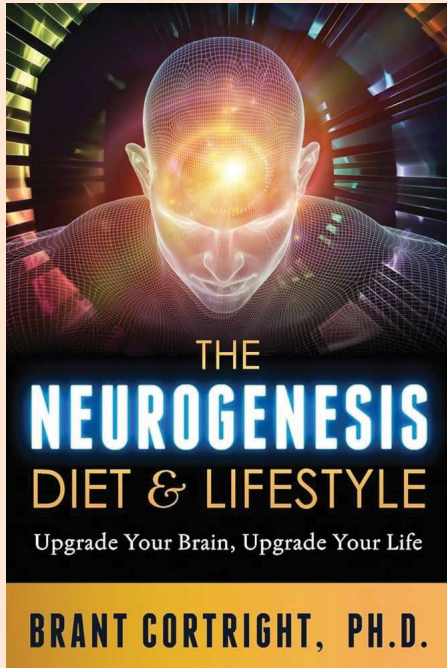


## Book review

### The Neurogenesis Diet and Lifestyle: Upgrade Your Brain, Upgrade Your Life

by Brant Cortright, published by Psyche Media, 2015.

Review by Phuoc-Tan Diep, Consultant Histopathologist,  
UHMB NHS Trust



We have all gone through very difficult times in the last few years, and other challenges loom. If we can strengthen our minds, we may be able to face these times with love, kindness and resilience. We may even be able to flourish.

This book guides us through the research that clearly shows adults can grow new brain cells thereby slowing or even reversing our mental decline with age. It provides us with the choices we can make in order to maximise adult neurogenesis.

Brant Cortright is a clinical psychologist and Professor of Psychology and his work focuses on an integrated approach which includes the spiritual.

His book is clearly laid out, which allows the large amount of well researched data and ideas on neurogenesis, to be accessed.

The first chapter “The Neurogenesis Revolution” provides a concise and clear view of the terrain of neurogenesis. The author provides boxes that highlight “Myths” and “Breakthroughs”. Further important details are in bold type in the main text throughout the book.

At the end of each chapter is a section of “Future Dreams” which opens up the author’s extrapolations, extending into a near-future with rose-tinted science-fiction and social-fiction possibilities. Each of the chapters are closed by a succinct summary.

The second chapter provides an overview of the program, essentially a summary of how to “Enhance Your Brain” through neurogenesis.

The next chapters cover, in detail, how to enhance neurogenesis through diet, body, heart, mind and spirit.

The penultimate chapter gives advice on the four “Poisons” that affect neurogenesis: chronic inflammation, chronic stress, physical assaults and deprivation.

The final chapter describes “Putting It All Together”.

In addition, there is an appendix which gives “A Brief Tour of Your Brain”, a glossary, and extensive references.

Cortright is clear and sets out the book in an ordered and logical way. His writing, whilst containing much science, is straightforward, not overtly academic, thus allowing the data to shine and the lay-reader easy access. The use of bold type to highlight important ideas and concepts is very helpful in view of the large amount of data.

The extensive list of foods and supplements is a great resource. For example, his “Superstars” are blueberries, omega-3, green tea and curcumin. Aerobic exercise is identified as being of utmost importance to neurogenesis, as well as sleep, music and nature, amongst others.

As a doctor, with a strong Christian faith, I was surprised and rather pleased to find in-depth discussions on love and spirituality. Areas such as these are certainly more difficult, if not impossible, to test using purely scientific methods. However, I do believe they are at least as important to being human as phenomena that can be tested in machines and seen under microscopes. I have an interest in the “love hormone” oxytocin and it is identified here as stimulating neurogenesis. Indeed, oxytocin may be a vital link between the spirit, the brain and the body.

Cortright writes: “Love in all its forms – romantic love, making love (sexual experiences), loving relationships with family, pets and friendships – increases neurogenesis by increasing the hormone oxytocin and by other mechanisms not yet well understood.”

I recommend this book whole-heartedly. It is a book to have as a resource, as a reference as well as being an enjoyable read.

My background in histopathology, my minor foray into research through the lens of oxytocin, and my faith, have given me an insight into how the brain is affected by love and by the spiritual.

This book is from 2015 and much has happened in the last few years, in research and in each of our lives. More than ever, the knowledge in this book may give us an holistic way to step bravely into an uncertain future.

### ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 166

- Q1 A7 Colon, Colorectal adenocarcinoma
- Q2 A3 Skin, Melanoma
- Q3 A2 Lymph node, Metastatic adenocarcinoma of the breast
- Q4 A4 Lymph node, Non-Hodgkin lymphoma

- Q5 A1 Prostate, Prostatic adenocarcinoma
- Q6 A5 Skin, Angiosarcoma
- Q7 A6 Breast, Invasive lobular carcinoma