



# WHISTLER INDEPENDENT BOOK AWARDS

## Book Evaluation



Title: Calm Brain Powerful Mind  
 Author: Aziz Velji

Rating scale: Excellent, Good, Adequate, Weak, Poor

Criterion	Description	Rating
Plot	<p>A coherent, well developed narrative arc; appropriate and satisfying ending</p> <p>Comments: Aziz Velji’s book comes at a critical time. Stress is pervasive as never before. Life moves faster and is more complicated. Men, women and children are glued to their cell phones, and as a result, greatly suffer from a chronic case of distracted living. Velji went on a personal quest to find ways to eliminate stress from his own life, and he shares his wealth of research with the perceptive reader. His fascinating book provides a holistic way to rewire the brain into a completely new way of thinking, one that is calm, powerful, permanent and transformative. This is an exhaustively researched and compelling book that alternates between science and spirituality, psychology and quantum physics. Age old wisdom is filtered and collated through his trained science and business mind. He does a good job of describing his experiences. Velji’s big promise is that with the right tools and confidence you can achieve the transition to a sustainable stress-free life. The voluminous research is apparent from the endnotes that provide the discerning and curious reader with additional information on this topic. I read the book once as a book reviewer, and then I started to read it again (as someone who has been affected by the pandemic) to anchor the excellent information and do the exercises listed at the end of the chapters.</p>	Excellent
Pace	<p>The plot unfolds effectively to keep the reader’s attention</p> <p>Comments: Using the metaphor of mountain climbing, the author slowly and carefully builds the story. The book has a strong opening and keeps the momentum throughout. The reader is asked to pay attention. Although there is much information here, it is: The author firmly believes no journey is impossible if we practice mindfulness, but we need the right tools for this journey. Fear, uncertainty and doubt are constant companions on the journey. The author has generally done an excellent job including the appropriate amount of detail. This is not a fast read as the reader must slow down to absorb the learning.</p>	Good
Characters	Characters are fully realized and believable	Good

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 Author: Aziz Velji

Rating scale: Excellent, Good, Adequate, Weak, Poor

	<p>Comments: As the song says, “Every picture tells a story, don’t it!” The photo of the author on the back cover shows a handsome, smiling, bald man who looks intelligent and approachable and appears to be comfortable in his own skin. Velji bears a resemblance to author and retired pediatric surgeon, Dr. Bernie Siegel who writes and teaches about mind-body medicine and the relationship between the patient and the healing process. Siegel says he shaved his head to be more approachable to his patients! The author’s personality comes across clearly and the assessment of his strengths and weaknesses makes him very engaging. The reader will want to join Mr. Velji on his journey to being fully realized and creative human beings. Existing is not enough. There are ways to awaken the force within us. I am inspired to meditate daily to experience a higher state of consciousness.</p>	
Dialogue	<p>Dialogue reveals, reflects and reinforces the character of the speaker</p> <p>Comments: Although this book does not rely on dialogue to support the narrative, in this section I will discuss the use of quotations at the beginning of each chapter. I enjoy a well- chosen quotation to set the tone for the chapter. I liken it to a dialogue between the author of the book and the author of the quote. My personal favourites:</p> <p>Page 33 “The mind is like a monkey, inebriated, stung by a scorpion and seized by the demon, all at the same time.” Sanskrit shloka (Brilliant and funny!)</p> <p>Page 63 “What can we gain by sailing to the moon if we are not able to cross the abyss that separates us from ourselves.” – Thomas Merton</p> <p>Page 205 “Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.” – Rumi</p> <p>Quotes from one of my favourite Globe and Mail columnists, Elizabeth Renzetti; I am sure she enjoyed reading your book! Also, I am a big fan of the work of Bruce Lipton, Byron Katie and Bruce Lipton (“You are personally responsible for everything in your life once you become aware that you are personally responsible for everything in your life.”). I appreciated the author sourced examples of the influence and inspiration from different faiths and religious traditions. All of them have much to teach us. Thank you! There are 13 strong individual endorsements to this 2018 edition. I always read commendations after I read a book so as not to be influenced. These proved to be true and accurate commendations. The foreword by Jim Pappas is honest and compassionate. By following the advice in this book his life was changed forever.</p>	Good
Setting	<p>Time and place are well presented, authentic and contribute to the narrative</p> <p>Comments: N/A</p>	Adequate
Writing	Sentence structure is varied; writing is imaginative, effective and clear	Adequate

