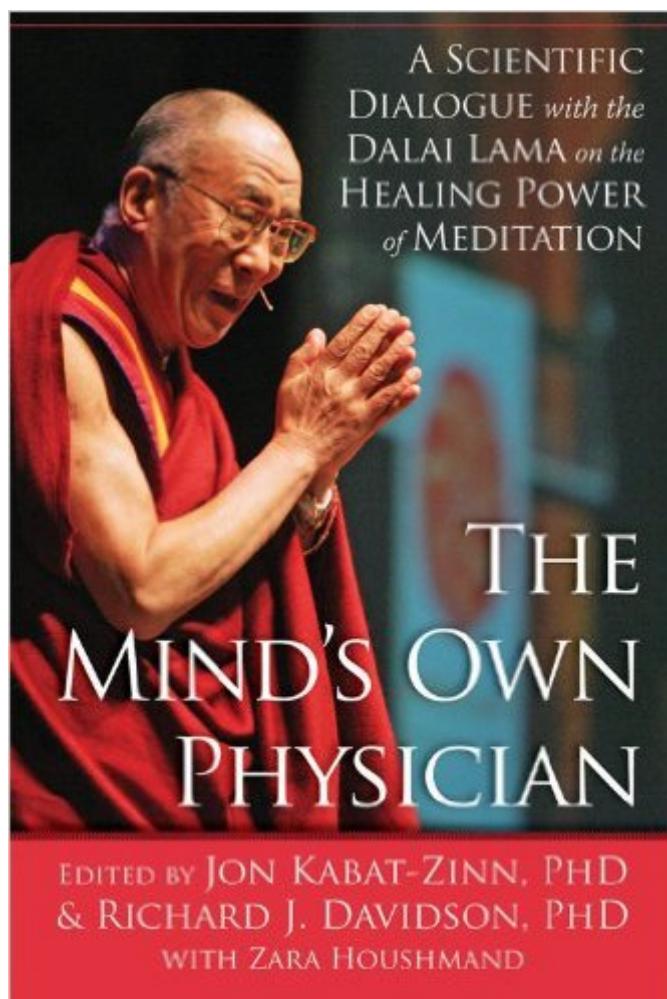


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# The Mind's Own Physician: A Scientific Dialogue With The Dalai Lama On The Healing Power Of Meditation



## Synopsis

By inviting the Dalai Lama and leading researchers in medicine, psychology, and neuroscience to join in conversation, the Mind & Life Institute set the stage for a fascinating exploration of the healing potential of the human mind. The Mindâ™s Own Physician presents in its entirety the thirteenth Mind and Life dialogue, a discussion addressing a range of vital questions concerning the science and clinical applications of meditation: How do meditative practices influence pain and human suffering? What role does the brain play in emotional well-being and health? To what extent can our minds actually influence physical disease? Are there important synergies here for transforming health care, and for understanding our own evolutionary limitations as a species? Edited by world-renowned researchers Jon Kabat-Zinn and Richard J. Davidson, this book presents this remarkably dynamic interchange along with intriguing research findings that shed light on the nature of the mind, its capacity to refine itself through training, and its role in physical and emotional health.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book was different from what I was expecting, but still extremely valuable. Based on the subtitle, 'A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama on the Healing Powers of Meditation', and the cover shot featuring the Dalai Lama speaking, I was expecting the book to be a collection of talks given by the Dalai Lama on this subject, with the 'dialogue' being questions posed to him. In fact, it is almost the reverse - in 2005 a collection of scientists, psychologists, and clinical practitioners

