

## Interview with Author Rick Hanson

### How to be Happier Just One Thing at a Time

[Just One Thing: Developing a Buddha Brain One Simple Practice at a Time](#) presents over 50 quick yet profoundly powerful simple meditation practices to change the neurocircuitry in our brains to lead to greater happiness, love and wisdom.

As an expert in neuroscience, positive psychology and contemplative training, Dr. Rick Hanson guides the reader through the meditation practices and offers additional material for deeper understanding of the exercise.

When I speak to Rick about the difference between this book and his first best-seller *Buddha's Brain*, he says that the reaction to **Just One Thing** has blown his mind. "It's very sweet. People around the world often email saying that it's just what they needed to hear."

25,000 people already subscribe to Hanson's "Just One Thing" newsletter and they are adding 1,000 new people a year. "This is my Sally Fields moment," he says with a laugh. "They like me, they really like me!"



Though simple and heartfelt as they are, these meditations are grounded in neuroscience and are practical, too.

Over 50 meditations include focuses such as:

- Get on Your Own Side
- Take in the Good
- Notice You're Alright Right Now
- Don't Throw Darts
- Fill the Hole in Your Heart

#### **Underestimating Your Chance for Success**

In relation to our dreams and goals, Hanson says that **we overestimate threats, and underestimate odds of success and our opportunities resources.**

We underestimate that people will help. We underestimate the reception of a new product or new blog. We underestimate that money can be obtained to finance a new idea. We underestimate that people will want to date us.

The result is that when we get flooded with "paper tiger" worries we get distracted from real threats and this sucks our resources away. The bigger threat as Rick sees it: "People end up dreaming small dreams."

Hanson believes that knowing what your true skills and talents are and getting the knowledge and skills you need to succeed in a specific endeavor is a good

strategy for achieving ones dreams.

### **How to be More Responsive Than Reactive**

Even though we can't totally get away from our brain's negativity bias and tendency to underestimate the help all around us we can do *Just One Good Thing*.

We can use **Hanson's five Cs** to be more responsive than reactive in life.

"You know the difference between being mellow and being worked up," Hanson says.

He describes the responsive mood as a resting state in which one is not feeling disturbed, or in pain or threatened. "You feel peace. There is no fight or flight. Your parasympathetic nervous system is activated.

**When we are responsive we are approaching life from a basic sense of sufficiency**, a basic sense of contentment.

Hanson says that people who feel this believe they have enough for them. It's not that they don't desire more, it's just that they know they have enough regardless. This kind of perspective leads to a default state of caring.

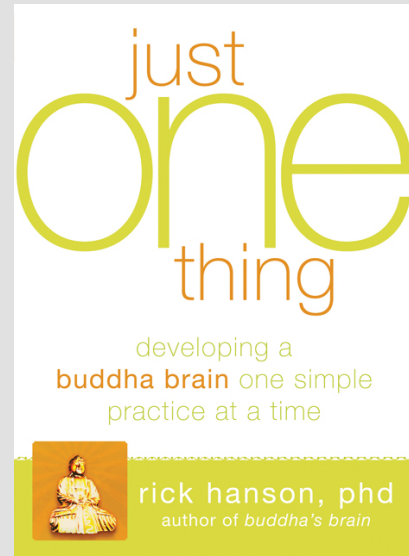
According to Hanson the scientific evidence is that **our basic nature is: Calm, Caring and Content, and we're Conscious and Creative, too.**

"When we're calm our field of awareness is wide. We see the whole mosaic. When we're disturbed our field of attention narrows, we get tunnel vision," he explains. "The good news is that our nature is 5 Cs. The bad news is that Mother Nature evolved a hair trigger system based on drive, aggression, and being power hungry."

**What's the take away point?** "Ideally, when we're triggered into reaction, we then find ourselves quickly back into responsive mode." Our responsive mode does not have to mean being inactive and sedate. "It can have healthy passion and vitality. You can get excited about your children doing well in sports. Our responsive mode is active when we're engaged in art project, making love, laughing with friends. We can be energized without tapping into reactive mode."

Hanson wants us to guard against reactive mode, since it's dragging us over the cliff in world history terms (the wars, greed, environmental chaos, imbalance in society, tribalism, etc.).

He advises, "Clock more time each day in responsive mode. **Our ability to influence the world is minimal, but our ability to gradually change our brain is big!** Through using all kinds of methods (such as his *Just One*



*Thing* meditations) we gradually make our brain happier, more effective and more loving. That's what you get when you change brain from inside out."

"Build your basic sense of being calm, being content, fulfilled, and satisfied. Build your basic sense of enoughness and be loved and loving. When you do that in realistic ways, you really do build up your sense of resilience, you make yourself less sensitive to stress, and you build up strengths that you can use to pursue your dreams."

An authority on self-directed neuroplasticity, Dr. Hanson's work has been featured on the BBC, NPR, Consumer Reports Health, and U.S. News and World Report, and his articles have appeared in Tricycle Magazine, Insight Journal, and Inquiring Mind. He edits the Wise Brain Bulletin, and his weekly e-newsletter - Just One Thing - has over 20,000 subscribers, and also appears on Huffington Post, Psychology Today, and other major websites. For more information and to sign up for his newsletter - Just One Thing - go to [www.RickHanson.net](http://www.RickHanson.net)

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