

Yes, You Can Change!

Yes, You Can Change!

The Art of Reclaiming Your Life

Sanket Pai

 juggernaut

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*To my wife Kavita and my daughter Aahana.
Thank you for believing in me, even during the times I did
not believe in myself.*

*To my mentors, coaches and teachers.
Thank you for showing up exactly when I needed you
the most.*

*To the benevolent Universe.
Thank you for reminding me that life always knows better
than I do.*

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Author's Note

I envision a world full of happy people, living their most authentic lives, creating value and impact through meaningful connection and contribution. I believe each one of us has the power to create more well-being, fulfilment, creativity and ease in our lives. I believe we are all much more powerful than we think. But sadly, the truth is that most people are just scratching the surface of the impact they could have. Most of us shy away from living the life we truly want to live. Others want to change but don't seem to understand what's keeping them stuck in their comfort zones.

Circumscribed by our culture, upbringing, societal rules, norms and beliefs, we grow up leading a mediocre life. We think we need to get all our ducks in a row before we can finally serve at our highest potential. We are always finding reasons to delay taking action and making changes. Author Robin Sharma has said, 'To get the results only 5 per cent of the population has, you have to

do what 95 per cent of the population is unwilling to do.' What this means is that you really need to rise up to the challenge and let go of living a life full of excuses. Barack Obama, the former President of the USA, once said, 'Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.' We need to step up and reclaim our lives.

Yes, You Can Change! is a book for anybody who wants to take their life to the next level and live by purpose and design. The book touches upon a number of topics including mindset, emotional and physical well-being, breaking out of the social cage of personality, reimagining success, and boosting results by mastering your focus and expanding your possibilities. These areas constitute the ingredients of change. As you turn the pages of this book, I believe you will always find something to refer to or to think about. Some readers may find this book prescriptive, while others may see it as full of opinions and speculations. I invite you to explore its contents with a dose of curiosity and an attitude of learning. Throughout the book, I have included insights, perspectives and routines I have gathered from my mentors and my personal experiences and lessons along the way.

Yes, You Can Change! is not a guidebook or a simple 'how-to' book. It may not be the book you want, but it is the book you need, today and every day, as you navigate

through life, with the experiences and circumstances it unfolds along the way.

Many authors expect you to read their books from cover to cover. This book is different. It does not have a sequential story or process that requires you to read it from start to end. You don't need to follow a chapter-by-chapter order. Each chapter is unique, and the inspiration comes from all around me – the experiences I've gone through, the conversations I've had with my coaching clients, the mentors I've learned from, the books I've read, the movies I've watched and even my random thoughts and reflective moments along the way. Each time you pick up this book, ask yourself, 'What do I need the most today?' Then run your finger down the contents, or simply open the book at random and read the chapter that's in front of you. Every time you read or reread a chapter, you will find a new meaning, a new message, a new perspective on your quest of reclaiming your life. Trust me!

Yes, You Can Change!, much like life, is what you choose to make of it! Go deep and tap into that authentic and empowered space within you. Have fun with it!

To the Warrior Within,

Sanket Pai

1

The Mind Can Be Your Worst Enemy

Our brain is powerful. It has infinite potential. Yet, sadly, we are not born with a brain manual. The problem with our brain is that its primal focus is on survival and safety.¹ Actually, it's not a problem; it's the core function of our brain. And to be able to protect us, it has to constantly scan the perimeter for risks and dangers, whatever is negative, to ensure our survival. That becomes a problem when we keep playing small, held back by the fear and inhibitions triggered by the brain.

Do you feel you cannot escape your mind and its constant churn of faults, problems, concerns and pains? If you struggle to keep the momentum and motivation during your own quest to achieve a goal, you are not alone.

Way too often, we come down very hard on ourselves for not sticking to our goals, plans or new habits. Such a failure is usually accompanied by feelings of guilt, regret and even self-loathing. I am sure you have experienced this from time to time – whether it’s to do with a new gym regime, avoiding a particular kind of food, acting on an opportunity or a new communication protocol in your relationships and so on. You may or may not be conscious of this, but it can be very damaging to your self-esteem. It can really bring you down.

After I moved from a well-paid corporate job to my coaching profession, I did not have a single paying client for several months. A few pro bono coaching sessions happened on and off, but none of these led to a paying coaching engagement. I would spend hours sitting at the laptop designing my website or creating random social media posts in a vain attempt to get coaching clients. A lot of irrational self-talk surfaced and kept me stuck in the rut of my negative thoughts, worries and fears, and I stayed inside my comfort zone for a long time.

We all have an inner critic. While this little voice can be helpful at times, more often than not it becomes quite harmful. No matter how hard we try to change things, it comes down to that one powerful little truth: you can never outperform your own self-image. When this self-image gets into the zone of excessive negativity, we term it negative self-talk. Researchers estimate that

we think, on average, 6,000 thoughts a day,² 80 per cent of which are negative and almost 95 per cent repetitive.³ Isn't that crazy and totally dysfunctional? I am sure some of you know of the Robin Sharma quote: 'The mind is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.' Do you want a master who is always engulfed in negativity? Think about it: if your teacher at school, or your boss at work, or even your parents at home are like this mind, would you ever learn, grow or be happy?

