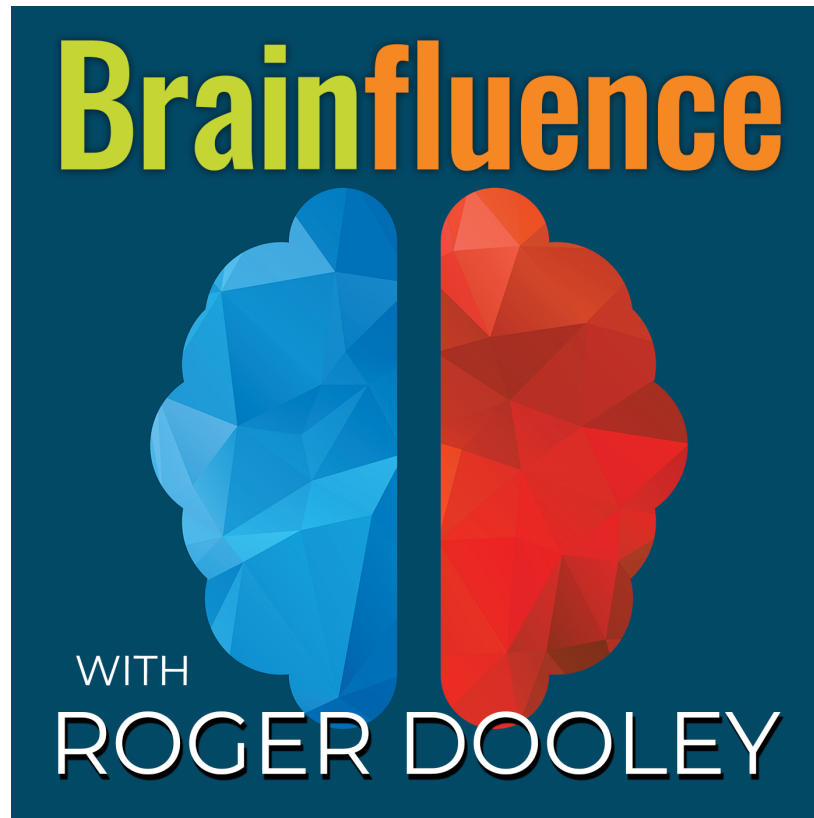


**From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



**Roger Dooley**

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

# From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

Welcome to Brainfluence, where author and international keynote speaker Roger Dooley has weekly conversations with thought leaders and world class experts. Every episode shows you how to improve your business with advice based on science or data.

Roger's new book, *Friction*, is published by McGraw Hill and is now available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and bookstores everywhere. Dr Robert Cialdini described the book as, "Blinding insight," and Nobel winner Dr. Richard Clamer said, "Reading Friction will arm any manager with a mental can of WD40."

To learn more, go to [RogerDooley.com/Friction](https://www.RogerDooley.com/Friction), or just visit the book seller of your choice.

Now, here's Roger.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to Brainfluence. I'm Roger Dooley.

Today's guest is probably familiar to you. Christophe Morin was one of the early proponents of using neuroscience to improve marketing and sales. He coauthored *Neuro-Marketing: Understanding the Buy Buttons In Your Customers Brain*. As well as the more recent title, *The Persuasion Code*. His new book is a solo effort. It's a departure from that space and it is titled *The Serenity Code*. Welcome back, Christophe.

Christophe Morin: Thank you for inviting me.

Roger Dooley: So Christophe, we don't usually do self-help books on this show. We take a more business oriented approach, but I thought this book was important to bring to our audience for a couple of reasons. First of all, we are still in the

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## **From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

pandemic. We are months away from having widely distributed vaccines. And probably a year, if not years, away from approaching normalcy. And people are dealing with all kinds of issues from being isolated from anxiety about their business situation, their employment situation.

And then the other aspect I thought was important was unlike so many self-help books that are basically an author offering opinions as to how you should help yourself. Your book is actually based on neuroscience, biology, cognitive science, and so on. You do a deep dive. So in any case, I'm excited about it. Did you start this book before the pandemic? It seems so timely right now.