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**Book Evaluation**



Title: *Calm Brain Powerful Mind*  
 Author: Aziz Velji

Rating scale: Excellent, Good, Adequate, Weak, Poor

	<p>Comments: Lively writing style with excellent observations and nicely varied sentence structure. However some overly long sentences and dense paragraphs made digesting important information a task. Yet as the writer says, the modern attention span is 8 seconds less than a goldfish at 9 seconds. It is captivating descriptions and writing that keeps the reader engaged. "Stress is an argument with reality." Our conditioned mind is an absentee landlord unaware of what is going on. Brilliant description!</p>	
<p>Language</p>	<p>Original and free of clichés; varied vocabulary; correct spelling, punctuation</p> <p>Comments: The book is written in the clear language one would expect from an author with post graduate degrees in engineering and business, yet it is written with the enthusiasm of an acolyte who wants to share his knowledge to increase human potential. Describing quantum physics for the lay person: "If a baseball were the size of the earth, its atoms would be about the size of grapes." Chapter 19 Requires concentration to absorb but worth the effort. Chapter 20 contains useful info. Shorter paragraphs would make the concepts easier to digest. I think this book is not for the professional or expert in the field but for the regular guy or gal trying to cope with stress. I appreciated the comprehensive glossary of terms. These definitions deepened the reading experience. 'Loneliness', a plague in Vancouver. (Side note: The best description of Vancouver. A beautiful woman who keeps dating the wrong men!) Small typo: Anxiety gap page 17 who we think we are</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Themes</p>	<p>Themes are well developed and use vivid imagery to add depth to the narrative</p>	<p>Excellent</p>



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	<p>Comments: If the author wanted an additional tag line for this book, may I suggest “Transcendental meditation for engineers, business managers and other skeptics.”</p> <p>The author wants the reader the value of giving the rational mind a rest because it is a hindrance to knowing ourselves and ties us in knots with doubts and arguments. As you so wisely write, intellect on its own cannot keep us calm our fears and anxieties which create stress. The author does a masterful job describing how the brain works, the difference between the mind and the brain. The physical structure through which consciousness manifests. Using examples from quantum physics to show similarities between science and mysticism. There is energy rather than solid state at the subatomic level. The author explains that in the process of watching the world we are actually affecting it. Our every thought, word, action has an impact on everything else. Thought is an energy that can be focused like a laser to change physical matter. (My personal favourite physicist is Dr David Bohm who shook up the world of physics as this book may shake up the world of psychiatry and behavioral science.) As the author states on page XI111 “It’s easier to change and transcend from a baseline of happiness than one from misery. When we are filled with love, fun, laughter and enjoyment we are open and receptive to new things and new ways of doing things.” The Dalai Lama has experienced great stress in his life yet he is a wonderful role model for approaching life with joy. Stress and spirituality are actually two sides to the same coin. All suffering stems from ignorance, hatred and craving. Our normal natural state of mind is one of peace, free from conditioning. It’s a silent and creative mind.</p> <p>Page 26 A neat explanation of why so many people like to travel.</p> <p>Page 46 Why prolonged stress causes degeneration in the area of the brain responsible for self- control Living in stress is a primitive state of survival. Stress attracts more stress. Sleepwalking through life.</p> <p>Page 64 Anxiety gap</p> <p>Why people overeat. How increased activity in the brain’s left prefrontal cortex indicates a large capacity for happiness. Why some older people are more socially insensitive across a variety of domains (degenerating frontal lobes) Why some just can’t help being jerks! “There are two ways to live in this world – either in moments of misery and suffering created by the voice in the head, or in moments of lucidity, clarity and contentment when the mind is quiet” This book outlines the ways and gives the reader the tools to accomplish. Although there is mention of dream yoga and lucid dreaming I did not find it listed in your Index. This is a topic that fascinates me.</p>	
Production	Cover is well designed and appealing; interiors are professional	Good



