

ADDICTED TO
THE MONKEY MIND

CHANGE THE PROGRAMMING
THAT SABOTAGES YOUR LIFE

JF BENOIST

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A Note on Privacy

Confidentiality and discretion are the highest priorities in my work. Because of this, I have taken real life types of events to create simulated stories and characters in this book. Any resemblance to any specific person or persons is purely coincidental.

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Meet Kevin

Kevin arrives home one evening after working a twelve-hour shift at the hospital. He goes straight to the fridge, pulling out a bottle of beer. He grabs a bag of chips off the counter and shuffles tiredly into the living room, where he sinks into the couch and turns on the TV.

He soon hears his wife stomping down the stairs.

“Kevin! I can’t believe you!” Jamie screams, still out of view of her husband.

He sighs and responds, “What did I do?”

Jamie enters the room and throws an envelope at Kevin.

“You didn’t drop off the contract at the realtor’s! That was the *one* thing I asked you to do with the offer on this house! I just called Judy to apologize, and she said we’re too late—they accepted someone else’s offer,” Jamie hisses, looking at her husband in disgust.

Kevin takes a long gulp of his beer, his attention still focused on the TV. He finally responds, “I’m sorry. Work has been so crazy lately that I...”

Jamie cuts in, “Oh, work is the problem, is it? Let’s talk about your *work* for a second. I got a call from your nurse friend Patti today. She was calling to ask if you were sick since you hadn’t gotten to work yet . . . at *ten o’clock*. You left at seven this morning, Kevin. What did you do for those three hours before you decided to show up to

work?” Jamie interrogates, moving to block his view of the screen.

Exaggerating his sigh, Kevin takes a moment to think before responding. “I wasn’t feeling well this morning and had to take some time before I could go work my shift,” he answers matter-of-factly, now looking his wife in the eyes.

“Oh, that is such bull!” Jamie shouts, throwing her hands in the air. “You were parked at some liquor store, downing vodka or who knows what.” She pauses and takes a deep breath before quickly running her fingers through her hair. “I can’t look at you right now,” she says quietly, focusing on the rug. She walks away, leaving Kevin alone with his racing thoughts.

Can’t you do anything right? You’re irresponsible. You’re stupid. Jamie deserves better than you.

Kevin jumps up, desperately wanting to silence this critical voice in his head. He quickly walks out the front door, and soon he’s putting the keys into his truck’s ignition and speeding into the parking lot of the bar two blocks away. As he parks, his mind will not let up on him.

Now what? You’re going to drink away all your problems? Own up to something for once. Stop running away from your troubles, Kevin.

Slamming his truck’s door, he jogs into the bar and demands a double whiskey from the bartender. As soon as the glass is in front of him, he drains it.

“Another,” Kevin instructs.

“Rough day?” the bartender asks.

Kevin cracks his neck and lets out a cynical laugh. “You could say that. Whatever I do is just never good enough for my wife.”

“Oh, yeah?” the bartender comments with raised eyebrows.

Kevin shakes his head bitterly and takes another swig. “Never. She comes from this family where all of them are CEOs or lawyers. So when I got kicked out of med school, they basically shunned me. I mean, they had to know how hard that was for me, you know?”

I was the one who wanted to be a doctor in the first place! But they didn't seem to care at all. Not even my wife. That's really messed up to do to someone, if you ask me," Kevin says sharply.

"Why'd you get kicked out of med school?" the bartender curiously inquires.

Unconsciously, Kevin responds by motioning to his glass. Catching himself, he uncomfortably shrugs it off and replies, "Um, I don't really want to talk about it. Get me another, will ya?"

This goes on for several hours. By the time the bar is closing, Kevin can barely see straight. Not wanting to leave his truck behind, he decides to drive home anyway. After all, it's only a few blocks.

The streetlights illuminate blurry images on Kevin's ride home, and he struggles to decipher them. He jerks his head to the right when he thinks he sees a person walking on the sidewalk. "Just a tree," Kevin slurs with a laugh.

As he's about to pull into his driveway, he sighs a breath of relief at making it home safely. Suddenly, he sees a blob dart in front of his truck. Or did he? Kevin blinks his eyes and keeps his foot on the gas. "It's nothing," he reassures himself.

