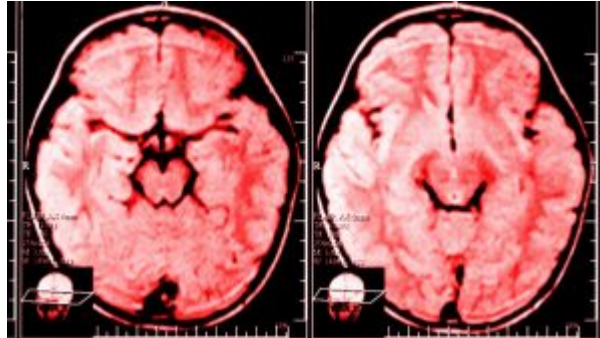


2018 Science Explains What Happens to Someone's Brain From Complaining Every Day

[*Life Story](#)

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Neuroplasticity: The Good and The Bad

The human brain is remarkably malleable. It can be shaped very much like a ball of Play-Doh, albeit with a bit more time and effort.

Within the last 20 years, thanks to rapid development in the spheres of brain imaging and neuroscience, we can now say for certain that the brain is capable of re-engineering – and that we are the engineers.

Science Explains What Happens to Someone's Brain From Complaining Every Day anxiety

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In many ways, neuroplasticity – an umbrella term describing lasting change to the brain throughout a person's life – is a wonderful thing.

Here are a few reasons why:

- **We can increase our intelligence (“I.Q.”)**
- We can learn new, life-changing skills.
- We can recover from certain types of brain damage.
- We can become more emotionally intelligent.
- We can “unlearn” harmful behaviors, beliefs, and habits.

On the other side of the coin, we can redesign our brain for the worse!

Fortunately, thanks to our ability to unlearn harmful behaviors, beliefs, and habits, we can right the ship again!

BELIEFS CHANGE THE BRAIN

Donald Hebb, an early pioneer of neuroplasticity and neuropsychology, famously said:

“Neurons that fire together, wire together.”

Dr. Michael Merzenich, now recognized as perhaps the world’s most renowned neuroscientist, built on Hebb’s work, proving the relationship between our thoughts (“neurons that fire”) and structural changes in the brain (“wire together.”)

Among Dr. Merzenich’s numerous discoveries, this one may be the most important:

Your experiences, behaviors, thinking, habits, thought patterns, and ways of reacting to world are inseparable from how your brain wires itself.

Negative habits change your brain for the worse. Positive habits change your brain for the better.

Neuroplasticity and Illness

Consider this quote by Alex Korb, Ph.D., and author of *The Upward Spiral: Using Neuroscience to Reverse the Course of Depression, One Small Change at a Time*:

“In depression, there’s nothing fundamentally wrong with the brain. It’s simply that the particular tuning of neural circuits creates the tendency toward a pattern of depression. It has to do with the way the brain deals with stress, planning, habits, decision making and a dozen other things — the dynamic interaction of all those circuits. And once a pattern starts to form, it causes dozens of tiny changes throughout the brain that create a downward spiral.”

COMPLAINING AND BRAIN CHANGES

We’re going to get a bit more specific now, discussing the effects of negative behaviors – specifically, complaining – and how these behaviors alter the brain’s structure.

We all know that one person who is continually negative. The person who never seems to be satisfied with anything or anyone.

Negative people are almost always complainers, without fail. Worse, complainers are not satisfied in keeping their thoughts and feelings to themselves; instead, they’ll seek out some unwilling participant and vent.

Undoubtedly annoying to their friends and family, these “Debbie Downers” aren’t to be chastised but understood.

You see, we all complain from time-to-time. In fact, researchers from Clemson University empirically demonstrated that everyone grumbles on occasion. Some just do so much more often than others.

Complainers generally fall into one of three groups:

Attention-seeking Complainers: People who seek attention through complaining; always dwelling on about how they've got it worse than everyone else. Ironically, (rational) people are apt to ignore outright the person rather than waste mental energy focusing on their negativity.

Chronic Complainers: These folks live in a constant state of complaint. If they're not voicing about their "woe is me" attitude, they're probably thinking about it.

Psychologists term this compulsory behavior rumination, defined as "repetitively going over a thought or a problem without completion." Rumination is, unfortunately, directly related to the depressed and anxious brain.

Low-E.Q. Complainers: 'E.Q.' is short for emotional quotient, and constituents within this group are short on E.Q. What I.Q. is to intelligence, E.Q. is to emotional understanding.

These people aren't interested in your perspective, thoughts, or feelings. You're a sounding board – a brick wall. As such, they'll dwell and vent at every opportunity.

Is the Brain to Blame?

The answer is (mostly) "Yes."

You see, most negative people don't want to feel this way. Who the hell would?

Harmful behaviors such as complaining, if allowed to loop within the brain continually, will inevitably alter thought processes. Altered thoughts lead to altered beliefs which leads to a change in behavior.

Our brain possesses a something called the negativity bias. In simple terms, negativity bias is the brain's tendency to focus more on negative circumstances than positive.

Dr. Rick Hanson, a neuroscientist and author of *Buddha's Brain*, explains negativity bias:

"Negative stimuli produce more neural activity than do equally intensive positive ones. They are also perceived more easily and quickly."

Repetition is the mother of all learning. When we repeatedly focus on the negative by complaining, we're firing and re-firing the neurons responsible for the negativity bias.

We're creating our negative behavior through repetition.

Final Thoughts

It's not possible to be "happy-go-lucky" all of the time – and we needn't try.

We should, however, take concrete steps to counteract negative thinking.

Research has repeatedly shown that meditation and mindfulness are perhaps the most powerful tools for combating negativity.

Positive psychology researcher, Barbara Fredrickson, and her colleagues at the University of North Carolina, showed that people who meditate daily display more positive emotions than those who do not.

Following a three month experiment, Fredrickson's team noted that "people who meditated daily continued to display increased mindfulness, purpose in life, social support, and decreased illness symptoms."

After learning the basics of meditation, which involves focus on the breath, create a daily meditation schedule that works for you.

15-20 minutes of daily meditation may just make a huge difference in your life – and your brain!