Christophe Morin: Yes. The story of the book is a long one. If you want to see, the Genesis of the book was definitely part of my ongoing struggle and fight against anxiety. And certainly the pandemic created such a sharp disruption in my lifestyle, since I was traveling a quarter million miles a year, that it sort of precipitated the urgency of really doing the scientific work that I think needs to be done to decode how stress, anxiety and depression affect us. After the publishing of Persuasion Code, it became more obvious to me that the dynamic tension between different brain systems can explain advertising effectiveness, but it also can explain how we respond to stress.

There was an unusual coincidence that precipitated my interest in the subject. And of course, the fact that I was no longer traveling, gave me this enormous amount of time to dedicate to the book, which is why I produced it in

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

a record time of about a five and a half month, but working almost daily, non-stop.

Roger Dooley: You mentioned stress, anxiety and depression. And they form the acronym SAD, which you use throughout the book. I think it would probably be important to point out, but when you use SAD, we are not talking about seasonal effective disorder that many of our listeners may be familiar with. What happens to us at this time of year when the days are short and we don't get enough sunlight. But in any case, how do those three conditions relate? Do they correlate with each other or do they operate pretty much independently?

Christophe Morin: That's part of the complexity of understanding the relationship between certainly stress and anxiety, and even depression. In my research, it's very clear that while they are separate response systems, which I describe for both stress and anxiety, one will affect the other. And ultimately, depressive states may be produced as a result of excessive stress and anxiety. But all those correlations are extremely difficult to identify, to measure. What seemed obvious to me though, is they have similar brain systems that somehow take over.

And of course, the culprit that I identify in the book is the primal brain, that ancient brain structure, which is on the bottom part of our brain. That has the job, the responsibility of protecting us. But under unusual threats and unusual repetition of risks that are seemed overwhelming to us. We see those systems literally take over and overrule many of the assessments that we can make if we consider the facts, and if we consider the

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## **From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

logical possibility that any of those stressors will eliminate us. We have lost the capacity to use our cognition. To take back the control, if you will, of our nervous system.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. And I guess the primal brain was pretty useful when it was evolving, when early humans and of course animals were living in the moment. You had to respond pretty quickly if a saber tooth tiger was going to jump out of the woods and attack you. But today, a lot of our threats are important. Clearly, coronavirus, COVID is important. You flying 200,000 miles a year. Terrorism is a constant issue. But some people adapt and say... Well, they look at the numbers rationally and say, "Well, the odds of me being involved in any kind of terrorist incident are infinitesimally small." Where other people do not do as good a job of adapting to that. And that's all they can think about. And it creates a fear of travel, fear of flying and such. One statistic in the book was that SAD is 30% higher today, that combination of issues is 30% higher today. Has that gone up even more?

Christophe Morin: Yeah. Every single data that is released is continuously showing enormous raise, enormous uplift of levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. It doesn't affect the same different age groups. And I have to say one of the most worrisome data that I see coming is that younger people tend to have much more serious anxiety rates than adults. And a lot of it is because as young people still continue the maturation of their frontal lobes, the cognitive part of our brain, that gives us the best of our thinking, the best of our attention, the best of our concentration, and the best of our predictions.

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## **From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

When you don't have that engine to help you rationalize what's going on, your body is basically consumed by short-term assessment and stress. And so young people are extremely vulnerable right now because of the direct effect of COVID on their social lives. And as you know, if you've ever raised teenagers, social lives are more important than health risks. And so there's a kind of a crushing effect of stress and anxiety on the lifestyles of young people. And it's worrying me because I think we need to always pay attention to how healthy and strong the young generation is to, in a way, save us if we need help.

Roger Dooley: I think you probably were not very surprised to find out that college campuses were having major outbreaks of COVID because that's sort of a natural reaction, I guess. The students don't, of that age, don't necessarily evaluate risk very well. And hence, might engage in riskier behaviors. Not because they're bad people or they're stupid. It's just, their wiring might be a little bit different.

Christophe Morin: Yeah. It is a wiring issue. And that's what is the underlying story in the book. And that is if you start really looking at how the primal brain is functioning and its relationship to the rational brain, and this third aspect, which I described called the spiritual self. Your ability to do something about it is real. In other words, we tend to think, hey, I'm anxious. I need some meds, or I need some aspect of to fix me. But my book says, "No, you can listen, how those brain systems are operating currently, understand that you are being somewhat hijacked by the primal brain. And if you have awareness of that, you can

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

rewire it." And so the premise of the book is not to say, you don't need meds or see a psychiatrist.

