in the last dish, fat. This demonstrated that the genes didn’t determine the fate of the cells because they all had the exact same genes. The environment determined the fate of the cells, not the genetic pattern. So if cells are in a healthy environment, they are healthy. If they’re in an unhealthy environment, they get sick.”

Dr. Lipton then took this a step further, which brings us back to the cancer question. “Here’s the connection: With fifty trillion cells in your body, the human body is the equivalent of a skin-covered petri dish. Moving your body from one environment to another alters the composition of the ‘culture medium,’ the blood. The chemistry of the body’s culture medium determines the nature of the cell’s environment within you. The blood’s chemistry is largely impacted by the chemicals emitted from your brain. Brain chemistry adjusts the composition of the blood based upon your perceptions of life. So this means that your perception of any given thing, at any given moment, can influence the brain chemistry, which, in turn, affects the environment where your cells reside and controls their fate. In other words, your thoughts and perceptions have a direct and overwhelmingly significant effect on cells.”

This echoes, from a highly scientific point of view, what the intuitive and spiritual healers have been advocating for years: your mind can and does contribute to both the cause and healing of whatever ails you—including cancer.

Other than the mind, two other factors impact the fate of cells, according to Dr. Lipton: toxins and trauma. All three factors have been associated with the onset of cancer.

With this body of knowledge comes promising news. According to Dr. Lipton, gene activity can change on a daily basis. If the perception in your mind is reflected in the chemistry of your body, and if your nervous system reads and interprets the environment and then controls the blood's chemistry, then you can literally change the fate of your cells by altering your thoughts. In fact, Dr. Lipton's research illustrates that by changing your perception; your mind can alter the activity of your genes and create over thirty thousand variations of products from each gene. He gives more detail by saying that the gene programs are contained within the nucleus of the cell, and you can rewrite those genetic programs through changing your blood chemistry.

In the simplest terms, this means that we need to change the way we think if we are to heal cancer. "The function of the mind is to create coherence between our beliefs and the reality we experience," Dr. Lipton said. "What that means is that your mind will adjust the body's biology and behavior to fit with your beliefs. If you've been told you'll die in six months and your mind believes it, you most likely will die in six months. That's called the nocebo effect, the result of a negative thought, which is the opposite of the placebo effect, where healing is mediated by a positive thought."

That dynamic points to a three-party system: there's the part of you that swears it doesn't want to die (the conscious mind), trumped by the part that believes you will (the doctor's prognosis mediated by the subconscious mind), which then throws into gear the chemical reaction (mediated by the brain's chemistry) to make sure the body conforms to the dominant belief. (Neuroscience has recognized that the subconscious controls 95 percent of our lives.)

Now what about the part that doesn't want to die ... the conscious mind? Isn't it impacting the body's chemistry as well? Dr. Lipton said that it comes down to how the subconscious mind, which contains our deepest beliefs, has been programmed. It is these beliefs that ultimately cast the deciding vote.

"It's a complex situation," said Dr. Lipton. People have been programmed to believe that they're victims and that they have no control. We're programmed from the start with our mother and father's beliefs. So, for instance, when we got sick, we were told by our parents that we had to go to the doctor because the doctor is the authority concerning our health. We all got the message throughout childhood that doctors were the authority on health and that we were victims of bodily forces beyond our ability to control. The joke, however, is that people often get better while on the way to the doctor. That's when the innate ability for self-healing kicks in, another example of the placebo effect.

“Jesuits used to say, ‘Give me a child until age six or seven, and he’ll be with the church for the rest of his life.’ They knew that our subconscious minds are programmed through the experiences we have in the first six years of our lives.

“Since the subconscious programs operate outside the range of consciousness, we don’t experience ourselves playing out these behaviors. Therefore, we don’t even see ourselves sabotaging our own lives, and as a result, we don’t take responsibility for the lives we lead. We see ourselves as victims of forces outside of our control. It’s hard to own what we’ve done our whole lives. So we perceive ourselves as victims, and we believe that genes are in control.”

