

HOW TO KEEP YOUR BRAIN
HEALTHY AND HAPPY IN THIS BUSY,
RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD

BRAIN UNDER STRAIN

YOUR 10 - WEEK GUIDE TO
A MORE BALANCED MIND



CHARLOTTE LABEE



*‘Because you are alive,
everything is possible’*

THICH NHAT HANH

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM ME TO YOU

This book is a handbook for your overstimulated brain. It combines ancient knowledge, the latest neuroscientific insights and experiences of myself and others. However, the contents of this book need not be your truth. I would therefore ask you to read the book open-mindedly and take from it what applies to your life now. When you reread it in a year's time (I definitely recommend it), you will probably take out completely different things from what you take out now. After all, your brain changes every day, and with it do your views and the things you feel comfortable with.

That you have this book in your hands probably means that you want to learn more about your own brain. In the book, I tell you all about the infinite possibilities of this fascinating organ. I also explain how spirituality and science can reinforce each other and how you can take the strain off your brain by adjusting your lifestyle.

Life in a world like ours can be overstimulating. That's why you might be stuck with certain questions, such as: what am I doing here on earth? What is my purpose? What is the meaning of my life? Who am I? Where do I want to go? What really makes me happy? If that is the case, you will probably like this book as well.

In this book, I share the personal experiences of several people. For the sake of their privacy, some of the names have been made up.

Do you have a medical condition? If so, always consult a doctor or therapist with sufficient knowledge and experience.

MY PROMISE

When we have an overstimulated brain, we often look at that very brain in search of the cause. In reality, possible causes can be found in so many things. In this book I will show you the influence of our intestines, the environment we live in, our youth and upbringing, hormonal disruption, epigenetics, nutrition, the connection between your heart and your brain, your breathing, spirituality and so much more. The best way for you to destimulate your brain starts by healing your cells. I have developed a 10-week plan for this purpose, a plan that will help you bring your brain back to balance.

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PREFACE

I am writing this book from my heart, with a message and a purpose. The purpose is a change in the world, the message is that this change always starts with ourselves. Be the change you want to see in the world.

As I write this, there is a lot going on in the world. Think of the pandemic in recent years and the war that broke out not even that far from our homes. These kinds of terrible events have a major and often negative impact on the brain. Under the surface of our existence, however, other, structural brain problems have been lurking for some time. Problems that are growing and now threaten our younger generations as well. For despite the material wealth in the modern world, we are increasingly losing ourselves, our happiness and our health. As a result, we seek refuge in distraction, pleasure, technology and medication. Often though, in vain. Problems with memory, fatigue and sleep are on the rise, as are anxiety disorders, burn-out and depression, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and dementia. In many cases, these disorders are symptoms of an overstimulated and dysregulated brain.

This overstimulated brain is one of the biggest problems in today's society. It is the cause of countless physical, mental and emotional complaints, which over time can turn into long-term or even permanent health damage. I see myself as an ambassador for the medicine that works best against overstimulation: a lifestyle adjustment. More and more people, including doctors, subscribe to this vision and discover what a different way of living can do for themselves or their clients. With preventive lifestyle changes, many physical and mental health issues can be prevented. As we intuitively feel, prevention is always better than cure. And if a cure is still needed? Then we always have an extraordinary self-healing ability, which has worked wonderfully well for millions of years.

Why change starts with yourself

When was the last time you were truly happy? Can you describe that moment? And just as important: how often do you do things that fill you with happiness in the first place? That make you feel joy in every fibre of your body?

The answer to these questions is different for everyone. Maybe you feel happiest when you are mountain biking, hiking or swimming. But how often do you do that, and are you really in the moment then? Most people's heads are somewhere else even during relaxing activities, so they can hardly enjoy the here-and-now. It is a logical consequence of today's world, in which our brain has to process an overload of stimuli on a daily basis. In addition, we live in a performance-based consumer society that tries to make

us addicted to things like noise and excitement, stress, shopping, food, social media, technology and the approval of others. But most of all, we are addicted to constantly running at full speed so that we don't have to pay attention to our disturbed inner processes. As a result, we increasingly lose connection with ourselves and our brain slowly but surely becomes overstimulated.

