

[PDF] The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories Of Personal Triumph From The Frontiers Of Brain Science

Jim Bond, Norman Doidge M.D. - pdf download free book

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Author: Jim Bond, Norman Doidge M.D.

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly For years the doctrine of neuroscientists has been that the brain is a machine: break a part and you lose that function permanently. But more and more evidence is turning up to show that the brain can rewire itself, even in the face of catastrophic trauma: essentially, the functions of the brain can be strengthened just like a weak muscle. Scientists have taught a woman with damaged inner ears, who for five years had had "a sense of perpetual falling," to regain her sense of balance with a sensor on her tongue, and a stroke victim to recover the ability

to walk although 97% of the nerves from the cerebral cortex to the spine were destroyed. With detailed case studies reminiscent of Oliver Sacks, combined with extensive interviews with lead researchers, Doidge, a research psychiatrist and psychoanalyst at Columbia and the University of Toronto, slowly turns everything we thought we knew about the brain upside down. He is, perhaps, overenthusiastic about the possibilities, believing that this new science can fix every neurological problem, from learning disabilities to blindness. But Doidge writes interestingly and engagingly about some of the least understood marvels of the brain. (Mar. 19)

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Review It takes a rare talent to explain science to the rest of us. Oliver Sacks is a master at this. So was the late Stephen Jay Gould. A case can be made for John Emsley, one-time science writer in residence at Cambridge, and author, most recently, of *Better Looking, Better Living, Better Loving: How Chemistry Can Help You Achieve Life's Goals* (2007).

And now there is Norman Doidge, a psychiatrist who divides his time between Columbia University and the University of Toronto. Four years ago, Doidge set himself the most cerebral of tasks: to understand a concept called neuroplasticity. The brain, far from being a collection of specialized parts, each fixed in its location and function, is in fact a dynamic organ, one that can rewire and rearrange itself as the need arises. That need can arise when the brain is physically damaged, as it is by a stroke, or simply when it is allowed to go to seed, as it has in my case.

It is an insight from which all of us can benefit. People with severe afflictions -- strokes, cerebral palsy, schizophrenia, learning disabilities, obsessive compulsive disorders and the like -- are the most obvious candidates, but who among us would not like to tack on a few IQ points or improve our memories?

To benefit from a concept, one must first grasp it, and that is what makes *The Brain That Changes Itself* such a terrific book. You don't have to be a brain surgeon to read it -- just a person with a curious mind. Doidge is the best possible guide. He has a fluent and unassuming style, and is able to explain difficult concepts without talking down to his readers.

The case study is the psychiatric literary genre par excellence, and Doidge does not disappoint. There is a woman who manages quite well on just half a brain, an eye surgeon who made a remarkable recovery from a severe stroke, a seven-year-old who had to be taught how to hear pitch, an eight-year-old girl whose autism was holding her back from learning how to speak. Their stories are truly inspirational, and Doidge tells them with great compassion and sensitivity.

Buy this book. Your brain will thank you. -- *Jessica Warner, senior scientist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and the author of Craze: Gin and Debauchery in an Age of Reason and The Incendiary: The Misadventures of John the Painter*

A masterfully guided tour through the burgeoning field of neuroplasticity research -- *Discover*

Doidge provides a history of the research in this growing field, highlighting scientists at the edge of groundbreaking discoveries and telling fascinating stories of people who have benefited. -- *Psychology Today*

Doidge tells one spell-binding story after another as he travels the globe interviewing the scientists and their subjects who are on the cutting edge of a new age. Each story is interwoven with the latest in brain science, told in a manner that is both simple and compelling. It may be hard to imagine that

a book so rich in science can also be a page-turner, but this one is hard to set down. -- *Jeff Zimman, Posit Science, e-newsletter*

It takes a rare talent to explain science to the rest of us. Oliver Sacks is a master at this. So was the late Stephen Jay Gould. And now there is Norman Doidge. A terrific book. You don't have to be a brain surgeon to read it -- just a person with a curious mind. Doidge is the best possible guide. He has a fluent and unassuming style, and is able to explain difficult concepts without talking down to his readers. The case study is the psychiatric literary genre par excellence, and Doidge does not disappoint. Buy this book. Your brain will thank you. -- *Globe & Mail*

Lucid and absolutely fascinating... engaging, educational and riveting. It satisfies, in equal measure, the mind and the heart. [Doidge is] able to explain current research in neuroscience with clarity and thoroughness. Presents the ordeals of the patients about whom [he] writes...with grace and vividness. In the best medical narratives -- and the works of Doidge... join that fraternity -- the narrow bridge between body and soul is traversed with courage and eloquence. -- *Chicago Tribune*

Only a few decades ago, scientists considered the brain to be fixed or "hardwired," and considered most forms of brain damage, therefore, to be incurable. Dr. Doidge, an eminent psychiatrist and researcher, was struck by how his patients' own transformations belied this, and set out to explore the new science of neuroplasticity by interviewing both scientific pioneers in neuroscience, and patients who have benefited from neuro-rehabilitation. Here he describes in fascinating personal narratives how the brain, far from being fixed, has remarkable powers of changing its own structure and compensating for even the most challenging neurological conditions. Doidge's book is a remarkable and hopeful portrait of the endless adaptability of the human brain. -- *Oliver Sacks*

The newest buzzword in brain science seems to be neuroplasticity-the idea that the adult brain is capable of positive change. Sharon Begley covers the same ground in her upcoming *TRAIN YOUR MIND, CHANGE YOUR BRAIN* but with stories of those whose lives have been saved or improved through training based on neuroplastic theories, Doidge's book is much more engaging for lay readers. -- *Library Journal*

The power of positive thinking finally gains scientific credibility. Mind-bending, miracle-working, reality-busting stuff, with implications, as Dr. Doidge notes, not only for individual patients with neurologic disease but for all human beings, not to mention human culture, human learning and human history -- *New York Times*

[Doidge] links scientific experimentation with personal triumph in a way that inspires awe for the brain, and for these scientists' faith in its capacity. A valuable compilation of work that seeks to prove the unsung adaptability of our most mysterious organ. Readers will want to read entire sections aloud and pass the book on to someone who can benefit from it. -- *Washington Post* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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