

**GROW YOUR
MIND**



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LIFE**

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7 SIMPLE STRATEGIES

to Increase Focus, Heal Your Pain, and Unlock Your Best Life

DR. NARJES GORJIZADEH



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for my parents

Keep walking, though there's
no place to get to. Don't try
to see through the distances.
That's not for human beings.
Move within, but don't move
the way fear makes you move.

—Rumi

FOREWORD

I HAVE KNOWN Dr. Narjes for many years now, and I have seen her go from a woman who was full of stress, anxiety, and health challenges to a woman who is happy, inspirational, and living on purpose every day.

Her transformation has been remarkable!

And in this beautiful book, you will find out how that happened.

Dr. Narjes combines modern science and ancient wisdom and uses her colorful life experiences to guide the reader to a life of health and happiness.

She has written an entertaining and accessible guide on how to heal your body and grow your life so that you can experience a life of good health and more happiness, and graciousness.

Dr. Narjes brings together her decades of training in science as a PhD scientist and beautifully merges it with the deep wisdom she has learned from enlightened teachers, and she

presents it to us in a wonderful book of entertaining life lessons and practical techniques.

It carries a simple but powerful message—*when you grow your mind, you will grow your life*. She guides us to let go of negative beliefs and embrace the positive, to believe in our potential and our body's ability to heal, and to live a life of joy and happiness every day.

With easy, practical, and effective tools, this book is a joyful read packed with a ton of thought-provoking content.

I believe this book will inspire and empower every reader to control their own destiny. I recommend this book to anyone looking to create and enjoy a life of health and happiness.

—Vikas Malkani, The Wisdom Coach

INTRODUCTION

IMAGINE YOU WERE granted a superpower that enabled you to choose how you experience life.

What would you choose? Would you choose to experience life as happy or sad? Joyful or frustrating? Peaceful or distressing?

What if I told you that you were born with this superpower?

Yes, you have the ability to *choose*.

There are many things in life that are out of our control. External circumstances may bring us surprises, uncertainties, and unwanted experiences. However, the superpower inside each of us allows us to experience life as happy and joyful regardless of the external circumstances.

The key to unlocking a happy, joyful life, or the life we want, is *inside* us. If we use our superpower, if we assert our ability to choose, we and not the outside world are in control.

But the problem is that most people don't use their superpower.

My aim with this book is to show you how to access and strengthen your superpower with simple strategies so that you can create the life you want.

Choice gives us power. It is our human privilege. And it is available to us in every moment of our lives, even during times when we think we have no options. To unlock the life we want, all we need to do is claim our ability to choose.

When we do, our life will be in our own hands and not in the hands of external situations. Once we use our superpower, there is no obstacle we cannot overcome or limitation we cannot surpass. We can reach our highest potential. And our potential is higher than we think.

There is no limit to how far or high we can soar—unless our mind imposes one. When we grow our mind, we grow our life.

The fact that you picked up this book shows that you want to expand and grow, to use your superpower. I congratulate you for taking a conscious step toward reaching your highest potential.

Once you decide to use your superpower to create what you want and deserve, then even problems, challenges, and uncertainties become opportunities to grow your mind and grow your life.

It may not be immediately apparent to you how a difficult or trying situation could contribute to your growth. But, if you make the choice to see it as an opportunity for life to guide you, you will soon discover how it was a stepping stone to speed up your growth, contributing to your higher, wiser self, not a stone blocking your way.

My life has not been short of challenges. But these challenges were not setbacks. They were the catalysts that advanced my progress toward the wisdom I wanted in my life.

My Path to Growth

Ever since I was a child, I have been searching. I have always wanted to know how life and everything in it happens.

As a young woman, I discovered physics, the study of the how and why of the physical world. I studied physics at university and eventually earned a PhD in materials science with a focus on condensed matter physics. And I pursued a career as a research scientist.