An overstimulated brain is dysregulated, tired and cannot function optimally. At first, this manifests itself in relatively harmless symptoms such as headaches, depression or the proverbial short fuse. We often wave these symptoms away as if they are part of life. But when ignoring these signals becomes a habit, sooner or later worse symptoms follow. Complaints such as anxiety disorders, sleep problems and depression are nowadays not only reserved for adults. More and more young children suffer from early life stress because their nervous system and brain are always running at full speed.

In rich countries like the Netherlands, these symptoms are unprecedentedly common, but they are also spreading like an oil slick elsewhere in the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental illnesses will constitute the world's biggest disease burden as early as 2030. That means we will have to prepare for the biggest pandemic ever. But how will we do that? How do we learn from the mistakes we have made in recent decades? And what can we do to turn the tide?

One thing is certain: we are not born to be sick, depressed, insecure or unhappy. It can sometimes feel like these conditions happen to us and we can't do anything about it ourselves. Fortunately, the opposite is true. In fact, we have an enormous amount of knowledge, experience and therefore power in our hands. From our knowledge and experience, we gather new insights and thus lay the foundation for change. And the actual change starts with you.

Do you think that the overstimulation of your brain is not that bad, or do you doubt that you can take charge of your health issues yourself? Then I would like to point out that we all live in the same pathogenic world and that, neuroscientifically speaking, people's brains are amazingly similar. So your brain has the same vulnerabilities, but also the same potential to recover as everyone else's.

Meanwhile, I have had the opportunity to help thousands of people with training courses, one-on-one coaching, books, guidance and advice. Time and again, I see the same causes and patterns underlying their maladies, but also the same steps leading to recovery. So by applying the tips and knowledge in this book, you too can really make a difference in life. Because, and be honest, you are reading this book for a reason, right? It

has come your way for a reason. Maybe you are fascinated by the brain and its workings. Or maybe you have read one of my other books and are looking for more in-depth information because you find that what I have to say helps you. This is a good example of how the brain opens up to change when it is rewarded for new behaviour.

A new view of the world

I am writing this book from different perspectives. From age-old proven methods, from the latest scientific knowledge, from my own experiences and those of other people who have turned their lives around and have become best friends with their brains. Therefore, this is not only a scientific book.

Personally, I love science and have been able to learn an incredible amount from it over the years. Yet sometimes there are things I miss. Science often looks at things succinctly, and sometimes it takes decades before something you intuitively sense is scientifically proven. In addition, scientists contradict each other quite often, and political or financial interests can play a role in the studies being conducted. Of course, this does not mean that we should just throw the baby out with the bathwater. Science is still a great tool and has brought us so much over the past centuries.

Above all, it is important that we continue to read scientific studies without bias and see them in a broader context. My own explanation of science is therefore different from the traditional definition. When something gives great results in many people, that to me is the science that works. For this, I don't need proof from numbers and graphs. In my view, the best science is sharing experience. Experiences are the best life lessons we can get, which our brain learns the most from. That is why in this book, I will share with you my experiences and those of people I had the privilege to guide. When you recognise something in someone else's experience, you will find that your brain opens up and your willingness to learn from that other person grows. In this way, we can learn a huge amount from the ancient knowledge that helped our ancestors to be connected to themselves, nature and the world around them. Call it a connection with your higher being, call it spirituality, call it karma or call it a different way of looking at the world. This different way of looking at the world is necessary to get off the social train, which these days just keeps running and is on a collision course with our health. The good thing is that by now science increasingly endorses this age-old knowledge. This is an extra confirmation that it really works, for every brain and therefore for yours as well.

In this book I am going to share a lot of knowledge with you. Knowledge about how the brain works, the strategies it deploys, the origins of your brain programming and information about how you can manage your brain differently, step by step. I have developed

a 10-week plan especially for this purpose. If you work with it every day for at least two months, you are guaranteed to get results. Your brain will no longer be overstimulated after this, allowing you to regain peace and balance in your life. Is this a promise? Yes it is! Every brain can change, be destimulated and get back in balance. The only question is whether you are really willing to attend to it. For that is the great challenge of our time. We are chronically too occupied to give ourselves enough space and attention, which makes us increasingly ill.

