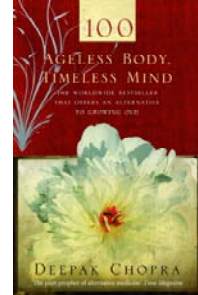




RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

AGELESS BODY, TIMELESS MIND
by Deepak Chopra

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PART ONE

The Land Where No One Is Old

People don't grow old.
When they stop growing, they
become old,
ANONYMOUS

If you were to destroy in mankind the
belief in immortality, not only love
but every living force maintaining
the life of the world would at once
be dried up.
DOSTOEVSKY

I move with the infinite in Nature's power
I hold the fire of the soul
I hold life and healing
RIG VEDA

Look at these worlds spinning
out of nothingness
That is within your power
RUMI

I WOULD LIKE YOU to join me on a journey of discovery. We will explore a place where the rules of everyday existence do not apply. These rules explicitly state that to grow old, become frail, and die is the ultimate destiny of all. And so it has been for century after century. However, I want you to suspend your assumptions about what we call reality so that we can become pioneers in a land where youthful vigor, renewal, creativity, joy, fulfillment, and timelessness are the common experience of everyday life, where old age, senility, infirmity, and death do not exist and are not even entertained as a possibility.

If there is such a place, what is preventing us from going there? It is not some dark continental landmass or dangerous uncharted sea. It is our conditioning, our current collective worldview that we were taught by our parents, teachers, and society. This way of seeing things—the old paradigm—has aptly been called "the hypnosis of social conditioning," an induced fiction in which we have collectively agreed to participate.

Your body is aging beyond your control because it has been programmed to live out the rules of that collective conditioning. If there is anything natural and inevitable about the aging

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process, it cannot be known until the chains of our old beliefs are broken. In order to create the experience of ageless body and timeless mind, which is the promise of this book, you must discard ten assumptions about who you are and what the true nature of the mind and body is. These assumptions form the bedrock of our shared worldview.

They are:

1. There is an objective world independent of the observer, and our bodies are an aspect of this objective world.
2. The body is composed of clumps of matter separated from one another in time and space.
3. Mind and body are separate and independent from each other.
4. Materialism is primary, consciousness is secondary. In other words, we are physical machines that have learned to think.
5. Human awareness can be completely explained as the product of biochemistry.
6. As individuals, we are disconnected, self-contained entities.
7. Our perception of the world is automatic and gives us an accurate picture of how things really are.
8. Our true nature is totally defined by the body, ego, and personality. We are wisps of memories and desires enclosed in packages of flesh and bones.
9. Time exists as an absolute, and we are captives of that absolute. No one escapes the ravages of time.
10. Suffering is necessary—it is part of reality. We are inevitable victims of sickness, aging, and death.

These assumptions reach far beyond aging to define a world of separation, decay, and death. Time is seen as a prison that no one escapes; our bodies are biochemical machines that, like all machines, must run down. "At a certain age," Lewis Thomas once affirmed, "it is in our nature to wear out, to come unhinged, and to die, and that is that." This position, the hard line of materialistic science, overlooks much about human nature. We are the only creatures on earth who can change our biology by what we think and feel. We possess the only nervous system that is aware of the phenomenon of aging. Old lions and tigers do not realize what is happening to them—but we do. And because we are aware, our mental state influences what we are aware of.

It would be impossible to isolate a single thought or feeling, a single belief or assumption, that doesn't have some effect on aging, either directly or indirectly. Our cells are constantly eavesdropping on our thoughts and being changed by them. A bout of depression can wreak havoc with the immune system; falling in love can boost it. Despair and hopelessness raise the risk of heart attacks and cancer, thereby shortening life. Joy and fulfillment keep us healthy and extend life. This means that the line between biology and psychology can't really be drawn with any certainty. A remembered stress, which is only a wisp of thought, releases the same flood of destructive hormones as the stress itself.

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Because the mind influences every cell in the body, human aging is fluid and changeable; it can speed up, slow down, stop for a time, and even reverse itself. Hundreds of research findings from the last three decades have verified that aging is much more dependent on the individual than was ever dreamed of in the past.

However, the most significant breakthrough is not contained in isolated findings but in a completely new worldview. The ten assumptions of the old paradigm do not accurately describe our reality. They are inventions of the human mind that we have turned into rules. To challenge aging at its core, this entire worldview must be challenged first, for nothing holds more power over the body than beliefs of the mind.

Each assumption of the old paradigm can be replaced with a more complete and expanded version of the truth. These new assumptions are also just ideas created by the human mind, but they allow us much more freedom and power. They give us the ability to rewrite the program of aging that now directs our cells.

The ten new assumptions are:

1. The physical world, including our bodies, is a response of the observer. We create our bodies as we create the experience of our world.
2. In their essential state, our bodies are composed of energy and information, not solid matter. This energy and information is an outcropping of infinite fields of energy and information spanning the universe.
3. The mind and body are inseparably one. The unity that is "me" separates into two streams of experience. I experience the subjective stream as thoughts, feelings, and desires. I experience the objective stream as my body. At a deeper level, however, the two streams meet at a single creative source. It is from this source that we are meant to live.
4. The biochemistry of the body is a product of awareness. Beliefs, thoughts, and emotions create the chemical reactions that uphold life in every cell. An aging cell is the end product of awareness that has forgotten how to remain new.
5. Perception appears to be automatic, but in fact it is a learned phenomenon. The world you live in, including the experience of your body, is completely dictated by how you learned to perceive it. If you change your perception, you change the experience of your body and your world.
6. Impulses of intelligence create your body in new forms every second. What you are is the sum total of these impulses, and by changing their patterns, you will change.
7. Although each person seems separate and independent, all of us are connected to patterns of intelligence that govern the whole cosmos. Our bodies are part of a universal body, our minds an aspect of a universal mind. 8. Time does not exist as an absolute, but only eternity. Time is quantified eternity, timelessness chopped up into bits and pieces (seconds, hours, days, years) by us. What we call linear time is a reflection of how we perceive change. If we could perceive the changeless, time would cease to exist as we know it. We can learn to start metabolizing non-change, eternity, the absolute. By doing that, we will be ready to create the physiology of immortality.

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9. Each of us inhabits a reality lying beyond all change. Deep inside us, unknown to the five senses, is an innermost core of being, a field of non-change that creates personality, ego, and body. This being is our essential state—it is who we really are.

10. We are not victims of aging, sickness, and death. These are part of the scenery, not the seer, who is immune to any form of change. This seer is the spirit, the expression of eternal being.

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