

Do humans have the
capacity to change?
essay sample



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The modern view of neuroscience is that 'You are your brain.' Many scientists conclude that any behavioral change in humans is a direct result of the imbalance in their neurobiology. Humans have the capacity to change, and it can be either positive or negative depending on the experience that caused the behavioral alternation. The literature brings variety of examples on different types of human change. Some of them can be taken consciously when others are the result of trauma, eye-opening events, or the strong influence of the environment. Humans constantly change. The number of people fighting their addictions is constantly increasing. As the awareness of the problem spreads widely the more people start to engage in a positive change process. But why is the overcoming of addiction so difficult? The problem lays in our physiology. Our bodies and especially the brains are quickly adjusting organs. They respond to the incoming data and process them in the most convenient and simplified way.

If you are to start smoking for example, you will teach your brain to respond to nicotine dosage by releasing the dopamine hormone. The dopamine is known for activating and stimulating the reward centers in our bodies, so once the brains is 'taught' to become excited during smoking, it will become a habit and a part of your body's physiology. For a smoker to quit and embrace in positive change is to again teach his/her brain to start releasing the dopamine without the presence of nicotine. This process can be tough and challenging, but 'You are your brain' and as long as your brain can evaluate the proper response to incoming signals, the behavioral change can be approached. The process of thinking is the way our brains respond to information we feed them with. The perfect example of how quickly the brain

can burn the information down into the circuits comes from the story “Cathedral” by Raymond Carver. It is a short story that describes the personal growth of the narrator within one day. Raymond Carver creates minimalistic picture of an arrogant, simpleminded man whose change is both authentic and forever.

The narrator will never be able to reverse what the ‘eye-opening’ experienced has done to him. He becomes deeply aware of his surroundings. The contrast in the story is strong. In the beginning the reader is being introduced to an insensitive and simpleminded guy. The only idea the narrator has about blind people is the one he got from watching a television. He admits that his idea of blindness comes from the movies, and blind people are usually led there by “seeing-eye dogs” (Carver 513). He also thinks that “they move slowly and never laugh” (513). The narrator doesn’t want his wife’s blind friend to visit his house; he’s obviously feeling uncomfortable to be around someone he doesn’t know much about. Carver gradually unfolds the more complex pieces of the narrator’s personality making him more ‘digestible.’ When Robert arrives at narrator’s house, he’s trying to make him comfortable. He starts to admire the way blind man deals with the reality. When Robert asks him to draw with eyes closed, the narrator’s perception of blind’s man world changes: “It was like nothing else in my life up to now” (523). Why is his change convincing?

The sensory input of the narrator’s expectations has been violated and this brought the awareness of the surrounding. Our brain refine its model of the world by paying attention to its mistakes, and the narrator’s brain has just adapted to the new information. In this term his change is real and
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irreversible. The new perception is strong and solid. "He Becomes Deeply and Famously Drunk" by Brady Udall is another story that embraces human's capability for change. The main character, Archie, is a young boy whose life has been filled with anger and hatred for a man who killed his father. When Archie was young, he lived with his parents on a farm. His father was a cowboy who "liked to celebrate after a big job by getting himself good and hammered" (Udall 556). One night, after the job, he got killed in a fight. Calfred Pulsipher, the man who smashed his father's head with industrial jack, got away with this. The loss of the father has made Archie's life miserable. His mother couldn't bear the responsibility; she was depressed, delusional, and wasn't strong enough to be a supportive parent. Even though very smart, Archie has been always getting in a lot of trouble.

He had "seen therapists, psychiatrists, clergymen, even hypnotist," (555) but nobody could ever help him find a peace. He has a deep vengeance for Pulsipher, because he believes that he owes something to his father. He got the idea of this sort of obligation from the books that he used to read, and "in those books if someone killed a member of your family or even a friend, it was pretty much your duty to pay the son of a bitch back. It's what anyone who had any courage or sense of justice did; it's what cowboys did" (558). He believes that "It's what father would have done" (558). He lives for the revenge. His nervous system operates deeply on the messages send out from his limbic part of his brain. The emotions like anger and thirst for revenge are highly directed to prolonged activity of amygdale. Archie is a good boy, but the way the anger overflows his mind sometimes resembles the way animals react when put in danger. At the end of the story Archie

meets Calford. Pulsipher turns out to be an alcoholic whose life is a disaster. Archie has an opportunity to kill him, but he decides not to. He realizes, just by looking at Pulsipher, what kind of punishment this man paid for what he's done.

Archie finally finds a peace. He's life now is going to change entirely. Free of anger, he will have a chance to release the pressure from amygdale and operate on emotions build in frontal and prefrontal cortexes. In Tim O'Brien story " The Things They Carried" we find another example of how the environment can change human being. The author creates a picture of the character involved in deep personal change. In " The Things They Carried" he tells the story of soldiers who undergo an ostentatious behavioral change. The narrator, lieutenant Cross is a young man positioned as a leader of a group of soldiers during the Vietnam War. He is deeply in love with a girl named Martha. He carries the letters from her, pictures and a pebble. Cross is so attached to these things that regardless of the situation he's now in, he can't stop thinking about their meaning. He loves Martha with passion that becomes nearly an obsession: " He loved Martha more than his men" (O'Brien 542). He's lost in the world of cruelty and death, and the way he attaches himself to the items from ' home' expresses a great loneliness. But he also carries the responsibility to lead and protect his fellows, but this isn't possible since he can't focus on the duty while constantly daydreaming.

After Ted Lavender dies, the lieutenant Cross decides to change. He realizes that his man was dead because of his " carelessness and gross stupidity" (551). As a result he decides to burn everything that was connecting him with the outside world. He burns the pictures and letters from Martha.

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Lieutenant Cross becomes a different person. The life-threatening experience causes trauma and turns him into a machine. He becomes distant and quite. He decides to hate Martha and to only focus on doing his job well. His change is reliable. Cross is not the only man turned into a killing machine. Veterans of war usually suffer from post traumatic syndromes. The soldiers often escape into the world of primal instincts to survive. They don't dare daydreaming, they're "mostly pleased to be alive" (O'Brien 547). Even though O'Brien's story doesn't reveal much of the events from after Cross's changed, the reader is able to predict the consequences that experience of war will have on him. The great example of the post traumatic syndrome can be found in another story of a soldier. In "The Red Convertible" by Louise Erdrich we find the character of Henry.

Henry is a young Native American that was drafted into Vietnam War. Early in the story we see him happy, positive and 'full of life.' When he comes back from war, he's a different person. The war has changed him. Henry becomes "quite, and never comfortable sitting still anywhere but always up and moving around" (Erdrich 113). The war made him violent, hostile and strange. Henry seems to no longer be able to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. The story ends with his suicide. Henry's "boots filled with water on a windy night" (111), as he jumped into a river to escape the weight of miserable life filled with mental torture. Henry's mental and psychological destruction are the results of a change caused by what he saw and experienced during the Vietnam War.

People own the capacity to change. As our neurobiology changes so does our behavior. The slightest alteration in our brain's activity has a result in the <https://assignbuster.com/do-humans-have-the-capacity-to-change-essay-sample/>

way we act. Most of the changes are the results of traumatic experiences, because only a strong input can conduct an impulse strong enough to rewire the brain's circuits. In this term every each of the characters in the stories above has underwent the reliable and authentic change. A positive change is sure much more difficult to embrace than a negative one, because it requires the presence of a strong will that not necessarily always go along with what our brains are used to get. The change is always difficult, and the presence of suffering doesn't really bring the old cathartic liberation and purification.

Work Cited

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