

DEEPAK CHOPRA

Acknowledged as one of the world's greatest leaders in the field of mind body medicine, Deepak Chopra, M.D. continues to transform people's understanding of the meaning of health. Time magazine heralds him as one of the top 100 heroes and icons of the century. Chopra is known as the author of over 42 book and more than 100 audio, video and CD-ROM titles which have been translated into 35 languages and sold more than 20 million copies worldwide.



Interview with Deepak Chopra Excerpted from the book **Against All Odds**

Written by Kuwana Haulsey

It was the 70's and about to get the Nobel Prize researcher. I had an I'd just finished medical in medicine and physiology incredible regard, almost a school. because of his absolutely reverential attitude, toward

My dream was to go amazing research. This these people who I thought into endocrinology, which is doctor only took six fellows, were exploring the frontiers the study of hormones. So I which he weeded out of of consciousness through applied for a very more than 7,000 applicants. the study of brain prestigious fellowship at a I was one of them. chemicals. And yet when I major hospital in Boston However, after I started my was in the lab with them, it connected with Harvard fellowship I had my first was all about who had Medical School. The head experience of published what and how are of the program was a very disillusionment. I came into we going to beat the heck well known academic the program with a very out of them? Contrary to endocrinologist who, idealistic vision of what it what I'd believed, the according to everyone, was meant to be a great setting that I found myself

in was one of competition, ego building, one-upmanship and, in fact, even a little bit of cheating. I was totally dismayed and destroyed.

A few months into my fellowship, we were sitting around a table with our esteemed professor, who was held in awe by everybody in the world who knew anything about our subject. He asked me a question about some experiment that had been done in 1969 in some obscure journal. Rats had been given some iodine and the effects of that iodine had been measured on the pituitary etc, etc. So he turned to me and said, "How many milligrams of iodine did they get in that '69 paper?"

"I think it was 2.3 milligrams but it could be 2.4 or something like that," I said, reaching into my briefcase to pull out the paper. "I have it in my bag."

He looked at me very disdainfully and in condescending tone said, "Oh my gosh, Deepak. You should have that information in your head by now!" Then he went on to insult me as to how incompetent and inept I was and that I didn't belong in such a prestigious group as the elite people he'd picked to be his team.

For a moment, I lost it. I picked up the briefcase and emptied its contents on his head and I said, "It's in your head by now!"

Then I got up and told him, "I quit. I'm leaving."

The professor was totally shocked.

He said, "How could you quit the most prestigious company in the world?"

"Because I don't want to be with egomaniacs," I replied. And he couldn't believe that either.

I walked out of his lab. But he ran behind me, pointing his finger at me and yelling, "You're finished! You just finished your career. After all this training in medicine and landing this fellowship, you're done. You're never going to have a future!"

I just kept walking. I had little old Volkswagon Beetle. I went to the parking lot,

got in and started the car. The professor actually ran up and held onto the car.

"Don't you realize what you're doing?" he said.

I didn't answer. I just drove away.

This was a long time ago, so the first thing I did was go to a bar and get drunk.

My wife was pregnant at the time and we didn't have much money. I got something like \$450 a month to have the prestige of being in this fellowship. It was just about enough to buy food and pay the rent on the apartment. And now I didn't even have that anymore.

When I finally told my wife, the first thing she was, "How are we going to pay the rent? Where are we going to find the food to eat?"

I said, "You know, we'll do what needs to be done and leave the results to the unknown. Let's just be authentic."

The next day I started looking at newspapers to see if anybody would give me a job with my half-baked training in medicine. I knew because of the name that he had, I would never be able to go back to endocrinology.

After a few days, I found a little ad in the Boston Globe for an emergency room physician and went to meet the emergency room director. He asked me if I had a license in medicine and I said, "Yeah, I have my license. I just finished my exams."

"Have you ever practiced in an emergency room before or seen any trauma patients?" he asked.

I said, "No."

"What's your interest?"

"Consciousness and brain chemistry," I said.

"Well," he replied, "that's not going to help you in an emergency room."

But there was a shortage of physicians and they needed someone with a license so I came on that morning.

