

EPISODE 042 - BOOK | SWITCH ON YOUR BRAIN

WITH NANCY RAY

Intro

Switch On Your Brain by Dr. Carolyn Leaf is one of the most interesting and impactful books I've read. Of all the books I read last year, this one is probably my favorite simply because it's full of scientific knowledge about the brain and how it works, which is something I really know nothing about, and how God designed us.

I love some practical application, which is why I loved her Five Step Process to Detox Your Brain in 21 Days, which I'll go over a little bit today.

So welcome to the Nancy Ray Book Club, where I share a summary of a book worth reading and my top three takeaways from that book. Many of you have joined my 2020 Book Club already and are reading along with me this year, but if you haven't, you're welcome to see my list of 12 books, one a month, and join us by visiting nancyray.com/bookclub. I'd love to have you.

You're listening to Work & Play with Nancy Ray, Episode 42.

Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories: work and play. Simply put, that is where our life and our legacy take place. This is a podcast all about learning to work and play well, which leads to a healthy soul and a fulfilling life.

Let's get to it.

Content

There are a few areas in life that I feel should be mandatory to learn about in school that really aren't. It's not taught in school, or if they are, I totally missed that and that could be the case. Somehow I got out of taking PE my entire life, but that's another story for another day.

Okay, so one of those areas that I feel like should be mandatory that just isn't at all, is personal finances. Can I get an amen? And now after reading this book, I feel like another area that should be mandatory learning about when you're in high school and college is just about your brain and how it works.

I didn't know how much I needed this book until I read it. Man, it's so powerful. The first part of the book, Dr. Carolyn Leaf outlines how to switch on your brain, explaining how your brain works, how your thoughts are actual things, they're proteins, they are formed inside your brain, and then how you can catch your thoughts and redirect them, how to enter into directed rest, which is so good for your mind.

And then the second part of the book is her outline of the 21 Day Brain Detox Plan. I'm going to briefly go over the Detox Plan with you, but I want you to know that there are so many good lessons to learn in Part One of her book that you should definitely visit the show notes and grab yourself a copy of this book because it's really that valuable.

I want to go over with you the 21 Day Detox Plan and how it works, but first I want to share with you my three biggest takeaways from Switch On Your Brain.

I love Dr. Carolyn Leaf's writing. I love that she is a neuroscientist. She knows what she's doing. But I also love that she loves Jesus. She ties every single chapter about your brain in with a Bible verse. It's so cool how the book is written and I just could go on and on, but let me get back to my notes and just tell you my top three takeaways because I think this is really going to share the heart of this book.

The first takeaway is that we're made in the image of a brilliantly intelligent God. Therefore, we are brilliantly intelligent and we need to learn to use our brain in the way that God designed it.

I've never really thought of it... I don't know. I've never really thought of myself like that before. And it's true, I don't think of myself as brilliantly intelligent, but if we're made in the image of God, and I believe that He is, then that's true of us. So we just need to learn how to use our brains that way.

God made everything. I love what she says. She says, "Science and the Bible have the same author. Science is simply a description of the everything that God has made. Our brain is a roadmap that points us back to a brilliant God." I love that thinking because I think so often our world puts God and science against each other and she says, "No. Science is this roadmap that leads us back to this brilliant creator."

We have to know that it all points back to Him. How intricate and how beautiful is it points back to Him, which is so cool. So that's my first takeaway is that we are made in His image and he is brilliantly intelligent, and so therefore we are too. And we need to learn to use our brain in the way God designed it.

My second big takeaway is that we can perform our own brain surgery. We literally can renew our minds. The technical term or the scientific term for this is called neuroplasticity, and neuroplasticity is basically the way that your brain changes. I'm going to go off of my notes and

try to explain it to you in a way that would make sense. But basically when we think thoughts, neurons fire, and there are pathways that are formed in our brain. The more we do something, or the more we think a certain way, those pathways get stronger and deeper and the thoughts are more easily traveled. That's why when you're first learning a new instrument or doing something that's brand new, it's really, really hard, but the more you practice it and the more you do it, it becomes easier because that pathway in your brain gets stronger.

And it's like a forest and there's a trail in the forest and the more people use that trail in the forest, the more it gets worn down and it's more easily traveled. It's the same way in our brain.

We have the ability to choose the thoughts that we're thinking. We have the ability to actually change with that neuroplasticity, the ability for our brain to actually change its structure. We have that ability. We have a say in that. Which is just really cool. I just thought that was fascinating and I loved how she put that. Chapter three is titled Your Choices Change Your Brain.

The main scripture that she uses is Romans 12:2, do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, His good, pleasing and perfect will.

