



HELP IN A HURRY

**SIMPLE TIPS
FOR FINDING PEACE
WHEN YOU'RE
OVERWHELMED,
ANXIOUS, OR
STRESSED**

DR. CAROLINE LEAF

Bestselling Author and Founder of the Scientifically Proven Neurocycle Method

“Life will never be perfect, but *Help in a Hurry* gives you the tools to navigate the messy moments with grace and resilience. Dr. Leaf’s wisdom and compassionate guidance are immensely valuable for anyone seeking practical, research-backed advice on how to transform overwhelming thoughts into purposeful growth.”

Demi-Leigh Tebow, former Miss Universe, bestselling author, entrepreneur, and speaker

“Life can be overwhelming, and at times it feels like the weight of the world is too much to bear. But what if we could learn to carry that weight with more grace? This book is a powerful guide for anyone looking to better understand themselves, manage the chaos of life, and cultivate a healthier mindset. It’s not just about surviving—it’s about thriving. With raw honesty and practical wisdom, this book reminds us that healing is a process, and each step forward counts. If you’re seeking peace, clarity, and the strength to keep going, I can’t recommend this enough.”

Michelle Williams, actress, author, and mental health advocate

“Everyone has intrusive thoughts, overthinking, and stress from being around difficult people. It’s harder now than it’s ever been. Dr. Leaf’s book masterfully shows you what’s really going on with your stress and what to do about it, based on real science and her decades of clinical experience. It’s a must-read if you want to thrive instead of just getting by every single day!”

Dave Asprey, father of biohacking and four-time *New York Times* bestselling author

“Dr. Leaf’s latest book not only provides deep understanding but also offers practical strategies for overcoming everyday challenges and building mental resilience. An essential read for anyone looking to foster inner strength and navigate the journey toward emotional well-being as they face the ups and downs of life.”

Dr. Josh Axe, DC, DNM, CNS

“Dr. Leaf gets it. Life is messy, but *Help in a Hurry* reminds us that we don’t have to figure it out alone. This book is a timely and practical gift for navigating tough moments.”

Judah Smith, pastor of Churchome and author of *Jesus Is*

“Dr. Caroline Leaf’s *Help in a Hurry* is the perfect toolkit for navigating life’s messiest moments. Packed with quick, science-backed strategies, it’s an empowering reminder that healing and growth are always within reach—even in the stormiest seasons.”

Dr. Will Cole, leading functional medicine expert, *New York Times* bestselling author, and host of *The Art of Being Well* podcast

“What if you had tools to help you get through life’s most difficult moments right at your fingertips? I’m beyond grateful that Dr. Leaf created *Help in a Hurry*. These tools are simple, practical, backed by science, and just flat-out work!”

Shawn Stevenson, bestselling author of *Eat Smarter* and *Eat Smarter Family Cookbook*

Dr. Caroline Leaf, *Help in a Hurry*,

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“In Dr. Caroline Leaf’s *Help in a Hurry*, she combines her brilliant scientific mind with her big heart, brimming with compassionate care and wisdom, to create a uniquely practical and effective guide that is very much needed in today’s hurried world.”

Kimberly Snyder, three-time *New York Times* bestselling author
of *The Hidden Power of the Five Hearts*

“Life is messy—there’s no sugarcoating it. This book is an incredible roadmap for anyone who wants to take control of their mental well-being, find balance, and feel more at peace. It’s filled with practical advice, real-life wisdom, and the kind of uplifting inspiration we all need when life feels like it’s getting the best of us. We can’t pour from an empty cup, and this book is the perfect reminder that prioritizing mental well-being isn’t a luxury; it’s essential. I can’t recommend it enough.”

Alli Webb, founder of Drybar and Messy and *New York Times*
and *USA Today* bestselling author

“A masterpiece in finding calm amid life’s chaos, scheduling specific times to worry, and reminding ourselves that sometimes it’s okay to not be okay. Dr. Leaf articulates beautifully the difference between peace and happiness, and she leaves the reader with tangible nuggets to digest and put into practice while teaching us how to reduce anxiety. A must-read.”