I understand how reclaiming our power can help us heal—that doing so is, in fact, necessary for us to truly heal. Yet too many positive thinkers know that thinking good thoughts—and reciting affirmations for hours on end—doesn’t always bring about the results that feel-good books promise.

Dr. Lipton didn’t argue this point, because positive thoughts come from the conscious mind, while contradictory negative thoughts are usually programmed in the more powerful subconscious mind.

“The major problem is that people are aware of their conscious beliefs and behaviors, but not of subconscious beliefs and behaviors. Most people don’t even acknowledge that their subconscious mind is at play, when the fact is that the subconscious mind is a million times more powerful than the conscious mind and that we operate 95 to 99 percent of our lives from subconscious programs.

“Your subconscious beliefs are working either for you or against you, but the truth is that you are not controlling your life, because your subconscious mind supersedes all conscious control. So when you are trying to heal from a conscious level—citing affirmations and telling yourself you’re healthy—there may be an invisible subconscious program that’s sabotaging you.”

The power of the subconscious mind is elegantly revealed in people expressing multiple personalities. While occupying the mind-set of one personality, the individual may be severely allergic to strawberries. Then, in experiencing the mind-set of another personality, he or she eats them without consequence.

Even though the influence of our subconscious is interesting, on the face of it, this is not great news for those of us who are doing all we can to heal with our conscious minds. If health is largely determined by subconscious beliefs I’m not even aware of, then I’m brought right back to the original programming: I’m a victim with no control!

Dr. Lipton went on: “I used to say, ‘You are personally responsible for everything in your life,’ but people would look at me as if I’d slapped them. Now I say, ‘Once you become aware of the fact that invisible programs from the subconscious mind are running your life, then you are responsible for it.’

“Becoming aware means accessing the behavioral programs in your unconscious mind so that you can change the underlying limiting or self-sabotaging thoughts that don’t serve you. It’s easy to figure out the nature of your subconscious programs. Just take a look at the character of your life. It’s a printout of your subconscious programs. The things you’re having trouble with are because of that programming.”

Dr. Lipton said that to break free of the programming, you have to first recognize that your subconscious mind exists. You must accept that the manifestation of limitations or disease is because of what’s happening in the field of invisible subconscious programs. (Although he also recognizes that about 3 to 5 percent of disease is due to “birth defects”—alteration of the genetic code that occurred before birth.)

That’s the hard part, because, of course, you say to yourself, “I wouldn’t create this!” Anyone who has been through diseases such as cancer bristles at this idea, because we absolutely would not create the situation consciously. Dr. Lipton, however, urges us to consider that the subconscious mind has been running programs that most likely brought the cancer on. He says that before we can begin the work of really healing, first we must let go of guilt and self-blame—after all, we were downloaded with limiting behavioral programs in our childhood without our conscious awareness.

“You can rewire yourself,” he said. “If a disease such as cancer has progressed to an advanced stage, then you might do a round or two of chemo, but at the same time you need to be reprogramming your mind and recognizing your involvement in the disease. You must recognize that you are a participant in the unfolding of your life. Then you can go into your subconscious program and find out where the problems are.”

Dr. Lipton’s research suggests that the subconscious mind is built on habituation. It learns from patterns and repetition of patterns. By accessing that invisible field, you can rewrite those habits. The million-dollar question is, how?

According to Dr. Lipton, we can do this in many ways. “Through processes such as hypnosis, subliminal tapes, the religious use of affirmations, Buddhist mindfulness, or a series of reprogramming modalities collectively referred to as energy psychology, such as PSYCH-K, Emotional Self-Management (ESM), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), and Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT), among many other new techniques, we can rewrite those destructive programs that occupy our subconscious field.”

The core of Dr. Lipton’s premise is that by rewiring the subconscious thoughts that negatively impact our cells, we have a far greater chance of healing. The absence of doing this kind of work could also explain why cancer recurs, even after hard-core treatment and years of remission.