each presented their latest research on topics related to mindfulness, meditation, neuroscience, and how these intersect with mental and physical health, to the Dalai Lama at a conference sponsored by the Mind-Life Institute, and this book is an edited transcription of this conference. Although the Dalai Lama is asked questions and does participate in parts, most of the speaking is not done by him. However, the information presented is fascinating, and done in bite-size chunks that lay readers can mostly understand ('lay' referring both to non-Buddhists and non-scientists.) I say 'mostly' because although I am very familiar with Buddhism, I am most definitely not a neuro-scientist (although I have read a lot of meditation related research), and the more technical brain discussions did get a bit over my head. However, in most cases the question and answer sessions brought things back down to a practical level that I could understand. The conference sessions, and the book, are divided into 5 themed sections: Meditation-Based Clinical Interventions, Biological Substrates of Meditation, Meditation and Mental Health, Meditation and Physical Health, and Integration and Final Reflections. Each features 1-3 speakers presenting their research, followed by a panel discussion with questions and answers (in some cases including questions from the audience.) The panels are themselves a who's who of Western Buddhism, featuring names that will be familiar to many - Sharon Salzberg, Jack Kornfield, Alan Wallace, Jon Kabat-Zinn and more. For the first time a Christian representative, Father Thomas Keating, was included as well. That being said, most of the discussion is secular in nature. The principal discussion is how MBSR (mindfulness-based-stress-reduction) and MBCT (mindfulness-based-cognitive-therapy), both based on Buddhist practices but developed in a secular context outside of them, impact the brain, and how they can be utilized to heal and to maximize human potential. The greater emphasis is placed on the former - on clinical applications to both mental and physical health ailments. Research presented addresses the proven and potential impact of MBSR and MBCT for managing the impact of stress, clinical depression, and chronic pain, as well as for changing negative thought and emotional patterns and developing positive ones. In that sense, this really isn't a 'science of spirituality' kind of book, as it doesn't spend a lot of time looking at spiritual and mystic experience or beliefs per se (for that consider *Fingerprints of God: What Science Is Learning About the Brain and Spiritual Experience*). And although it is possible to extrapolate from the research presented here to develop practices for yourself, this also isn't a personal spirituality book (for a presentation of some of this info for that purpose, try another book by the Mind Life Institute *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves*). But if you are looking for a current (2005 being current in the science research world) and accessible overview of the science behind meditation and mindfulness, and how these may

impact humanity on many levels, this is a great offering.

'The Mind's Own Physician' is a dialogue in five sessions between the Dalai Lama and a set of physicians and researchers before an audience at the Mind and Life Institute. If you would like more information about the past or future sessions, here is the web address:[...]The dialogue in this book was aimed at finding mediation and mindfulness practices that could be incorporated in medicine. There are very many ways to mediate as HH Dalai Lama states. He didn't have an educational background in medicine, biology so he needed more information about the terms or how things worked, he asked questions. He was asked to and gave a summary of the principle themes in Buddhism. That also helped to make sure that no one was getting lost when he was using terms common in Buddhism. Since I don't want to give too much away in the findings explored and the commonalities of Buddhist thought and modern neurobiology, I will just mention a little of what was discussed in Session One. Pain was discussed. HH Dalai Lama explained there are two parts to pain (1) the pain itself and (2) the arrows around it or the feelings around it. We ask ourselves, will this ever end? It is killing me; will it ever get any better? Buddhist meditation can do nothing about the pain but it can change the added pain of thoughts about the pain. And that can help people feel better. That part of the burden can be lifted and the person with pain can feel freer. A research study on psoriasis was given as an example of using mediation as a healing tool. Both the control group and the experimental group were given UVB or PUPA light treatments. But only the experimental group also listened to meditation tapes. But as illustrated in this book, the graphs showed that the group who listened to the tapes healed faster than those who just received the light treatment. This book does still have a lot of religious and medical terminology that you need to learn in order to understand the concepts so it is not a book that you can read quickly. I recommend reading about one session and then letting the book sit for a while. That way, you can come up with your own questions and perhaps explore something in more detail that was brought up in a chapter. I recommend this book to everyone interested in learning about the benefits and limitations of meditation to medical problems. I received this book from the GoodReads program but that in no way influenced my review.

This book does not focus on religious beliefs, but does show how religion can view and use meditation techniques to improve their teaching and belief structure. Mostly it encompasses the scientific findings and continuing research which has brought about amazing results that solidify the benefits of meditation, and show the value in continued research and practice. This book is a

validation in scientific terms of meditation as a medical treatment.

A continuing series of books from the Mind Life Institute and Western Science (I've read two of the prior publications, *Healing Emotions* and *Destructive Emotions*). This book elaborates upon the others with more up-to-date scientific evidence for mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive-behavioral therapy. I also bought *The Emotional Life of Your Brain*...by Richard Davidson, Ph.D. and Sharon Begley. The two books are very complementary. A must read for those interested in the intersection of science and the Eastern Wisdom tradition of Buddhism.

This is a fascinating book with a spiritual lift, and wonderful medical/scientific studies which support the best effects of mindfulness and centering. Includes a chapter by Fr. Thomas Keating - developer of "Centering Prayer" which offers techniques of contemplative prayer for the present-day lay person.

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