Let me illustrate this with an example. The other day, a woman shared with me that she had been suffering from mental fatigue, brain fog and negative thoughts for some time. She then told me that she had done one of my meditations that morning and had completely calmed down from this. She was very happy that this had helped her so much with her discomfort, but thought the forty minutes the meditation took her was quite an amount of time. I then asked her the following question: 'If spending forty minutes on yourself seems like too much of your time, what is it worth to you to be happy and healthy?'

It's a question I would like to ask not only this woman, but a lot of people. Why is it stored in our brain programming that it is a sin to take time off for ourselves? Where has the compassion for ourselves gone? Where has our self-love gone?

It is time for a different world and a different experience of life. That change starts with a deeper connection with ourselves. Only when our hearts and brains are reconnected can we find our happiness, move energetically into a higher frequency and get into a wonderful flow. The knowledge and practical steps in this book can help you a lot with this. I wish you much pleasure and, above all, happiness on our journey together.

Welcome to *Brain Under Strain – Your 10-Week Guide to a More Balanced Mind*.

INTRODUCTION

In the preface, I asked when was the last time you were truly happy. But I might as well have asked when was the last time you were rested. Had a clear mind. Felt good in your skin. Or felt like you could take on the whole world.

Millions of people today suffer from ailments like anxiety, fatigue, hyperventilation, mental lethargy, brain fog, feelings of agitation, negative thoughts, poor sleep, unexplained physical discomforts and so on. While this may seem like the way things are ‘just’ supposed to go, it is not. It certainly doesn’t have to stay that way either, because you can wake up from this physical and mental state. You can choose a different path, and live from happiness, passion, energy and zest for life. Even when you face big life challenges and sometimes just feel a bit lost. A positive state is the basis that helps you to be adaptable and resilient in any situation. But this does require a big adjustment in your brain programming, mindset and lifestyle. However, I can tell you from experience: this adjustment is well worth it. Because imagine no longer struggling with all these negative feelings. Imagine you can trust your body, brain and the connection with your inner self. Imagine you can live without excessive stress, unhealthy food and addictive habits. In this future scenario, you don’t worry about the past or fear what is to come. You are not bothered by the opinions of others and live your life completely the way *you* want to. Wouldn’t that feel really good? Let’s work on that together.

To guide your personal change journey, I have divided the book into different levels:

- Level 1 – Useful facts and insights about the brain
- Level 2 – More theory about the overstimulated brain
- Level 3 – Explanations about what your brain needs
- Level 4 – A 10-week guide to apply all the knowledge

Now after reading this overview, don’t scroll straight to Level 4 to start the 10-week plan. After all, this is not how you bring about change. You must first acquire enough relevant knowledge and recognise the experiences of others to make your brain aware of the urgency to allow change. Only then will the brain open up to it. So read this book from the beginning and don’t skip chapters. I will guide you step by step and regularly bring up examples of people who have already made great strides. Also, I do not use too many scientific terms, so that the book remains accessible to everyone.



LEVEL 2
YOUR BRAIN AND
OVERSTIMULATION:
VALUABLE
INSIGHTS

WHAT IS AN OVERSTIMULATED BRAIN?

Everyone has an overstimulated brain from time to time. You, me, my husband, my parents, my child, colleagues, friends and so on. This is part of the world and time we live in. That's why we shouldn't only try to prevent overstimulation, but also learn to cope with it once it happens. Learn to pick up the signals our body and brain send us and make the right choices accordingly—which is not always easy. Of course, this doesn't mean that you have to go through life in a continuous state of zen either. Far from it. That's not even possible. What you will hopefully achieve with the information in this book, however, is that you will find more connection with yourself, others and the world around you. This is necessary to cognitively, emotionally and spiritually take the steps that will help you move forward at this point in life.

An overstimulated brain is a brain that can no longer process internal and external stimuli properly. Stimuli are pieces of information that enter the brain. These include sensory stimuli: everything you see, hear, smell, taste and feel, but also the emotions and thoughts that the brain attaches to these stimuli to give meaning to your perception. Scientists distinguish between sensory overstimulation, cognitive overstimulation and emotional overstimulation. You can experience these forms of overstimulation separately, but also combined.

