

wave is success

As humans begin to approach their physical limits, Dr Spackman regards neuroscience as one of the last great frontiers.

"If you look back 25 years and see the strides that have been made in things like biomechanics, nutrition and training methods, it's no wonder our athletes are bigger, stronger and faster," he says.

"But if you look back 25 years at sports psychology, nothing much has changed, and that's quite shocking really.

"There is still a lot of snake oil being peddled, and a lot of it is the same old stuff repackaged.

"What I have tried to do is to write a book that is easy to read and follow, but which, if you follow it, will change your brain without you knowing it, based on solid neuroscience."

When Dr Spackman talks about changing your brain, it's not a metaphor. He means it literally.

"Because of the speed that Formula One cars achieve, people think the drivers must have fantastic reflexes," he says.

"Well, I've tested myself against many of them and not one had better reflexes than me.

"But if I am in a race car which snaps into over-steer I have one answer – opposite lock.

"The difference is that Michael Schumacher knows the answer is opposite lock, part 238, sub-section 15.

"In the time I have spent thinking about what to do, Schumacher's mind has sorted through all the possible answers, selected exactly the right solution and nailed it.

"Andre Agassi's reflexes are not that different to mine. But if you show him film of Pete Sampras serving, he can tell you whether the return will be a backhand or forehand – before Sampras even hits the ball.

"Agassi has built-in circuits in his cerebellum that will analyse the ball toss and cue in on minute body movements to predict the ball flight before it happens.

"Everyone knows that if you go to the gym and do thousands of curls you will end up with big biceps.

"The brain is far more elastic and receptive to training than that. What people like Agassi and Schumacher have done is use thousands of hours of training to build completely new pathways and connections in their brain. It's just like gym work but you can't see the difference because the result happens inside your head."

Dr Spackman started out intending to write a book which would change other peoples' lives, but he ended up changing his own.

As *The Winner's Bible* rocketed up the best-seller's list in New Zealand, emails from the damaged and desperate began to clog his in-box.

"I was getting a thousand emails a day, and eventually I had to change my email address," he said.

"At the time I was living in a rented house, but somehow people found my address and started turning up in my driveway."

The stories of people who were trying to claw their way out of the gutter touched him.

People like "Suzie Q", a one-time high-flier who had become addicted to methamphetamine, lost her husband and her life and had her son taken away by the police.

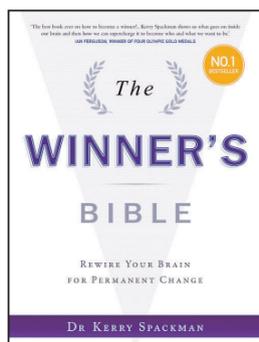
His successful work with Suzie Q means more to him than any sporting world championship he has been a part of, and it's the reason why he has dropped all but a few high-profile clients ("the ones who have been with me from the start") to concentrate on working with more needy people.

"Let's face it," he says, "if Jenson Button had not won the F1 title this year, Sebastian Vettel would have – and the world would not have been much different.

"But someone like Suzy Q getting her son back and turning her life around, that makes a difference.

"That's not a zero sum game. The world really is a different place."

ON TRACK: Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton.



The Winner's Bible: Rewire Your Brain For Permanent Change by Dr Kerry Spackman, published by The Winner's Institute, rrp \$29.85