

Forgot Your Brilliance?

A Companion Booklet
to Episode 1
of
THE KAREN SCHAAL
PODCAST

Created by Karen Schaal
A Science and Gratitude Approach
Powered by People Owned Psychology™



Welcome!

This booklet is part of the Brilliance Series, a five-part collection accompanying Episodes 1–5 of The Karen Schaal Podcast.

Each booklet is designed to help you reconnect with your innate brilliance, not through inspiration alone, but through tools rooted in biology, psychology, and gratitude-based science.

Inside, you'll discover simple, science backed exercises crafted to help you reclaim focus and shift your attention inward toward the systems that support you every day.

In a world that constantly pulls at your attention, these intentional moments are designed to offer clarity, and begin to restore the mental space your brilliance deserves.

Let it sink in.
This is the system you live in.



Your Body's Brilliance

Your body is made of trillions of cells, tissues, and organs, all working together in a symphony of precision, intelligence, and care.

Every second, systems you never have to think about are protecting you, repairing you, and helping you thrive. From your heartbeat to your breath, your body is always working on your behalf, even when you are not aware.

Science continues to uncover just how extraordinary this design truly is. When we become aware, we begin to collaborate with our biology instead of resisting it.

The infographic below highlights just a few ways your body and brain support you, automatically and in service of your well-being.

Did you know?

Your body builds 120,000 protein molecules every minute to repair, grow, and fuel your cells.



Your nose has around 10 million receptors that analyze and send data to your brain.



Electrical pulses from your heart communicate pressure, volume, and oxygen levels across your body.



Your gut contains 100 million neurons, helping regulate mood, immunity, and balance.



Your brain generates about 70,000 thoughts each day, many below conscious awareness.



100 billion neurons in your brain communicate through trillions of synapses every second.



This is your brilliance.

Reconnecting with Your Brilliance

These practices are designed to help you reconnect with yourself. You'll find them throughout the Brilliance Series, and you can incorporate them into your routine in ways that feel natural.

Use them one at a time, or combine them as they resonate with you. Let them evolve with you. Let them remind you of your brilliance.

1

Breathe

A Moment
of Noticing



2

Move

Awareness
in Action



3

Reflect

A Quiet
Discovery



4

Observe

Intelligence
in the Environment



5

Appreciate

Gratitude
as Connection



Breathe



Pause today and ask
"What is my body doing for me
that I haven't acknowledged"?

Then try this:

Breathe in slowly through
your nose for a count of four.
Hold gently at the top for two.
Exhale through your mouth
for a count of six.
Repeat this cycle three times.

Feel what changes.

Not in a dramatic way, just in
the quiet space that follows.

Your body is working with you.
It is waiting for you to join in
it's brilliance.

You don't need to earn
today's stillness.
You don't have to push.
You're already worthy
of this moment's silence.

Expanding the Mind and Growing the Heart

Move



Pick one everyday action.
Walking across the room.
Reaching for a glass.
Opening a door.

Now slow it down just slightly.
Feel how your muscles engage,
how your body shifts
to support you.

Notice the coordination,
the balance,
the quiet strength
behind the movement.

You don't have to
change anything.
Just pay attention

This is awareness in motion.

Let this small act of
noticing remind you . . .
Your body is brilliant,
even in the simple things.

Reflect



Set a timer for five minutes.
Grab a notebook
or a blank page.
Then ask yourself:

What is something brilliant,
steady, or strong
my body has done lately?

Maybe it healed a paper cut.
Maybe it steadied you
through a stressful moment.

Maybe it carried you
through the day
with quiet endurance.

Write whatever comes.
No censoring.
No pressure to be profound.

Let your pen move,
even if your mind resists.

You might be surprised
by what's already
waiting to be seen.

Observe



Step outside
or look through a window.

Find something
that reflects design,
rhythm, or life.

A tree swaying in the wind.
The spiral of a leaf.
A bird landing with precision.

Now pause.
Notice how your body
responds to that image.

Does your breath slow?
Do your shoulders soften?
Do you feel a little
more at ease?

Your nervous system
recognizes harmony.
It responds to beauty.
This is your intelligence.
This is your brilliance.

Appreciate



Tonight, before bed, place your hand gently on your chest or your abdomen. Take a quiet moment and say in your mind or out loud . . .

“Thank you.”

Thank you for carrying me.
Thank you for staying with me.
Thank you for doing what you do.

There’s no need to force emotion or look for a feeling. Just let the words land.

Let this be a moment of recognition, for the partnership that’s already in place.

Your body isn’t the enemy. It’s been with you through it all. Supporting you every moment along the way.

Why These Practices Work

The practices in this booklet are rooted in evidence-based research.