Then he feels the bump.

Slamming on the brakes, Kevin jumps out to see the damage. His breath escapes him when he sees the source of the bump.

His neighbor's chocolate lab.

Kevin's stomach drops. His mind is spinning. He can't see straight. He leans against the car for support until he can't hold it back anymore; he turns into the lawn and vomits. As he wipes his mouth, he wonders if it's from the alcohol or the disgust at what he's just done.

He checks the dog's mouth, desperately hoping to feel a breath.

Nothing.

Panic sets in. It's 2:00 a.m.—what is he supposed to do with this dog? He can't tell his wife. He can't wake up the Browns. Kevin rubs his suddenly pounding head. He can't deal with this right now. So he

does what he thinks is his next best option: dragging the dog's body into the bushes.

After clumsily hiding the body and rearranging the shrubs, he leaves the truck parked where it is, its bumper sticking out into the road. Fumbling with his keys, he finally finds the match to the front door and stumbles in, simultaneously collapsing on the sofa and falling into a deep sleep.

The next morning, Kevin awakes to Jamie shaking his shoulder.

"Kevin! Hey, have you seen Max? The Browns just stopped by and said they can't find him," Jamie says, her nose scrunched in concern.

As Kevin opens his eyes, he grabs the cushion for support. By the time he's able to focus Jamie into one image, last night's details have flashed through his mind. He swallows hard and closes his eyes.

"Nope," he mumbles, shaking his head.

He can hear Jamie sigh and walk out the back door, yelling for the dog that will never come. As Kevin sits up, he places his head in his palms. "What did you do?" he asks himself.

He collapses in defeat, mourning the creature he killed and the person he has become.

INTRODUCING THE MONKEY MIND

Kevin's life is not what he pictured. What he truly wants is to be happily married, start a family, have a successful career as a doctor, and connect with those around him. Instead, he's experiencing marital issues and career struggles, and he has a serious drinking problem.

What Kevin doesn't realize is he's stuck in a mindset that is dragging him down in life. Imagine this mindset as if it were a computer: someone had to come along and program the computer to operate as it does.

So how does this kind of programming get created in the first place? It comes from the thousands of messages we heard repeated over and over to us as we grew up, many of which had an underlying tone of pressure.

“You only got a B on that test?”

“You never clean up after yourself! Why are you so lazy?”

“Why can’t you ever do as you’re told?”

“If you keep this up, you’ll never amount to anything.”

These messages, and many more, are what shaped our programming. Our parents and teachers told us these things in an attempt to help us be accepted and successful; they thought they were pushing us to do better by using punishments and reprimands as motivation. However, what this constant influx of negative messages really did was teach us that the best way to motivate ourselves is through *shame*.

These indirect, shame-inducing messages led many of us to develop a sense of inadequacy, making us feel like we’re not “good enough” in some areas of our lives. With this self-deprecating mindset, we’ve learned to put an immense amount of pressure on ourselves to act a certain way.

As a result, we find ourselves altering our behavior and subtly performing for those around us. We say we’re fine when inside, we’re falling apart. We fib and claim our email wasn’t working instead of admitting we forgot to send it. We walk our best walk and talk our best talk, all in the hopes that others will like, love, or—at the very least—tolerate us.

After years of focusing externally, we’ve learned to look outside ourselves for the cause of our problems. When we get upset, we blame others or outside circumstances. We get caught up in believing that what others think of us, and what happens to us, are what dictate our experience.

In actuality, our beliefs about ourselves and the world—which

were formed through our programming—are what determine our everyday experiences. While our programming was primarily developed through those shame-inducing messages from the adults who raised us, it also incorporated other impactful experiences we went through in life: bullying, trauma, heartbreak, or failure.

Over time, our beliefs slowly transformed into the negative mindset that directs how we view our world today: the Monkey Mind.

We call this mindset the Monkey Mind because it is less mature and evolved than the other aspects of our mind and thought processes. It's quick to react to something it doesn't agree with, as well as blame something or someone else for our problems. It wants to keep us focused on how everything outside ourselves is why our lives aren't the way we want them to be:

If your job wasn't so demanding, you wouldn't be so stressed.