Craig Siegel, *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author, coach, teacher,
TEDx speaker, eight-time marathoner, and investor

“Dr. Caroline Leaf is one of the most prolific clinical and research neuroscientists in the world; she is also a phenomenal human who genuinely cares about people. This book presents the best of what she has to offer, with practical instruction to help anyone and everyone better manage anxiety and stress. Read it and experience more peace in a hurry!”

Rory Vaden, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Take the Stairs*

“In these turbulent and stressful times, *Help in a Hurry* lets us know that true, simple, and effective tools are available. Many in today’s world are struggling daily to navigate life’s messiness and chaos, too often experiencing anxiousness, overwhelm, energy drain, and stress-related physiological symptoms. This book is filled with practical tips and tools, which when applied simply and briefly—yet consistently—will result in gradual change into a life of increasing inner calm. Small, steady steps according to these practical strategies offer a way through and a way out of inner turmoil, self-hatred, and living focused on the past or future. We can learn not to regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it; we can also gradually learn to not get stuck in ‘future tripping’ that sabotages our living in the today we each have been given. Progress, not perfection, is the goal. Thank you, Dr. Leaf, for bringing us yet another actionable, evidence-based, and timely book!”

Robert P. Turner, MD, MSCR, QEEDG, BCN

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My sweet Alexy,
your candle burned out way too soon,
but the people you touched still feel its warmth
because your candle was bright
and burned hard and fast for those you loved.

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Help in a Hurry, What's That?

Are any of these phrases a part of your daily routine?

“I’ve had it up to here!”

“I can’t take it anymore.”

“My head’s about to explode.”

“Give me strength!”

“I give up!”

“Why me?”

“I am at the end of my rope.”

“I am going to tear my hair out!”

“I am at a breaking point.”

“I am sick with worry.”

“I am an anxious wreck.”

“This was the straw that broke the camel’s back.”

“I am climbing the walls!”

“It’s all downhill from here.”

We all have “off” days, where everything that can go wrong does. As the saying goes, “When it rains, it pours.” If you think about it, we have a lot of these kinds of sayings, in many different languages. My personal favorite is the Arabic phrase that translates as, “Some days honey, some days onions.” The idea of a bad day is pretty universal!

This doesn’t mean, however, that we have to stand in the rain without an umbrella or raincoat. This is why I wrote this book: While “bad days” are universal, knowing what to do when we are faced with the ups and downs of life is *not*. So many of us find ourselves at a loss when [insert your favorite bad word here] hits the fan. We know that bad things happen but not *what to do* when they happen.

This book is filled with simple, quick strategies to assist you when things are going badly and you are at a loss for what to do. It’s basically a guide to dealing with those “stormy,” “oniony” days, based on my own personal and professional experience, my work in the field of mental health for over three decades, and what the latest research is telling us about how to manage our mind and brain to build up our mental resilience.

Sure, we can go through life from crisis to crisis and sort of make up things as we go along. The problem with this approach to “bad days” is that the more we just let things happen, the more we are allowing these things to shape us rather than using the bad times as opportunities to learn, grow, and build up our strength so that we are not so easily swayed by the vicissitudes of life.

Just think of a recent time when you got irritated. If you remained in that irritated state of mind, there’s a good chance it progressed and spread like a virus into other parts of your day, blocking access to your mental resilience and making the small things seem so much worse, while handicapping your ability to deal with major life stressors. And,

if you get into a pattern of reacting this way, in 63 days it becomes a habit that can severely impact your well-being and make you feel so much worse in the short- and long-term.

Note I said **63 days**, which is roughly the time it takes to form a habit.¹ This means that we *do* have some wiggle room to prevent something we are doing from becoming a habit that drives us and influences our mental and physical health. We have time to choose how to react rather than letting what happens to us determine our resilience to life. This is what this book is all about: how to get help in a hurry, develop good habits that build up your resilience, and figure out a game plan for life, which is, inevitably, a very messy affair.

So, in this book we have rainstorms, onions, and viruses—and what to do about them. What you will not find is the promise that things will always be okay or *x* number of steps guaranteed to take away your pain, stress, and irritation and make you happy all the time. It is not a book about optimizing your life to make all your dreams come true or to help you live till you are 120.