And then like I said, she always takes a Bible verse and then links a science concept and in the beginning of chapter three she says, "Here's the science concept that's linked to that verse. Through our thoughts, we can be our own micro surgeons as we make choices that will change the circuits in our brains. We're designed to do our own brain surgery and rewire our brains by thinking and by choosing to renew our minds."

That is crazy y'all. That's up to us. We have that power and renewing your mind isn't just a saying in the Bible, it's true, you can literally renew your mind. It's amazing.

I love this quote from Oprah. I have said this when I've been speaking to an audience before, it is so true, but it goes perfectly along with this whole concept. She says, "Be thankful for what you have. You'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never ever have enough."

I love that because right now I'm still in the midst of the Contentment Challenge and I'm not shopping for the first three months of this year. If you want to learn more about the continued challenge, you can go back to Episode 003. We'll leave a link in the show notes to that. But it's really all a mind game.

I've learned that it's so much about where my focus is, where my thoughts are going and drifting, and I have to really capture those thoughts and put them right down the right path again.

Anyway, moving on to point number three. Point number two is that we can perform our own brain surgery and literally renew our minds.

I think my biggest takeaway—number three—is that you can come outside yourself or your brain and literally throw a thought out as soon as it enters your mind. This might sound weird, but this visual was so helpful for me. She says, literally visualize yourself coming outside of yourself and looking at yourself and looking at your brain and saying, if there's a thought there, you can actually take dominion over that thought and throw it out.

As a mom who can easily worry or, I don't know, moms listening, maybe you can relate, but these terribly worrisome thoughts, tragic thoughts about my children will come out of nowhere and it can freak you out if you dwell on it. But man, this book and this concept of just coming outside of your brain and throwing out a thought as soon as it enters has given me so much confidence and freedom just to say, nope, I'm not thinking that. I'm not even going there.

I go outside my brain and I catch the thought and I throw it out and I choose a new one. You can call me hokey and weird. I don't care. Because literally since reading this book, it has changed my life in that simple way. This is my brain and my life and this simple practice has helped me so much.

I don't know, this is a side note, but it just reminds me of the scripture, "Who can add an hour of your life by worrying?" Jesus said those beautiful, powerful words. And man, we cannot add an hour. Mamas, we can't add an hour by worrying or entertaining those thoughts. It just benefits no one by doing that. So you can call me crazy, but I'm a visual learner and if you just try it, you might see how it could help you too.

21 Day Detox Plan

Okay, let's jump into the 21 Day Detox Plan because this is good. You might be wondering, why 21 days? Well, she says it takes 21 days to form a real thought in your brain and 63 days minimum to build that thought into a habit or get it on autopilot, basically. So that it's just a thought that's operating in your subconscious. That it is there. It's part of you. So the bottom line is that it takes time and it takes some repetition, and that's just how our brains are made.

So there's five steps to this 21 Day Brain Detox Plan and the first step is to gather. You just gather the thought or the toxic thought that you maybe believe or are thinking all the time that's really bringing you down. You bring that thought into consciousness. I don't know, maybe, she uses the example maybe your toxic thought is just constantly worrying about money. She guides you through what it looks like to gather that thought.

The second step is focused reflection. This takes just a couple of minutes, but basically the idea is to really look at this thought and think about why am I thinking it? How often am I thinking it? What actual phrases is my brain telling me?

Number three is you write it out. There's some really fascinating evidence about writing and

how when you write something down, it literally changes your brain. You see yourself being an active participant in it and you seeing the words back, it really does something in your mind. Which is so fascinating. But she says you have to take one to two minutes to really write it out. She says, it's like you're shaking the branches to loosen the glue of this toxic thought that's part of you.

Number four is to revisit. So you revisit the thought, but then you just look at it in a new way and then number five is actively reach. And the active reaching is really interesting. This is where you get really physical and real with that toxic thought. I love what she says in her book. She says, let's say, I guess here's an example of an active reach. You're working on a toxic thought of saying out loud, or in your mind, a lot of could've, should've, would've, if only statements. Your active reach step is saying, "I will not say this. I am putting the past behind me." Or visualizing the situation, event, or issue disappearing in a puff of smoke. Or quoting a verse that's applicable. Or doing something fun like smiling, or yawning, or tapping your foot.

A second example is if the toxic thought is that you keep trying to change the past by playing movies in your mind thinking that if you did that, then this would have happened, then this should have happened, and you wouldn't have. Active reach is to say, I choose to stop playing this movie, or I am switching that movie off, again, coming outside of yourself and saying, no, I'm not entertaining that thought anymore. And then quoting a Bible verse that applies or praying a prayer that you've created for that situation.