Since the time I began studying for my master's degree, I enjoyed developing computer codes to make the invisible world of atoms visible to the human eye. My simulations showed how atoms move and behave to form increasingly complex structures and how their behavior shapes the behavior of the world we see. They opened a door to an unknown and unseen world. Even though I was creating only a virtual door to a virtual world, the work was exciting and temporarily satisfied my thirst to know.

Over the next several years, my search to understand more about the nature of existence took me on a journey beyond my country and my comfort zone. And it provided me with many opportunities to expand my knowledge of science and of the nature of life itself.

Along the way, there were three unwanted events that at first seemed to nudge me off track but ultimately were the ones that moved me closer toward understanding the world and my role in it.

The first major event was the Tōhoku earthquake in Japan that caused a tsunami and nuclear disaster in 2011. At that time I was working as a research scientist at Tōhoku University, where I had gotten my PhD, and living in the city of Sendai.

The unexpected shake of the earth shook me on the inside as well. Thinking of all the lives lost—people who were living in proximity to me—was difficult for me to digest. Nearly twenty thousand people died as a result of the tsunami that followed the earthquake. I couldn't shake the thought that it could have been me who suddenly disappeared from the earth in the middle of an average day. And it made me question, "Am I really living the life that I want? Would I leave this life feeling fulfilled that I have achieved what I wanted?" And the answer was no.

I had pursued the science and career that I loved, and I could think of no other work that I would have liked to do more. But I was not satisfied. I enjoyed my work. But I knew there was something missing. There was more to the world than current knowledge of physics could explain. And I knew I hadn't found my life's purpose. I knew I had a higher potential inside me to fulfill.

The ground shaking literally beneath my feet showed me how fragile life is and gave me a sense of urgency to find what I'm looking for. I had no clue how to find it, especially since I didn't even know exactly what "it" was, but I knew I had to find it in order to feel fulfilled.

Life helped me. This wake-up call was soon followed by another.

The next major event occurred soon after the earthquake. I went to Singapore to start a new career at a prestigious research institute. I faced a lot of stress at my new workplace. The pressure of adapting to a completely different work environment and work style and the unreasonable expectations of my boss took a mental, emotional, and physical toll on me.

I became more anxious. I couldn't focus. I wasn't productive. I couldn't sleep well. I was unhappy. I had low energy and I was fatigued all the time.

After one year of visiting medical doctors to try to fix these symptoms and feeling no better, I went on a new search to find a solution for managing my stress.

I found it in a meditation class, but that class did so much more than help me relax. It provided a way for me to finally understand the world in a complete and holistic way and, ultimately, revealed my life's purpose.

Since childhood, I had wanted to know how and why things happen. And in my professional life, I searched for this understanding by studying the physical world—the world outside us. Meditation provides this understanding by studying the inner world—the world inside us—by looking at our mind.

Now, with physics and meditation, I had the instruments to see the full view of the world, from the outside and the inside.

I immersed myself in the field of meditation and the science of the mind. By practicing the wisdom and the techniques that I learned, my physical and mental symptoms of stress improved naturally and significantly. These amazing benefits inspired me to want to share what I had learned with others so that they could benefit, too. I became a certified meditation and mindfulness teacher.

Meditation led me to a new path, one exploring my inner world to complement the path I walked exploring the external world in my professional life. I will be forever grateful to my meditation teacher, Vikas Malkani, for introducing me to this path, teaching me the importance of training our mind and focusing on positive thoughts, and helping me to find my life's purpose.

The Curse That Was a Blessing in Disguise

Shortly after I began walking this new path in my journey of life, I moved to Australia.

While working as a research scientist at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, I continued to learn more about the ancient wisdom of meditation and the science of the mind by studying the teachings of ancient and contemporary masters from different parts of the world and exploring the emerging modern scientific research on meditation while practicing a variety of meditation techniques and exploring how my mind affects my life experiences.

I started to see a link between the laws of the physical world and the laws of life. For over a decade now, I had been using computer codes to simulate the building blocks of the physical world. Quantum mechanics was the alphabet of most of my calculations, and calculating the energies of atoms in physical structures was the basis of my simulations. *Energy*. Because when you see the world through the eyes of quantum mechanics, everything is energy. The laws of the physical world and the laws of life are both plays of energy.