Science continues to confirm that the five areas of focus in this booklet:

- intentional breath
- movement
- reflection
- observation
- appreciation

can support emotional regulation, cognitive clarity, physical healing, and deeper connection.

The following pages offer a deeper look at what is occurring in your body and mind during each of the recommended practices.

Each practice is paired with a relevant research study, offering deeper insight into how and why these simple exercises can create meaningful shifts in your self-awareness, enhance your well-being, and influence how you see and relate to the world around you.

Why These Practices Work

1. Breathe - Regulation Through Awareness

In a noisy world, conscious breathing acts like a biological reset button. Even one intentional breath activates your parasympathetic nervous system, the part of your body responsible for calming and recovery.

This shift slows your heart rate, reduces stress signals, and creates a pause between reaction and response.

By stimulating the vagus nerve and restoring balance, conscious breath brings the nervous system back into focus, helping you feel safe, steady, and in control.

Research

Zaccaro, A., Piarulli, A., Piarulli, A., Laurino, M., Garbella, E., Menicucci, D., Neri, B., Gemignani, A., & Gemignani, A. (2018). How Breath-Control Can Change Your Life: A Systematic Review on Psycho-Physiological Correlates of Slow Breathing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12, 353. <https://doi.org/10.3389/FNHUM.2018.00353>

Why These Practices Work

2. Move - Awareness in Action

When you engage in intentional movement, whether stretching, walking, or simply shifting posture, you're not just moving your body, you're activating your brain.

Physical movement increases interoception, your ability to notice internal signals, like breath, balance, and tension. This helps you develop a sense of grounding, coordination, and presence.

Moving with awareness builds nervous system resilience and gently pulls your attention back from the noise of distraction, into your own lived experience.

Research

Craig, A. D. (Bud). (2002). How do you feel? Interoception: the sense of the physiological condition of the body. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 3(8), 655–666.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/NRN894>

Why These Practices Work

3. Reflect - Emotional integration

Taking time to reflect through journaling or quiet thought, clears out mental noise and helps organize your inner world.

This kind of pause activates your brain's default mode network; a system that helps you understand your past, imagine your future, and make sense of your experiences.

Reflection doesn't just improve clarity and emotional regulation, it's a way to come home to yourself. It allows you to reconnect with your values, notice what's true for you, and recenter your identity in the midst of a busy world.

Research

Baikie, K. A., & Wilhelm, K. (2005). Emotional and physical and health benefits of expressive writing. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 11(5), 338–346.

Why These Practices Work

4. Observe - Restoration Through Perception

In the over stimulation of modern life, simply observing nature invites the brain and body to slow down.

Just a few minutes of natural scenery . . . trees, sky, water, light can regulate heart rate, lower blood pressure, and ease anxiety.

Nature doesn't demand attention, it gently receives it, which gives your cognitive system a chance to rest and restore.

This kind of effortless attention replenishes focus, supports emotional clarity, and reconnects you to something larger than yourself, making space for calm, insight, and resilience to grow.

Research

White, M. P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J., Wheeler, B. W., Hartig, T., Warber, S. L., Warber, S. L., Bone, A., Depledge, M. H., & Fleming, L. E. (2019). Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. *Scientific Reports*, 9(1), 7730. <https://doi.org/10.1038/S41598-019-44097-3>

Why These Practices Work

5. Appreciate - Growth Through Gratitude

When you pause to appreciate something, a gesture, a detail, a person, a moment, you shift your brain's focus from what's missing to what's meaningful.

Gratitude increases activity in brain areas linked to connection and well-being, reinforcing emotional bonds and strengthening your sense of inner stability.

Over time, these small acts of noticing build a mindset wired for joy and purpose. This is where making choices toward goodness, comes into play.

Choosing to see, name, and honor what's already working, even in the smallest ways.

Research

Kini, P., Wong, J., McInnis, S., Gabana, N. T., & Brown, J. W. (2016). The effects of gratitude expression on neural activity. *NeuroImage* 128, 1–10.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.NEUROIMAGE.2015.12.00>

Congratulations!

If you've made it this far,
you've already done something powerful.

You paused.
You paid attention.
You reconnected with yourself.
And that matters.

Whether this is
the beginning of your journey
or a return to it,
thank you for choosing to walk this path.

These practices aren't just exercises -
they're invitations.
To come home to yourself.
To see clearly.
To begin again, gently.
Keep coming back.

Keep noticing what's already within you.
You are more brilliant than you've ever been told.

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About the Author

Karen Schaal is the founder of People Owned Psychology™, a science- and gratitude-based platform devoted to expanding the mind and growing the heart. Her approach helps people embrace their personal brilliance by developing awareness - of themselves and the psychological processes that shape our experience. Karen believes that when we make intentional choices toward goodness, by seeking out the good in ourselves, in others, and in the world, we grow into the fullness of who we were meant to be.