There are a lot of books out there on these topics, and you may or may not find them helpful. I, personally, find many of them a little overwhelming, and I know I am not alone. There have been many times in life when I needed a helping hand that told me it's okay not to be okay and it's okay to take life one step at a time and just figure out how to make it through the next hour, day, or week—and this is what you will find here: a helping hand, free of judgment, because who even has time for that? In these pages, it is all about figuring out how to manage the mind and emotions amid the day-to-day chaos of life. It is simply about being *okay*, because so many of us are struggling with just that.

Of course, many of these struggles are deeply rooted in trauma and past experiences that take time and a lot of work

to learn how to manage, which I discuss in detail in my previous books, my Neurocycle app, and my research.² This book, on the other hand, focuses on strategies to help you survive those storms that just rush in—those unexpected, and sometimes expected, struggles that cut your legs out from under you and leave you dazed and not sure how to get up.

In fact, this is an important part of any healing journey: We need to learn how to *get through the next moment* before we can dive in and do all the necessary healing journey work. So, see this book as a resource, something on tap to help you when you are in a hurry and have a lot going on. It is filled with strategies to teach you how to steady your mind and focus in the midst of chaos so that you can get from A to B. It is not a comprehensive guide to the healing journey but rather will help you stay on the path so you can do the rest of the work and live your best, most fulfilled life.

It is important to note that the tips and strategies in this book are not quick fixes or final solutions. They are designed to help you get through the day without falling apart because you are stressed out or overwhelmed and to get you to the point where you are able to work on your issues and trauma in order to rewrite your story. So, if you notice that some of these scenarios *are* pretty strong patterns in your life and you are taking a little longer than anticipated to really make the changes you want, don't be disheartened. As mentioned, it does take at least 63 days to change a habit, and this is something you are more than capable of over time and with help.

And this starts with accepting that it's okay not to be okay, as mentioned above, and that it's okay for life to be chaotic and messy from time to time, as long as we don't stay stuck in the "bad day" zone.

It is about taking those onions and making something of them rather than letting them bring us to tears; it is about putting on our coat and rain boots and grabbing our umbrella so that the storm doesn't wash us away; it is about building up our immunity to that virus so that it doesn't set us down for days, weeks, or months.

The guides in this book are ways to exit that reactive mode where we make choices we end up regretting or build habits in the moment that end up hurting us. It's about preparing properly today so we don't have to do as much *repairing* tomorrow!

In the next chapter, I will start by giving you a little bit of the science behind how the mind-brain-body connection works, what happens when we struggle with the ups and downs of life, and why it's okay not to be okay and what we can do about this. Then I will go through some of the major issues many of us face as we go through life, giving you practical tips, examples, and strategies to teach you how to cope in the moment, get through the day, and move on to bigger and brighter things!



To download the Neurocycle app,
visit www.neurocycle.app



Help, What's Going On in My Head?

When everything around us feels like it is a mess, it is easy to imagine that our mind and brain are too. Think of words and phrases like “scatterbrained,” “brain fog,” “mind-boggling,” “drive you out of your mind,” “go mental,” and “brain fried.” Everything feels out of control outside of our head, so it must be the same inside it, right?

Here, it helps to understand what exactly goes on in the mind, brain, and body when we experience life and why things feel so messy inside our head when we are stressed, overwhelmed, and need “help in a hurry.”

We don't have to remember all these facts when we are struggling, but knowing what is going on and how we can change how we respond to life can be incredibly helpful. The big picture helps us step outside of ourselves so we don't get so lost in all the craziness of life that we forget there is always hope. It is never too late to change our mind and positively

impact how we think, feel, and choose—and how this plays out in our life. It is never too late to get help in a hurry!

What Is the Mind?

The mind can be a tricky concept, so it's best to start with what the mind is *not*. Your mind is not your brain, just as you are not your brain. The mind is separate, yet inseparable from, the brain. The mind uses the brain, and the brain responds to the mind. The brain doesn't produce the mind. Yes, there would be no conscious experience without the brain, but experience cannot be reduced to the brain's actions.

The mind is energy, and it generates energy through thinking, feeling, and choosing. That means we generate energy through our mind-in-action 24/7, which is part of the activity we pick up with brain technology. When we generate this mind energy through thinking, feeling, and choosing, we build *thoughts*, which are physical structures in our brain. This building of thoughts is called *neuroplasticity*, or the ability of the brain to change.