Science, said Dr. Lipton, is onboard with the platform of Epigenetics, even though most of modern medicine disregards it. Given the profound implications of his research, and the evidence he’s witnessed that proves its merit, it seems unbelievable that the medical world rejects it. But that’s the point; medical professionals don’t want to believe it.

“The amount of money you have invested in a belief system (‘Doctors have the authority; I am ruled by my genes; drugs are the only cure’) determines how willing you are to change it. The financial investment we have in medicine—and especially pharmaceutical drugs—is far too high for those factions to make a change. They don’t want change, no matter how much good it could do.

“Medical institutions are operating on fear. The funding and regulatory elements know that within each of us is the power to heal. For example, it is a proven fact that one-third of all healings are due to the placebo effect, which is controlled by the mind, but medical-related corporations based on making a profit don’t want us to know this. It’s interesting that more than 85 percent of doctors don’t even belong to the policy-making professional union called the American Medical Association. That means that the decisions made by 10 percent of the US medical community control the outcome of the entire medical profession. They determine standard practices, but they’re controlled by investors. And the FDA is heavily invested in the pharmaceutical business.”*

It’s curious to contemplate if an entire industry can possess a subconscious mind. Ideally, people go into medicine because they want to help other people. Yet, the very system in which they work can block those good intentions, since they can only pull from a very limited pool of (FDA-approved) resources, when in fact there exists a wide range of viable alternatives. If there is a sabotaging belief in the subconscious mind of the drug industry, I wonder what it would be, and how it could be exhumed.

Political dynamics are nothing new in the world of medicine, as Dr. Lipton described: “Back in 1925, physicists discovered that everything in the universe is based on energy—not matter. Everything physicists thought they knew had to be revised. In other words, consciousness is primary in creating the world. They went from believing in the machine itself to what runs the machine, but they couldn’t yet take it into the world; it was too radical an idea for the public to accept. Therefore, they arbitrarily agreed to restrict the principles of quantum physics to the realm of atoms and not bring it into the realm of people, societies, or communities.”

Given the politics of medicine, I asked Dr. Lipton where science and spirituality actually intersect. “Quantum physics,” he replied with confidence. “The definition of spirit is ‘an invisible moving force that influences life or matter.’ Einstein said, ‘The Field is the sole governing agency of the particle.’ According to physicists, the Field is defined as exactly the same thing: ‘an invisible moving force that influences life or matter.’ As it turns out, the Field and spirit are the same. The observer creates reality.”

After observing his own reality and admitting to difficulties in his personal life, Dr. Lipton pursued rewiring his own subconscious programs. Although he spoke as a scientist, his passion flowed from personal experience. “I was living a life of folly. I went in and out of trusting this stuff—all of which I’ve now come to know as true. Being a teacher, I had to learn it, but I had grave doubts. I went through some very tough times at first. Then, when I needed something, and I asked God (the Field) to give it to me, something would come forth. I’d say, ‘Show me something,’ and the universe would

show me. Finally, I had to own it. Now, I don't know what the future will bring, but I know that folly doesn't work. Now I live in a wonderful reality.

“There's a force moving within us, a biological imperative to survive and to avoid death. It's built in. Right now, there's the question of our own extinction, and none of us want to die.”

What is it in the subconscious mind of the individual—or the collective whole—that takes us to the brink of destruction? Only through entering the world of the subconscious mind's programming will we find out. “I was living in a self-imposed world that resembled purgatory,” Dr. Lipton recalled in a quiet voice. “I thought, ‘What the hell is wrong with this world?’ Now I'm walking in heaven. I've recognized who I really am and have rewritten the limiting programs that disempowered me.”

The new science of Epigenetics promises that every person on the planet has the opportunity to become who they really are, complete with unimaginable power and the ability to operate from, and go for, the highest possibilities, including healing our bodies and our culture and living in peace. ***

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