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	<p>Comments: The cover graphic design is evocative. The size of the font against the strong white is good for the reader. The back cover font is good and easy to read. Excellent use of italics for emphasis. Judicious use of white space gives the reader a respite as they digest this important information. The hand drawn sketch of the mountain at the beginning of each chapter suggests that you will be on a personal journey, this journey a DIY venture. The interior graphics and illustrations are well chosen and support the teaching.</p> <p>Page 21 Brain development and relaxation</p> <p>Page 41 screens of distortion</p>	
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Summary	<p>With the enthusiasm of an autodidact* and the clear writing skills of an engineer and business manager, Velji has produced a very useful and user-friendly book. He does a masterful job describing stress and its causes and how it manifests in the brain. We can't do away with cell phone use, but we can be aware of our lost attention and our capacity to focus. We can't think our way through our fears and anxieties. But with the information and exercises provided in this excellent and timely book, we can make a transition to a permanent mind shift where we will find peace, happiness and prosperity. Thank you for digesting so much collected wisdom and transmitting it for your reader with an engineer's precision and the enthusiasm of a questor who found the peace he was seeking. In the wake of the Covid 19 pandemic, there will be greater need for skills to deal with any lingering psychological distress. With its concrete tools and explanations, this book is an excellent addition to that mental first aid kit. I will recommend it with enthusiasm and great pleasure. Also, I like your website. There is so much chatter online, it's very good to find a site that is simple and easy to navigate. Well done!</p> <p>N.B. (Article by Wendy Leung in Globe and Mail Monday July 26) "An unexpected wrinkle: The stress of the pandemic can age people prematurely, but the effects can be slowed"</p> <p>*An autodidact is smarter than regular people in certain topics that interest them the most. Most autodidacts choose to self-teach themselves different topics, diving in deep to learn as much as possible. They will research, read, listen, take notes, and do hands-on work to learn their topic.</p> <p>***</p> <p>(Reviewer's note: Aziz Velji, you write about the danger of that irritating little voice in our heads, the voice of the ego, that makes us anxious, produces stress and its resultant suffering. Yet there are occasions when a miraculous little voice in our heads can save us. Intuition? Or can it be something more. I would love to know your thoughts. Perhaps you can blog about it.</p> <p>On Saturday March 27 at 2 o'clock I was walking to the local library in Lynn Valley, North Vancouver to peruse their annual book sale. As I waited to cross the street, a voice somewhere inside my head insisted quite loudly, 'You have enough books.' I had to agree. I went shopping to the nearby mall. If I had not heeded that voice, I would have been in the library exactly the time a mad man went on a stabbing spree, killing one innocent woman and hurting five others. He left our beautiful community devastated by this senseless crime.</p> <p>***</p> <p>My favourite author Anton Chekov wrote, "Any idiot can face a crisis, it's day-to-day living that wears you out." When fueled with Adrenaline, humans are capable of amazing and heroic feats, yet it's the drip drip drip of Cortisol, the primary stress hormone, which is deadly and curbs important functions that would be nonessential or harmful in a fight-or-flight situation.</p> <p>A Silicon Valley researcher studied people who are on their computers answering emails. She noticed that many of them would hold their breath or breathe erratically. For most people, it's safe to hold your breath for a minute or two. Doing so for too much longer can decrease oxygen flow to the brain, causing fainting, seizures and brain damage. In the heart, a lack of oxygen can cause abnormalities of rhythm and affect the pumping action of the heart. What on earth have computers done to our brains and what are they doing to the developing brains of our children?</p>
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