This realization helped me understand that there was no gap between my expertise in modern science and ancient wisdom. I was not walking two different paths but the same one.

I started teaching meditation and giving lectures and writing about it in magazines. I had the privilege of finding and following my passion and exploring life from both the inside and the outside. And now it was time to share it with the world. This was my life's purpose: teaching science-based wisdom.

And then, just when I felt complete, I faced the third major event that changed my life. I was diagnosed with a debilitating condition: Lyme disease. Like the earthquake, this diagnosis was a wake-up call reminding me how precious life is.

Lyme disease is caused by an infection from bacteria belonging to the genus *Borrelia*, and it is believed to be transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected tick. I have no memory of ever being bitten by a tick, and my symptoms, such as fatigue, low energy, and difficulty finding words, came on very gradually. I don't know how or when I acquired these bacteria and for how long I had them. It was a long, frustrating journey to get diagnosed, but that was only the beginning of what would become the greatest test of my body and mind.

The wisdom I had gained in the years prior came to my rescue, not only keeping me calm and peaceful and helping my body heal faster but also empowering me to turn this challenge into an opportunity to grow.

In the early, dark days after my diagnosis, I remembered that I had a choice. And I chose to turn this situation into a positive event by seeing and responding to it in that way. Yes, I chose to use my superpower—my ability to choose how I experience life.

I made a decision to use this experience as my unshakable motivation to make the best use of the rest of my life—to grow myself to my highest potential and to help others grow to their highest potential as well. I wanted to have a positive impact in the world.

Soon it was clear that I should write a book—this book—to share my message far and wide, to touch as many lives as possible.

I saw a stronger, wiser, and happier Narjes waiting for me on the other side of this challenge. This future self became my guardian

over the following months as I went through the ups and downs of several different treatments and all the mental, emotional, and physical pain they caused. No matter what happened or how I felt, I kept my focus on this future Narjes.

The treatments used to try to clear my body of the bacteria exacerbated my physical symptoms, such as fatigue, and caused new, uncomfortable emotions. Fear, anxiety, worry, agitation, and sadness would suddenly hit me out of nowhere.

I had never known fear like this before. I often felt, even safe in my home, as if a tiger was chasing me and I was running for my life. I would wake up in the morning with my heart pounding in my chest, by body overwhelmed with anxiety. I didn't know exactly what I was anxious about, what I was afraid of. I was just anxious. I was just afraid.

Using my superpower helped me navigate these challenges. The vision of my healed future self never left me. She patiently accompanied me every step of the way, assuring me that she was there for me until we could be one and the same. When I was struggling, this future Narjes would reach her hand out and pull me into the air to breathe. When I was planning talks and writing articles about meditation or taking notes for my book, this future Narjes would clap her hands, cheering me up and encouraging me to continue. When I was in pain or discomfort because of the treatments for Lyme disease, this future Narjes would give me an assuring and peaceful smile to let me know that it would all pass away soon and I would be united with her.

The key to becoming that future self was to keep my focus on it.

I realized that I could manage any discomfort when I remain focused—focused on the present moment, focused on the ancient wisdom of meditation, and focused on my healed self.

So, I used all I had learned during my years exploring the science of the mind and everything I knew about physics and modern science to find strategies to keep my focus on the things that would empower me stay calm and peaceful in the present moment, prepare me to live my desired future, and help my body heal itself faster.

I started experimenting with different strategies to test their effectiveness in reducing mental, emotional, and physical pain. I found many powerful ones.

In this book, I share these simple strategies, the wisdom behind them, and the science of how and why such basic techniques are effective at healing pain and unlocking the life we want.

