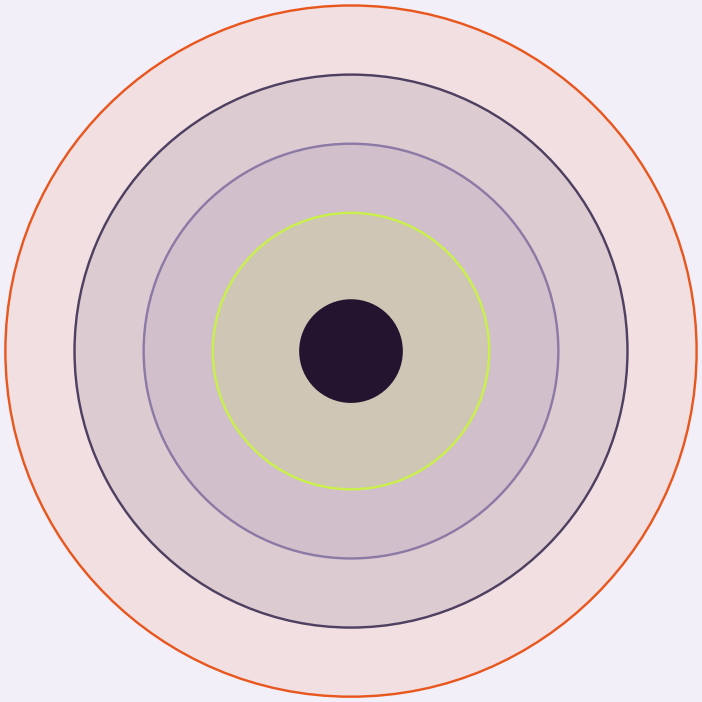


Unlearn Your Pain: A 28-Day Process to Repro-gram Your Brain

A reading of the book by Howard Schubiner and Michael Betzold (2010)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Unlearn Your Pain: A 28-Day Process to Reprogram Your Brain, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Howard Schubiner is a Michigan internist who founded the Mind Body Medicine Program at Providence Hospital in Southfield, and he wrote this book with the writer Michael Betzold. He argues that much chronic pain, from back and neck pain to headaches, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel, comes from what he calls mind body syndrome (MBS): real symptoms produced by learned nerve pathways in the brain rather than by damage in the tissues. Because those pathways were learned, he says, they can be unlearned. The book lays out a 28-day program of reading, daily writing exercises and guided meditations that help readers connect their symptoms to stress and emotion and change how the brain responds. It builds on the work of John Sarno, uses stories from Schubiner's own patients, and asks readers to have a medical evaluation first so that structural and other causes are ruled out.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The pain is real, but its source may be a learned pathway in the brain rather than damaged tissue.

This is the book's central claim and the one people most often misread. Schubiner never says the pain is imagined. He says the brain can produce real pain, and keep producing it, after the body has healed or when it was never injured at all.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

What the brain has learned, it can unlearn.

The title is the argument. If a pain pattern was learned like a habit, the same plasticity that wired it in can wire it out. The 28 days are a structured way to give the brain new lessons.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your danger alarm can stay switched on long after the danger has gone.

The brain's job is to protect you, and pain is one of its loudest warnings. In MBS, Schubiner argues, the warning system has become oversensitive and fires in response to stress, emotion or expectation, not only to harm.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When the symptoms started is a clue, so look at what else was happening in your life.

The book has readers look back over their lives and their medical history for links between stress and symptoms. A pain that arrived during a divorce, a move or a hard year deserves a second look.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Writing about feelings you have held back is part of the treatment, not a side exercise.

Daily writing is the backbone of the program. Free writing and unsent letters give anger, grief and guilt somewhere to go other than the body. Readers are told they do not have to do every exercise, but the writing is where most of the work happens.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Fear of the pain is one of the things that keeps it going.

Worry, constant checking and avoiding movement can all tell the brain the threat is real, which keeps the alarm loud. In HourLife's reading, lowering the fear matters as much as anything else in the program.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Answer a flare with calm confidence, not alarm.

Schubiner encourages readers to respond to symptoms the way you would answer a false alarm: firmly, without panic, reminding yourself that you are safe. The tone matters as much as the words.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Getting checked by a doctor first is part of the method, not a detour from it.

MBS is not something to assume. Some pain has a structural or other medical cause that needs treatment, and the book's approach only makes sense once a clinician has looked for one.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A setback is the old pathway testing you, not proof that nothing changed.

Symptoms can come back in stressful weeks, sometimes in a new place. HourLife's advice is to treat that as a cue to return to the practices rather than as a reason to give up on them.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Book a medical check first
- [ ] Draw your symptom timeline
- [ ] List what is pressing on you now
- [ ] Pick a writing time and a private place
- [ ] Collect your own evidence

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Write for fifteen minutes a day
- ◯ Sit with a short meditation
- ◯ Meet a flare with one calm sentence

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Book a medical check first

See your doctor and ask directly whether there is a structural or other medical cause for your symptoms.
Keep taking any treatment you are on unless your clinician changes it.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Draw your symptom timeline

On one page, list the big events of your life by year.
On the same page, mark when each symptom began or got worse, and circle any overlaps.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

List what is pressing on you now

Write down your current stresses: work, money, family, health, things you have not said.
Do not rank or solve them yet, just get them on paper.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Pick a writing time and a private place

Choose 15 to 20 minutes at the same time each day and somewhere no one will read over your shoulder.
Decide now whether you will keep the pages or tear them up.

MY VERSION DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Collect your own evidence

Note any time your pain changed with your mood, moved to a new place, eased while you were absorbed in something, or started without an injury.
Keep the list where you can reread it.

MY VERSION DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Write for fifteen minutes a day

Use a prompt or write freely about what you feel, including what you would never say out loud.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Sit with a short meditation

Spend ten minutes a day breathing slowly and noticing sensations without fighting them.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Meet a flare with one calm sentence

Prepare a line such as "I am safe, this is my alarm, not damage" and say it slowly when a flare starts.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

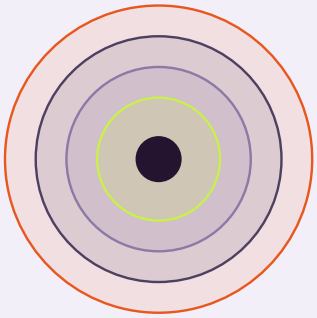
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



A learned alarm can be relearned, if you give the brain new evidence every day.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER HOWARD SCHUBINER