The first patient we had was a woman who'd been shot in the head in a gutter. She was pregnant. And this Spanish doctor, who became my mentor,

actually made me open her on the floor of the fulfillment. So when somebody said, “Why don’t emergency room and deliver a live baby. It was my you come and join the meditation center here in first experience with a living patient and she wasn’t Cambridge?” I did. It was another turning point in really even alive. She was already dead. But we my life. I’d been very intrigued by consciousness delivered a baby and my picture was on the front from a scientific perspective. But now I was having page of the Boston Globe the next day. the experience of pure consciousness in meditation. I

All of a sudden, I was an emergency room started talking to other people, even teaching physician, treating live people and getting trained by meditation to my patients. I became a voracious this very compassionate, loving human being. I reader. I started going to India and looking for forgot about what I’d left behind. That year I worked teachers. I became totally obsessed with wanting to very hard and made much more money than I would understand consciousness. have made as an endocrine fellow. But part of me However, my wife was still very concerned still wanted to go back to finish my training.that we wouldn’t be able to make a living. We Well, about a year later, I got a call from actually went to an Indian guru because the two of another professor at Harvard and he said, “Are you us were arguing about whether I should just go back looking for a fellowship? Well, I’m going to offer and work instead of hanging out with gurus and you one. I know what happened a year ago and I just teachers. She asked the guru, “Where’s the money feel that you deserve to finish your training.” going to come from?” And he said something very That was a wonderful validation. I’d chosen funny. He said, “From wherever it is at the to follow my bliss and walked out into the unknown, moment.” Even she liked that. only to have them call me back a year later. I felt I’d So kept doing what I was doing. My belief been true to myself, correcting the mistake I’d made was that I’d discovered something that was true and in thinking that just by being with prestigious it needed to be said and it didn’t matter if people people, I’d find authenticity. It was a turning point refused it or didn’t believe it. Actually, after I first for me.started writing and started speaking about the mind- I went back and finished three years of body connection, my colleagues began looking at training in endocrinology, learning all about the me in a strange way. They seemed almost molecules of emotion and correlating that with what embarrassed that I was their associate. I was an I learned in real life with patients—not with rats. assistant professor of medicine at Boston University I’d always been intrigued by the fact that two School of Medicine. I had teaching appointments at people could get the same treatment, see the same Harvard. I wasn’t supposed to be talking about this physician, have the same disease and have kind of thing. completely different outcomes. I kept saying to After this went on for a while, I finally went myself, “Why aren’t people talking about the fact to them and said, “Listen, you guys don’t have to that some people with a disease die and some people fire me. I’m leaving anyway.” And I could see the with the same disease recover even though they’re look of relief on their faces. At that time, I was also all getting the same treatment? These patients can’t being attacked by the medical establishment as a be wrong in what they’re telling me. There’s quack and as a fraud. There were derogatory articles something going on.”being published about me in the Journal of the My patients would tell me their stories and American Medical Association. So I was basically I’d correlate them with what I learned about the being treated with great disdain and ridicule. chemistry of emotions, trying to put it all together. But beyond all that was the knowledge that I Even when people rejected it, I’d say to myself, needed to be true to myself. That was most “This is got to be true. This is my observation.” important. So in spite of what everyone was saying It was during this time that I began to about me, I began submitting papers to medical meditate. All of the upheaval and rejection I faced journals on the subject. Unfortunately, they all that year had me searching for some sense of turned me down. So I started to write about my

patient's experiences and submit those papers. Again, they all turned me down. Finally, I submitted to publishers. They turned me down too.

When everybody turned me down, I went to some printing press, printed the whole thing myself and had it bound. It had a crappy presentation but it was my first book: *Creating Health: The Mind-Body Connection*.

A friend of mine at the meditation center in Cambridge had helped me self-publish about forty copies. She was kind of an adventurous girl and she took all forty copies on her bicycle to the Harvard Coop, which used to be the Harvard bookstore. She made friends with the manager and convinced him to put ten books face out in the window. As it so happened, an agent picked one of those copies, read the book and, after she tracked me down, sold it to a Boston publisher.

Shortly after that, the book took on a life of its own, selling out in bookstores all across the country.

Now it's twenty years later. The east coast medical schools that I left because I didn't want to embarrass anyone now invite me to give lectures. So it's come full circle. And I know it's because I told what I believed was the truth, whether people agreed or disagreed. I stayed true to myself. Two things that I often tell young people are to remain independent of criticism, but also of flattery, because they both get you into trouble and to always, always stay true to yourself. If you follow your bliss, no matter what it is, you can never go wrong.

My favorite inspirational quote comes from a great Indian teacher called Nisarga Datta Maharaj: "Do what needs to be done with impeccability, leaving the results to the unknown. Refrain from moral judgments. Leave them to the hypocrites."