Because they are so simple, the effectiveness of these strategies was unbelievably surprising to me. There were days when my mind would get overwhelmed with fear, worry, anxiety, or agitation, but by using one of the seven strategies discussed in part 2, I was able to calm my mind, turn it toward the positive again, and reduce the negative emotions significantly, sometimes within just a few minutes. There were times when I was racked by physical pain, but I could reduce it, sometimes significantly, by using one of my strategies and keeping my focus on positive and empowering thoughts.

Being present in the moment and focusing your mind on the positives are the most loving ways to heal your pain, whether it's mental, emotional, or physical pain. You can change your experience of life, even pain, if you choose to.

Two years after the diagnosis of Lyme disease, I was symptom-free. I underwent medical treatment for nine months and spent the rest of that time using acupuncture to help my body restore its balance and heal itself. The simple strategies to keep my mind

focused on the present moment and on my ideal future played a key role in my rapid recovery.

During this time, I continued teaching, writing, and giving talks, and I became a life coach to empower more people to create the life they want. I also created my coaching program, called the G.R.O.W. program—Get clarity, Respond, Optimize, Wisdom—to help others grow their happiness, grow their productivity, and remove their stress.

I've been sharing my wisdom and tools for three years now and I have touched thousands of people around the world with my programs, talks, presentations, coaching, and articles. With this book, I hope to help you, too.

How This Book Will Help You

The strategies in this book helped me heal my pain and unlock my best future despite many challenges. They have helped many others heal their pain as well. I believe they will do the same for you, whether you are struggling with stress, anxiety, negative thinking, unhappiness, lack of focus, fear of uncertainty, physical pain or health issues, or you seek to move toward greater health, greater happiness, and greater life satisfaction.

The simple strategies I will share can be used in your everyday life as well as in difficult situations or during stressful events (such as job loss, divorce, chronic disease, or a financial setback) to keep you focused, calm, positive, and more productive.

These strategies are not only helpful but also necessary in today's fast-paced life to keep us sane and peaceful.

We are living in an interesting time. We have more material comfort than previous generations, but we don't seem to be happier or more fulfilled. We have pain. We live with mental and emotional pain that may lead to health issues and physical pain if they remain ignored and unresolved.

Speed is the pain that we all share.

In today's modern lifestyle, the pace of life is getting faster and faster. Our mind is occupied with the endless stream of information it receives from our digital, online world. The speed of modern life is taking a toll on us, making us less focused. It causes us to pass through the moments of each day without paying attention to them. By missing the moments of our life, we are missing life itself.

We are getting so used to having an overstimulated mind and living life as if we were running a race that we are forgetting the art of slowing down, relaxing, and enjoying life for the sake of living. We hardly have time for ourselves, for things that truly matter in life, and for *living* our lives.

The pain of being disconnected from ourselves, others, and life results in mental, emotional, and physical tension in almost every single one of us. Maybe you.

Slowing down to connect with the individual moments in your life reduces speed and increases focus, joy, and happiness. The strategies shared in this book are simple ways to help the mind slow down and learn to focus.

With a focused mind, you can heal your pain and pave the way toward your best life. You will enjoy your life and create the one you want with less struggle, less stress, and more efficiency. You will be inspired to follow your dreams and eradicate the limiting beliefs that block you from your best future.

The seven strategies are simple, effective, and quick, and they easily fit into any busy schedule. Most of them take no longer than the length of one breath. The key is to do them repeatedly.

Every moment is an opportunity to develop the ability to focus. There are strategies that you can choose to do right in the morning when you wake up to set the tone of your mind for a happy, positive, and productive day. And there are different strategies to use throughout the day to keep you anchored in the moment and enhance the quality of your day, whether you are at home, at work, in your car, waiting on a line, in between meetings, taking a walk, or drinking a coffee.

Many of these strategies are ones that I created or modified by blending my understanding of quantum physics, neuroscience, wisdom, and techniques of meditation. They are science-based techniques inspired by ancient wisdom and adapted for our modern world.

If you are an overscheduled professional running from one meeting (or Zoom call) to another, a busy parent juggling work and home responsibilities, a manager who needs to make important decisions for your company in the middle of a chaotic day, or a person with chronic pain, these strategies will help you be and perform at your best.