The mind is a stream of nonconscious and conscious activity when we're awake and a stream of nonconscious activity when we're asleep. It's characterized by a triad of thinking, feeling, and choosing. When we think, we will feel, and when we think and feel, we will choose. These three aspects work together.

You have a unique way you think, feel, and choose, which is your *identity*. When your thinking, feeling, and choosing are off for some reason, this will affect your identity. When you think, feel, and choose, you create, and this creation is a *thought*.

And you're always thinking, feeling, and choosing! When you're awake, you think and feel and choose to build

thoughts. When you're asleep, you sort out the thoughts you've built during the day.

What Is the Brain?

The brain is an extremely complex *neuroplastic responder*. This essentially means that each time it's stimulated by the mind, it responds in many different ways, including making neurochemical, genetic, and electromagnetic changes. These, in turn, grow and change structures in the brain, building or wiring in new physical thoughts.

So, the brain is not the producer of the mind but rather the filter of the mind.

The brain is never the same because it changes with every experience we have, every moment of every day. And we can learn how to control this with our unique thinking, feeling, and choosing. We can use our mind to change our brain, which is what you will be learning how to do using the “help in a hurry” tips in this book.

The Three Parts of the Mind

The mind is divided into the conscious mind, the nonconscious mind, and the subconscious mind. To understand these three parts, think of a tree. The top of the tree is the *conscious* mind, which is our communication and behavior, or what we say and do.

The tree trunk area and the grass around it are the *subconscious* mind, or the prompts from the nonconscious mind that are just on the edge of our conscious awareness. These are those tip-of-the-tongue, can't-quite-put-your-finger-on-it cues that evoke and trigger that feeling that something needs to be addressed—something is trying to get our attention.

The roots are the *nonconscious* mind, which is the deep, spiritual, and phenomenally fast quantum world where our truth value, intelligence, wisdom, meaning, and thoughts with their embedded memories are stored in a swirling mass of energy.

Understanding these divisions of the mind will help us better understand our mind and ourselves, which will equip us to manage what happens to us in the best way possible. When we understand the why, the how becomes so much easier!

What's in a Thought?

Thoughts are the active ingredients as well as the products of the mind. The mind converts all our experiences all day long into thoughts and builds these thoughts into the brain and body as protein tree-like structures in the brain and hedge-like structures in the body cells. Thoughts are the accumulation of all our experiences, how we view and process each moment, and are pretty much what drives us. They also become part of our entire physical being as these protein structures, which hold our memory.

Each thought also has corresponding electrochemical reactions in our brain and body. When we think, energy and chemicals course through our brain and body in magnificently complex electromagnetic waves and electrochemical feedback loops, which, if we could hear them, would sound like the most exquisite orchestral symphony if they are healthy thoughts or earsplitting cacophony if they are toxic.

What Is a Memory?

Thoughts are made of memories. In the brain, these physical thought structures grow from the tops of neurons as

clusters of branches called *dendrites*, which look like trees. A thought can have from a few hundred memories to thousands of memories. This is why some thoughts can be so overwhelming; as a thought comes into the conscious mind, it opens like a flower blooming, the memories pouring out like pollen in springtime. If this is a good memory, you may find yourself flooded with happy feelings. If this is a toxic memory or trauma, well, it is kind of like having really bad allergies from all that pollen flying about that you just can't get rid of. You can find yourself replaying past scenarios, creating endless "if only, would have, should have, could have" scenarios and getting stuck in the pain and discomfort of what happened to you—hence you may need help in a hurry!

Thoughts Grow from "Seeds" Like Trees and Hedges

Just like trees and hedges start growing from seeds and then develop roots, trunks, branches, and leaves, so our thoughts originate from "seeds of experiences"—our stories—and expand into numerous roots, trunks, branches, and leaves in the mind, brain, and body.

The roots are the various memories or the details of the experience. For example, the thought may be of a traumatic relationship with a family member, and all the details of the experience are the memories of the thought. Or the thought could be a really happy one of a family member, and the details of this happy thought are the memories.

The trunk symbolizes the unique way you think about and process the "root" memories of the experience. You also process each new experience through the eyes of existing thoughts with their embedded memories, which are your past experiences, to understand it better. This is your past influencing your present.