For a long time, the term 'overstimulation' in the context of the brain was only used in relation to brain disorders or brain injuries such as Non-Congenital Brain Injury (NCBI). In this book, however, I mainly discuss brain overstimulation that comes about due to epigenetic influences, such as your lifestyle and other life choices. However, even if you have NCBI or a brain disorder, you can benefit from the tips and knowledge in this book. In fact, others in your situation have already made great strides with Brain Balance and the techniques I am going to share with you.

I believe that every brain is different and needs care to function optimally. It would therefore be great if this book reaches as many people as possible. Overstimulation of the brain can happen to anyone, and unfortunately it is happening more and more in modern society. The speed of all the change that we have to deal with and the amount of information being poured out onto us is hard for our ancient brains to keep up with. This goes beyond just not being able to process stimuli properly. It is about your stress system being under constant strain, which has a major impact on how you feel mentally and physically.

‘Every person’s brain can become overstimulated when the environment is like that’

Health issues associated with a brain under strain

You can’t easily spot an overstimulated brain. As with most mental illnesses or imbalances, it is hardly visible to an outsider when you are not feeling well. You don’t have an open wound or lump of any kind, which sometimes makes your symptoms difficult for others to understand. For instance, one of the participants in a recent 9-day training I gave told me that she had lost all her friends due to a year-long burn-out. Her friends thought her mental problems lasted too long, as there seemed to be nothing physically wrong with her. This is the tricky thing about brain issues. They cannot always be understood by others, but the longer they last, the worse they can become. Over time, overstimulation of the brain can for instance turn into a serious anxiety disorder, burn-out or depression.

How to recognise overstimulation

Recognising an overstimulated brain is more difficult than you would think on the basis of the previously mentioned symptoms. This is because the brain tries to ignore these symptoms whenever possible so that you can continue to function in the short term. Unfortunately, over time this only leads to more symptoms, and even to damage in the brain that can remain with you forever.

Because of this approach of ignoring that the brain takes, there is more going on subconsciously in many people than meets the eye. If we were to map how many Dutch are currently overstimulated, this would probably yield startling insights. Since such a large-scale survey is simply impossible right now, it is best to just start looking at you. Take a look at the list of questions below:

- Do you ever feel like you are just surviving, treading water?
- Do you ever feel like you can’t escape the rush hour, the rat race that is your life?
- Do you ever feel like you have to be constantly running at full speed?
- Do you ever feel like you can’t do everything you want to do?

- Do you sometimes have the feeling that you would like to pay more attention to yourself, but that you simply can't?
- Do you ever feel that you are just a little too stressed?
- Do you sometimes feel you have a shorter fuse than usual?

Do you recognise yourself in one or more of these questions? Then chances are you suffer from an overstimulated brain. Important to stress again is that while there is a difference, it is the preliminary stage of burn-out or depression. The questions touch on the first signs of a dysfunctional brain.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF AN OVERSTIMULATED BRAIN?

- mental fatigue
- tension-related pains
- short fuse
- memory loss
- diminished focus
- diminished attention to things you normally enjoy
- procrastination
- sleep problems
- obsessive-compulsive disorder (ocd)
- restlessness
- muscle tension
- stress
- anxiety disorders
- panic attacks
- hyperventilation
- shortness of breath
- headache
- obsessing
- negative thoughts
- being mentally tired and exhausted
- unexplained physical complaints
- feelings of agitation and restlessness
- anger and frustration
- inflammation
- hair loss
- intestinal issues



YOUR 10 -WEEK GUIDE TO A MORE BALANCED MIND

Overstimulated and stressed, that's how we often feel in today's society. And to no surprise: the speed at which the world has changed over the past 30 years is much higher than your brain can keep up with. From early in the morning to late at night, your brain has to deal with a large number of stimuli: through your work, your phone, and social media.

In this book, **Brain Balance Expert Charlotte Labee** provides you with practical tools to balance your mind, and your life. Charlotte offers valuable insights on how your brain works, helps you recognise symptoms of overstimulation, and shows how – by working on your nutrition, exercise, relaxation, and connection for 10 weeks – you can experience more peace of mind.

CONTAINS:

- insightful information about your brain and what it needs
- important and useful theories about overstimulation
- 10-week guide to work with what you have learnt



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Kosmos Publishers,
Utrecht/Antwerp