You absolutely do, if you know your levels of anxiety and stress are unbearable. But there is an opportunity, which is brain plasticity. And brain plasticity has been poorly explained and shared in books, in my opinion. Either it's too complicated, too abstract, or you have the idea that it's very special and only a few people can do that. No, we all can. And what I described in the book are simple habits, like walking in the park or working on your breathing, that have the ability to actually restore balancing between different brain systems. And so if you practice this on a regular basis, you have the ability to create the own medicine, to some extent, that can heal and free you for the most part of excessive levels of stress and anxiety.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. I like your comparison in the book, your analogy comparing the primal brain to a computer's operating system, the basic operating system. And then the rational brain as more of the sophisticated apps that run on top of that and can do a lot of stuff, but don't always work very well and sometimes just lock up or fail.

Christophe Morin: Yeah. We forget that evolution is a long process, and the primal brain is sort of the oldest part of our engineering and has been operating, if you check different sources for dating purposes, but for millions of years. We have very good software ruling our blood pressure, the way we sweat, the way we respond to all these aspects of threats. But our new brain, our cortex is young, and buggy, and we're still kind of working through

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## **From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

what consciousness is. What is this amazing state of being aware and able to notice aspects of our behavior. But so much of our behavior, so much of the responses that are happening in our body are not at all under our awareness. And so we need to work especially hard to observe and understand that subconscious ruling of our behavior.

Roger Dooley: Now, you talk about self love in the book. And I think when you throw out a term like that, some people are going to say, "I think there's way too much of that already. Too many people are thinking primarily of themselves and not of others."

Christophe Morin: Yeah.

Roger Dooley: Explain what you mean by self love and how that might differ from more negative manifestations like narcissism, or just being totally focused on self-interest.

Christophe Morin: Yes. It's true, the term self-love can create a negative response. Initially, people think narcissism and extreme selfishness. First of all, we forget, we are by design selfish. And we need to. And our primal brain has no qualms about making us and our survival the priority. We need that selfishness. What is different about self-love is our capacity to really put less burden, less criticism, less judgment on ourselves. What I have found is a lot of our behavior is to criticize and to self judge all the time. And that gets in the way of transformation. So in the book, as you mentioned, it is designed to be self-help to the extent that I'm telling people, you can do something

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>



## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

about it. We say that you need special fuel, and energy and motivation to support your desire to transform.

This is called self-efficacy in psychology. And self-efficacy is extremely important because you can't reach your goals if you don't have the motivation for it. And what I discovered is love as an emotion is extremely generous neuro chemically to our brain, by producing dopamine. And dopamine, we all know, is the fuel of our motivation. So if you direct love more to yourself, which is self-compassion, self-acceptance, less self-judgment and so on, you're basically boosting dopamine to make you love yourself. And if you love yourself, then you want to feel better about yourself. It's a kind of a technique to reframe the energy we need to transform ourselves.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. You actually did some research in preparing this book. Explain the processes and subjects that you used, and what you found from that research.

Christophe Morin: Yes. Of course, as a scientist, I didn't want just to collect data that others have analyzed. And so I decided to create an assessment tool that would measure current levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The good news is, there's some good tools that already exist. I didn't have to reinvent measurement of anxiety. It's been done by psychiatrist for many, many years. I used existing tested assessment tools. And I wanted, of course, to assess then factors that seem to help people mediate or moderate levels of stress and anxiety.

And so by the time I consolidated all the data, I actually did find some very, very strong correlation between

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

certain brain systems that are active, whether it's the primal, rational or spiritual. Certainly, attitudes that people have about themselves. In other words, self-love. There is a scale for that. And how much serenity they currently enjoy. And it was really quite remarkable how strong the correlations were between those three elements that I put into my theory of serenity and the capacity to maintain calm and composure. So, yes, anytime you test a theory, you need data. And the data was collected worldwide and was very supportive of my theory.