The branches reflect how this is playing out and showing up within the current context of your life and how it affects how you feel and see life, what you say and do, and how this all feels in your body. For example, as you recall the toxic thought about a problematic family member, you may feel anxious, get a stomachache, withdraw a little, and see the relationship as hopeless.

Thoughts Are Stored in Three Places

Thoughts are stored in three places: the mind, the brain, and every cell of the body. They form a connected network across your mind, brain, and body. A useful analogy to try to understand this network is to visualize your mind as the sky and thoughts as clouds in the sky, kind of like your own personal “iCloud” hovering over the thought trees in your brain and body. The mind “sky” essentially builds your experience into your personalized iCloud and then plants this experience into the brain as “thought trees” and in the body as “hedges.”

The sky is all your energy combined into a single, unified living “thing” that never dies. And, just like the sky is all around you, your mind is all around you. The clouds, as your thoughts, are specific patterns made from memory particles that come from all the experiences you have had, are having, or will have. Just as you have different thoughts, so you have different cloud types and formations, and they keep changing as the weather of the mind shifts based on your experiences of life. You are constantly updating and backing up your personal iCloud sky with each new experience you have every moment of every day, just like the sky and weather always change, affecting the plants below them.

The Mind-Brain-Body Connection

Thoughts with their complex root and branch memories are not just stored in the brain; they are stored throughout the 50–100 trillion cells in the brain and body *and* in the clouds of your mind, which is why, when you are under toxic stress, for example, your heart gets “sore” or your gut gurgles and swells up—or why, when someone says something to you that triggers you, you get overwhelmed with nausea or feelings of being “sick to your stomach.”

As mentioned above, the mind is how we uniquely think, feel, and choose as we go through life. The brain and body are the filter through which the mind works and, while it works, it changes our brain and body structurally as well as how they function. This mind-brain-body relationship is called *psychoneurobiology*.

One of the ways we can “see” mind energy showing up in the brain is as brain waves. Our brain waves are active all the time because the mind is always active and pushing life through our brain and body. Our brain waves change in terms of how they move through the brain, which is based on what we are thinking, doing, and feeling. When we feel tired, slow, sluggish, or dreamy and are not able to process information or emotions very well, slower brain waves are dominant. When we feel wired or hyperalert, like there is just too much going on in our brain, the higher brain wave frequencies are dominant. When we manage our mind, we are balancing these extremes, and this is different for each of us.

How our brain waves function and our daily experience of the world are inseparable because the mind *moves through the brain*, and the brain *responds to the mind*. When our emotions are out of balance or very negative (like when we aren't rising to the challenge and building new knowledge

into our brain daily, or when we are responding in chaotic and reactive ways to the chronic and acute stressors of life), this will be reflected in our physiology (blood, hormones, and so on) and in our brain waves, which will be out of balance. There is a corresponding relationship between the mind and brain that plays out in our mental, emotional, neurological, and physical health.

Managing Our Mind

The connectivity and balance that the mind, brain, and body crave can be disrupted when we don't manage our mind properly. Because of the neuroplasticity of the brain, if we aren't changing our reactions to the stress, then we are reinforcing them—they don't just go away. Whatever we think about the most will grow.

If we choose to stay in a negative state of mind, this can create a toxic response in the brain that can impact every system in the brain and body. The converse also applies; if we choose to start seeing every opportunity as a chance to learn, grow, and overcome, and we find the positive in the negative, our hope starts coming back and we can positively affect our brain waves and body—down to the cellular level!¹

Why Do We Need Help in a Hurry?

This is why learning to manage our mind in the moment is so important. It teaches us how *not* to reinforce negative patterns that can hurt our mental well-being, health, and longevity.

Indeed, we all have to learn how to catch and edit our thoughts and reactions before they trigger toxic chain reactions and become ingrained neural networks, a.k.a. bad

habits. In essence, you are your mind, and your mind runs your brain and body, so a messy, unmanaged mind means a messy, unmanaged brain and body, and when these three are a mess, our life can feel like a mess!

This managing, however, is easier said than done, especially when it feels like your life is falling apart around you. Hence the need for a quick helping hand in the moment, which this book aims to be, to get you through those times when everything is going wrong and your brain is about to explode.

As you practice these tips, you will quite literally be building an insurance policy into your mind-brain-body network that will open the door to your unlimited resilience, changing your mind, brain, and body for the better!