If that road hadn't been closed, you wouldn't have been late, and that date would have gone better.

If your mother didn't have such high expectations of you, you'd have a closer relationship.

The Monkey Mind also keeps a memory bank of all the criticisms and judgments we've adopted from our programming. If we ever get to the point where we stop blaming others and want to take responsibility for our circumstances, the Monkey Mind loves to remind us about the shame-inducing beliefs we've developed about ourselves:

You haven't gotten that raise yet because you're not smart enough. Everyone knows it.

That date went terribly because you look fat in this shirt, and no one is attracted to you.

Your family is embarrassed by your failure. That's why they never come visit.

This inner critic makes it extremely challenging to create the life we want for ourselves, as it produces an immense amount of anxiety that

whittles away at our confidence, driving us to do a number of things: drink, use drugs, isolate ourselves from others, yell at our kids, get divorced, give up on our dreams—the list is endless.

We've gotten to the point where we aren't aware of how much our anxiety rules our lives. When we're in line at the bank, we're anxious because it's taking too long. When we forget to call a client, we're anxious because we might have lost the deal. When we don't wear makeup to the grocery store, we're anxious about how others are perceiving us. The anxiety is so constant that we don't even question it.

Throughout the generations, we've *normalized* the Monkey Mind's critical voice and the vast amounts of anxiety it creates. For example, think about how many of us grab a drink at an event to "take the edge off." Where does this "edge" come from? It's the Monkey Mind, creating stories and judgments about the way we need to act. Because we're not conscious of this inner critic or equipped to deal with it, this ritual of drinking to minimize anxiety has become completely socially acceptable.

To move past the anxiety our Monkey Mind has created, we must listen to a different perspective: the Observing Mind.

The Observing Mind does not look to other people or situations as the source of our troubles. Instead, it offers an objective perspective, uninhibited by our judgmental programming. This point of view understands that the source of our upset or delight is within ourselves. The Observing Mind is able to offer this wisdom by witnessing and learning from the Monkey Mind. Oftentimes, being aware of our shadows allows us to see the light we can offer to the world.

Shifting into the Observing Mind's perspective is so powerful because our mindset affects everything we do. When we move away from the Monkey Mind's judgmental perspective, we open ourselves up to an abundance of opportunities and experiences. Relationships that once seemed doomed can begin to flourish. Endless cycles of addictive behavior can be resolved. An unattainable joy now becomes accessible. A life driven by passion and purpose is now within reach. When you address

the root cause of your problems—your programming—everything else will start to fall into place.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS BOOK

Learning about the Monkey Mind can come as a shock for some people, because many of us do not have an accurate assessment of our own programming. Some of us might even say that we don't have any negative programming because we had "great" childhoods.

While it could be true that we grew up in warm, loving households, the fact still remains that we grew up in a shame-based society that fueled the Monkey Mind. The skill of not blaming or judging others or ourselves is rarely taught in any school or university. Even those who love us the most don't usually have the tools to teach us reliable, repeatable ways to create a healthy state of mind.

In this book, we will explore why your thoughts are so erratic; why your emotions sometimes spiral out of control; why some days you feel great, but other days you're so anxious that you drink, use drugs, snap at your partner, sabotage your career, or feel so depressed that you can't get out of bed. We'll explain why—and how—we became addicted to our Monkey Minds.

With the Observing Mind's guidance, we will finally shed the programming we received growing up. We will feel more connected with others and experience far less anxiety in our day-to-day lives.

After teaching the skills of the Observing Mind for over twenty years, I've compiled many proven techniques for gaining mastery over our feelings and thoughts. What I offer to you in this book are the tools to put yourself back in the driver's seat of your life. By following the journeys of the characters in this book, you will

develop skills of observation, awareness, and emotional fluidity to help you change the course of your life.

Since we learn best experientially, there are opportunities throughout this book for you to practice the skills of the Observing Mind firsthand. When you apply these skills to your own life, try to remain curious and keep an open mind and heart. You may be surprised to find what new awareness pops up when you fully open yourself up to this work.

My goal is to teach you specific, useful skills you can actually put into practice, so you can finally shed your sabotaging programming and create the life you deserve.