So basically that fifth step is really just saying out loud and visualizing and using your physical body to get rid of that thought.

And then it's interesting because you don't only need to break down the toxic thoughts you're having, but you also go back through those five steps and replace it with this parallel building up process.

What you do is the exact same time as you do the breaking down of the toxic thought, you build up a positive thought. So going through all five steps again. You gather as you identify the toxic thought and the breaking down, you immediately, prayerfully, consciously think of the replacement thought.

For example, that worry about money. The replacement thought would be the Bible verse Philippians 4:19, "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

The focus reflection, step two, is you would grow and integrate healthy branches by reflecting on the positive and not just dwelling on the negative.

And then you would write, step three, add more information by writing the positive alongside the negative. Number four, you'd revisit. You're doing the same thing in the breaking

down and building up processes. The steps crossover because you're planning the solution to replace the problem.

And then active reach, this is the same step as in the breaking down process, but you actually do the active reaches. So you say the thing out loud, you imagine it, you move forward. And so this is something that you do for 10 minutes a day for 21 days, and by the end of those 21 days she says, your mind will have changed. You will have literally renewed your mind. And she says to take it one toxic thought at a time or one, I don't know, maybe if you're really negative about a certain area of your life, you just focus on that one area for that 21 days.

She says you can just do it all over again. You can do it all over again with the exact same thing. If you feel like you need to just reinforce it a little bit more, or you can choose a different area of your life or a different thought that you've been struggling with.

I just think it's so beautiful because it's so practical and it's so scripture based, it's just, it's really encouraging and really powerful. So I really encourage you to read the whole book because I'm going to be honest, I did my best here, but I am no neuroscientist. And the detail in which she dives into in this book is fascinating. I need to go back and re-read it because, like I said, this is something I believe we should all really know about is how our brains work so that we can be equipped to live the lives and think the thoughts that we should, that will lead us to a healthy and a positive and encouraging life, which all starts in our mind. I hope that you enjoy the book as much as I did.

It's time for the Work & Play Cornerstore. This is where I have a little fun and draw from my personal life and experiences to bring you a book I'm loving and a thing I'm loving.

I get a tiny commission from anything bought through these links. So I always greatly appreciate it when you buy through the show notes because it helps me continue to bring this podcast to you every week. Plus, it's always just fun.

So today I'm of course going to be adding the book, Switch On Your Brain, as well as our beloved coffee maker to the Cornerstore. I don't know, that's random, but I love our coffee maker. I've been thinking about it a lot.

So you've heard a lot about the book. I'm just going to go right ahead and tell you all about why we love our Cuisinart and Keurig combo coffee maker.

Will and I drink coffee every day, every morning. Unless I'm not feeling good, I come up with a mug of coffee. We're not really coffee snobs so we don't really care all that much about the pour overs and espresso machines. We have family members that are super good at all that stuff. I appreciate it. I just want good coffee that's ready and waiting for me when I wake up. I don't want to have to pour over or do any work the moment I wake up. I literally want to throw on a sweatshirt and my UGG slippers, go over to my coffee pot, and I like a hot cup of coffee waiting for me. It's the best thing.

So we have, like I said, the Cuisinart coffee maker and Keurig combo. It's a coffee pot on one side and you can program it to make your coffee so that you set it at a certain time. I know most coffee pots do that, but that's a non-negotiable for us. We program eight cups of coffee to be ready and waiting for us at 6:00 AM every morning.

But here's the best part. If we need an extra cup in the afternoon, boom, the Keurig is ready to go and you don't have to make a whole another pot. You just get a little, I always do the decaf in the afternoon, a little decaf K-Cup and it's perfect.

Whenever we're hosting people, Will's mom is not a coffee drinker, but she loves a chai latte, so I've got some chai lattes for her. My mom is picky about the coffee that she likes, so we have her K-Cups ready to go.

Again, whenever we host people, Will's work friends might come stay with us for training, different things. It's just nice to have, hey we have regular or decaf and I can just... I don't have to make a whole pot, it's just ready for them on the spot. Okay, so that's enough. It's both coffee and Keurig and I love it. So it's great.

Thank you so much for listening to Episode 42 of Work & Play with Nancy Ray.

Everything I mentioned today can be found in the show notes at nancyray.com/podcast/42. You can find me at nancyray.com, or follow me @NancyRay on Instagram or Facebook almost daily.

I'm going to close with some words by Dr. Carolyn Leaf herself:

"We are not victims of our biology. We are co-creators of our destiny alongside God. God leads, but we have to choose to let God lead. We have been designed to create thoughts and from these we live out our lives."

Thanks for listening and I'll catch you next time.