With advances in biological studies and technology, neuroscience has made it possible to open up this black box we know as our brain. Some of the revelations of studies in this field are mind-boggling. As much as we strive for change and growth, our brains are not evolved for it. Survival and certainty are the primal instincts of our brains. It's like we are still trying to protect ourselves from the primitive world of non-stop threats: starvation, tribe enmity and random wildlife attacks. Because of our brain's preference towards survival, it is always more interested in letting us know what's bad. That makes us loyal to a central theme: our comfort zone, which is an area of familiarity and predictability. The choices we make tend to come from our comfort zone.

Let me make one thing clear. Our comfort zone trades passion for predictability, creativity for continuity and dreams for the rut. Just because life is inherently filled with obstacles that are often outside our control,

it doesn't mean you keep returning to your comfort zone and playing small by letting your mind rule over you. Just because something feels familiar does not make it the best or most strategic way to proceed; in fact, it may be the worst way because you may be staying stuck in it. While I also concede that just because something feels unfamiliar and uncomfortable, this doesn't necessarily validate it as the best choice either. Your life ultimately seeks adventure and action – both of which often lie outside your comfort zone. As American author Joyce Meyer famously remarked, 'You cannot have a positive life and a negative mind.'

Our mind's favourite pastime is worrying, leading to fear. It is one of the most dangerous feelings. Our worries constantly interrupt our confidence, our planning, our goals and our desires. Worries manifest through negative scripts such as *'I'm never going to advance in my career'*; *'My boss hates me'*; *'I got a B on the test – I'm not good at maths'*; *'I'll probably fail this year'*; *'I'll never be able to do this'*; *'I'm no good'*; *'I shouldn't have used my credit card again – I'm never going to get out of my debt mess'*; *'I'm not good with finances'*; *'I'm hopeless'*; *'I have a terrible memory'*; *'I'm not smart enough.'* About 90 per cent of all our worries are memories or emotions from our past that are being projected onto our present and future. They aren't even true in the given moment. Just close your eyes for a moment, and ask yourself: 'Is this really happening, now?'

Our mind fears change. And it will try to put all its effort into convincing you something won't work, or it's too risky, or it's not for you. It's worthwhile to acknowledge that our mind is primitive, and it needs to be developed to unleash our hidden potential.

Worrying and fear are the main reasons behind our high levels of stress and overwhelm, and even depression. When we know that worrying and negative talk can affect us in damaging ways and can lead to an increased risk of mental health problems, with a little awareness and mindfulness, we can tone it down to the level of a spot of self-criticism from time to time. This can actually be healthy and motivate you to be a better person.

The ABRA method

I knew this wasn't helping, but I kept swirling in my negative self-talk and worries. This was limiting my ability to believe in myself and what I could possibly do. Early on my journey of personal growth, I came across Jim Kwik, a learning expert who became one of my mentors on my coaching journey. In one of his coaching sessions, he explained the ABRA method to deal with all the negative scripts in our mind. According to Jim, there are two fundamental principles we need to keep in mind in dealing with negative self-talk. First, you don't fight it, and second, you don't fight for it. Jim has a favourite quote he

often repeats: 'What you resist, persists.' Applying this quote to the first principle basically means that you should not resist your negative talk. If you keep saying to yourself *'I shouldn't have this negative talk'*, you will be supplied with more of it. Simply denying it is not the solution. So, don't resist it or try to fight it out of your system. The second thing is don't argue in its favour. A lot of people unconsciously end up voting for their negative talk and limitations: *'I got to be me'*; *'This is how I am'*; *'I can never remember things'*; *'I am such a dork'*; *'I can never keep up.'* As Richard Bach, the American writer, famously said, 'Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they're yours.' So, if you argue for your negative self-talk, you get to keep them, and they become your reality.

The ABRA method, when learned, is very easy to apply and an effective tool to replace all the negative self-talk that the mind indulges in. ABRA stands for **A**cknowledge, **B**reathe, **R**elease and **A**lign.

Acknowledge

Acknowledge the negative self-talk and don't try to fight it. Accept the negative script as a part of you. It's there and it's happening for real in the moment. Just be with it in the moment.

Breathe

Take deep, conscious and controlled breaths. Controlled breathing decreases the stress hormone cortisol in our

blood, and promotes feelings of calm and relaxation. It immediately brings you into the present moment. Deep breathing helps supply more oxygen to our brain, which helps our mind and body to function at their best.

Release

As you deeply and slowly breathe in, you start to release what you don't want. As you exhale, mentally release all the negativity and toxins from your mind and body. Let that breath out and let go of all the worry and helplessness. As you exhale, exaggerate and vocalize your exhalation with a loud sigh, and let it all go ...

Align

The last step is to align yourself with what you really want. This is where affirmations help you to instill a new pattern in your life. The trick here is to experience them inside with all your feelings as you vocalize them to yourself. Visualize your affirmations every time you say them. Step into the affirmation and see how it really feels, even if it's only for thirty seconds. Examples of affirmations include: *'I eat well, exercise regularly and get plenty of rest to enjoy vibrant health'; 'I know I can accomplish anything I set my mind to'; 'I am grateful for the ease with which I speak in public.'*

Remember this

Jim suggests a quick word hint to remember this tool: ABRAcadabra – magic! Try this tool the next time you notice negative self-talk surface. Slowly take the control back from your mind. Trust me, it's magic when you start using this tool to release all the negative scripts that are holding you back from unleashing your true potential and unfolding all the good inside you.