What This Book Is and Is Not

This book is not about meditation. It will introduce you to a new way of thinking and provide simple, quick, and effective techniques for enhancing your focus and training your mind to stay positive.

They are like micro push-ups to keep your mind and brain fit.

If you have a meditation practice, you can use these techniques to support it by helping to keep you anchored in the moment.

How To Use This Book

Part 1 is your foundation, explaining what we need to live a happy and thriving life in our modern world and how each of the seven strategies address those needs. You'll also learn the science behind the strategies.

The chapters in part 2 will introduce you to each of the strategies and provide you with everything you need to know to start using them right away. With step-by-step instructions and examples of the strategies in action, you'll feel confident using each one to focus your mind, appreciate the present moment, and unlock the future you want.

Because the strategies build on one another I suggest reading the chapters in chronological order. Once you're familiar with all seven, you can pick and choose which one (or a combination of them) to practice as part of your daily routine or use during a

challenging time. One strategy may work better than another in a certain situation or when you are in a specific mood. With these seven strategies in your toolbox, you will always find one that works no matter what you are confronting.

By the end of the book, you'll be ready to bloom into your future self.

Embarking on Your Journey

Are you ready to unlock your best life one moment at a time?

I may not know the specific pain you are struggling with right now, but whether it is the stress of navigating through daily activities or of an immediate crisis, I want you to know that I understand your pain. And I assure you that there is a way out of it. The way through is you. Your inner superpower, your ability to choose to focus your mind on how you wish to experience life, is available to you now and always.

I'm with you on every step of this journey, from easing your present pain to shaping your future.

Your best future is closer than you think, the universe is more supportive than you imagine, and your focus is more powerful than you know.

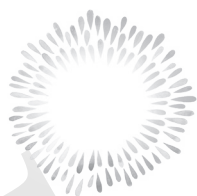
As you embark, visualize your healed, pain-free self and your best future.

Now, turn the page and let's begin.



Part One

Life Is Growth



CHAPTER 1

THREE PILLARS TO GROWTH

I WAS SITTING on a bench in the pavilion on the hill. The gentle touch of the cool morning breeze was taking away the sleep from my eyes. I could hear the leaves of the trees near me dancing with the breeze. Breathing the fresh air was bringing me back to my senses and reminding my mind to allow space for some rest. I could see the city of Sendai waking up to start a new day below me.

I had woken up early this morning and couldn't go back to sleep. So, I jumped onto my bike and rode to the crest of the hill near my apartment. It was my secret place where I came to bathe in its mysteriously peaceful air whenever I felt overwhelmed by the busyness of the world and my mind.

It was a small hill, but it was high enough that I could see a large part of Sendai from above.

I'd park my bike at the foot of the hill then walk up the long staircase to the top. A modest courtyard greeted me, with a few statues and trees scattered here and there. There was a small shrine in the middle of the courtyard. Sometimes a person or two would come to worship.

But I'd go there to watch the city from above and relax, slipping into this place's calming atmosphere.

On this morning, I'd walked up an additional few stairs from the right corner of the courtyard to reach a small pavilion with a panoramic view of the city. Sitting on one of the two benches in the pavilion, I saw the city stretching to the forest-covered hills. I could see the river I crossed to get here and the wide sidewalks and trees along the river. Cars and buses filled the streets. A few people were walking.

The activities of the day were getting started. But I was here, high above all those activities, simply watching.

My worries about my PhD project ebbed into a sense of serenity and well-being that I'd finish the project on time. After about an hour sitting there, I was calm and ready to go down the hill and start my day, refreshed and recharged.

This experience is a metaphor for what this book is about: to take ourselves out of the routine and activities of our daily lives for a moment, to refresh our mind and our view of life.

By doing so, we are reenergized and able to be and do our best. By taking ourselves out of the activity in our mind for a moment and pausing the negative thoughts that lead to negative emotions, we reconnect with the peace inside us that supports our highest potential.