Roger Dooley: Right. And I'll point out that you actually have a report on that data in the appendix for people who want to dig into it a little bit more deeply. And one of the things that you do include in the book are some very simple self-assessment questions that enable people to measure their levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. How accurate do you think those are? And the reason I ask, I did not actually do those tests. I probably should have. It could have been an interesting session here if I had numbers to share with you. But I did read through the questions and I immediately found myself questioning whether, okay, well, is that how I really feel? Or is that how I think I should feel? I just wondered how good that would be. Our current president, Donald Trump, if you asked him what his level of scientific understanding was, would rate himself as quite high. He has done so publicly. I think maybe an independent assessment might say, "Well, not so much." Is self-assessment effective in this case?

Christophe Morin: This is a big topic. And as you know, in marketing, which is where I do most of my business, there's always questions around how people answer surveys. Are they

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## **From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

doing it seriously, number one? Are they telling the truth? Do they not stumble upon certain definitions? So in psychology in general—

Roger Dooley: I think that's kind of a point of neuro-marketing, right, Christophe?

Christophe Morin: That's right.

Roger Dooley: To get below the conscious answer.

Christophe Morin: That's exactly right. It is my goal to include more subconscious measurements in the study of stress and anxiety. They are observable responses that people could have watching a movie or navigating a website. It would be ideal in a post COVID world, I can resume some of the research that I do, putting electrodes on people's heads. But in the business cycle that we're in, and the COVID-19 assessment through surveys was really the most credible and the most available methods.

But I agree with you, there's always limitations to how you can expect people to describe their own health. Now, having said that, these surveys of course are completely anonymous. The assessments are not threatening in terms of what it is that you're necessarily revealing, if it's completely anonymized. And I make that assessment available publicly on the serenitycode.com. And people can get their scores for free. It's designed to be non-threatening and it's designed to be a tool. Not revealing if you're bad, or good, or deserving or not. So it's really designed to be a tool and providing help for people.

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

Roger Dooley: I like the fact that most of the prescriptions that you offer seem to be pretty simple. In other words, the practices that you suggest, the habits are not highly stressful or highly complicated. They consist of maybe some simple mantras or watching some videos that... Why don't you explain the process that you take people into who want to try and improve their SAD score.

Christophe Morin: Yes. The idea behind habits is because of course we can rewire new habits. And you might as well just bring in habits that are going to be good for your brain. I identified well researched habits that were never, until this book, put together into an operating system to remove stress, anxiety. For instance, connecting with nature. There's tons of research demonstrating the benefit of walking or working out. And it does have the capacity to calm our nervous system. Connecting with pets is another one that many people who own pets will be able to testify. It makes them feel better. And research has indeed demonstrated that it produces more oxytocin in our brain, which is the feel good hormone. It makes us feel safer basically, right? So just the ownership of a pet is powerful, but it's also powerful to be with your pet.

There are behaviors that we don't necessarily have with a pet that I recommend, because being with the pet in the presence of an animal is being aware of your present moment. Which is such an important gift in terms of calming your nervous system. Every single one, connecting with laughter, connecting with music, connecting with stories, all those behaviors have been documented to produce really beautiful medicine to our brain. And we are the director. We're the conductor. We

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

just need to find the instruments, play those instruments, and the symphony of neurobiology is going to flood our brain with these beautiful hormones and neurotransmitters that make us feel better. And if we do this daily, then we can start using brain plasticity and rewiring the brain.

Roger Dooley: And you even have some substitute videos. If you aren't able to walk in nature, or it's not convenient to do that at a given moment, then you provide a link to an appropriate video, YouTube video for that purpose. Has there been any research, Christophe, on how effective video might be? It's kind of an interesting topic. And I would guess too, it depends on how immersive it is. I have to imagine that if you were watching in a dark theater, it would be more effective than if you're sitting on the subway watching on your iPhone or something, or VR, I suppose, would be the ultimate. If you could put on VR goggles and have a very immersive experience, you would think you would get closer and closer to the effect that real nature has.

Christophe Morin: Yes. I'm a media psychologist. My entire work and training academically is about understanding the effect of media and content on our nervous system. And the reason I recommend watching video as step one is because it's easy. And I have examined how successful self-help books are. And the numbers are terrible because most of the time it requires so much cognitive effort to read through those checklists and change your behavior overnight. Just doesn't happen. We have to go into micro steps before we begin the journey of transformation. And that micro step in my case was why

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

don't you just watch people practicing those habits. Practicing a walk in the park, so I found some best videos on YouTube, millions of views, are beautiful, 4K, beautiful. And it makes you feel good watching that video.

And that's the whole idea. Why? Because we can mirror the effect of videos, as you know, is to create what's called narrative transportation. In other words, we find ourselves moving or traveling into the video as if we were really acting in the video. And that phenomenon is well researched in the study of movies and so on. But it's a tool we can use to help jumpstart our motivation without having to conduct the habit right away. But mirroring and observing the habit is going to prime, if you will, our brain systems to activate the effect of doing it.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. That's really smart, because particularly in our current times, we may be in various modes of lockdown and not be able to engage in some of these activities, at least not without a lot of difficulty or even some risk. But even under good conditions, if you said, "Okay. Roger, I want you to take a 30 minute nature walk every day." That would be maybe a challenging activity to fit into my schedule because I would have to put on appropriate clothes, I'd have to drive someplace reasonably full of nature. I don't think I can walk around in circles in my backyard, but that might not be quite the same. I think it's a great intermediate step and hopefully encourage people to get farther into it. So Christophe, are there any other key pieces of advice that you would have for our audience in coping with the current situation, or even coping with life in general? Because we will be out of this pandemic eventually, I'm sure.

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**

<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

# **From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

Christophe Morin: We will. And that's certainly changing the dynamic of how we feel. Our inability to comprehend and see the future was causing an enormous amount of stress. As the prospect of new things happening is starting to get clear and clear in our brain, we could expect some of that stress and anxiety to dissipate. However, I do think unfortunately many of those conditions take time to heal. And therefore, the sooner you can start practicing those habits, in my case, I really pushed myself to continue to run every day, even if I didn't feel that great. And I could every single time notice air in my lungs, and ability to calm down my nervous system because of the exercise. It's really finding discipline, even if it's difficult. I know you wrote a famous book called Friction. We don't like friction.

We don't like effort. We don't like cognitive effort. As you know in advertising, any ad that is too complicated, it's not going to work. Well, it's the same with most of our habits and behaviors. We want them to flow easily. And many of those that I described are already part of what people do, but they may not have the consciousness of how important those habits are, like playing music, to their nervous system. If you play music, at least play music that will put you in a positive and optimistic mood. That's the recommendation. If you go and watch a movie, watch a movie that's going to also uplift your mood. Because that kick of neurotransmitter is going to help and calm your nervous system. There are conscious choices that you can make in practicing those habits that will make them contribute to relaxing and easing the level of stress and anxiety.

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>

## From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, that's great advice. Christophe, where can people find you and some of the ideas from your book?

Christophe Morin: So I created a micro-site called the [serenitycode.com](http://serenitycode.com). There's plenty explained about the book, even the map of the book and the model is free. I want this to be easy for people to navigate and experience. They can have access to those videos. Obviously, I don't own those videos. I don't intend to either. It's really mostly visiting that site. I think we'll give you access to the assessment, of course, where to buy the book, which is currently in Kindle and paperback, and soon will be in audio.

Roger Dooley: Great. Well, we will link there, and to any other resources we spoke about on the show notes page at [rogerdooley.com/podcast](http://rogerdooley.com/podcast). And we will have text, audio, and video versions of this conversation there as well. So Christophe, thanks so much. It's great to reconnect with you. And I hope that one day soon we can actually meet in person instead of just virtually.

Christophe Morin: That's right. Thank you so much, Roger, for inviting me. It's very special to be on your show.

Thank you for tuning into this episode of Brainfluence. To find more episodes like this one, and to access all of Roger's online writing and resources, the best starting point is [RogerDooley.com](http://RogerDooley.com).

And remember, Roger's new book, *Friction*, is now available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and book sellers everywhere. Bestselling author Dan Pink calls it, "An important read," and Wharton Professor Dr. Joana Berger said, "You'll understand Friction's power and how to harness it."

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>



# **From Neuromarketing to Serenity with Christophe Morin**

<https://www.rogerdooley.com/christophe-morin-serenity>

For more information or for links to Amazon and other sellers, go to  
[RogerDooley.com/Friction](https://www.RogerDooley.com/Friction).

**The Brainfluence Podcast with Roger Dooley**  
<http://www.RogerDooley.com/podcast>