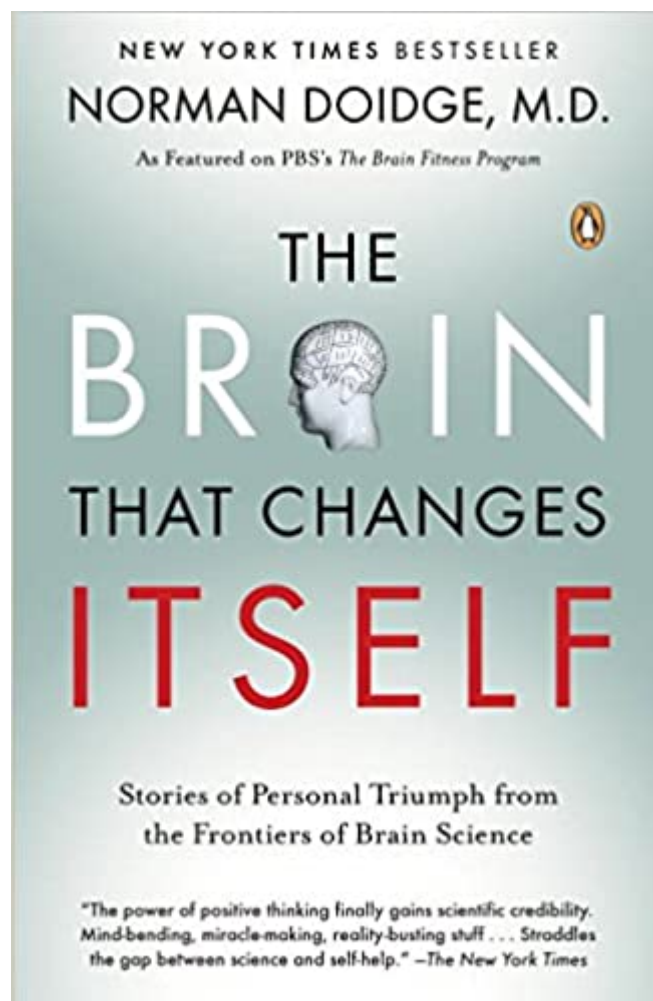




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# **The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories Of Personal Triumph From The Frontiers Of Brain Science**



## Synopsis

An astonishing new science called "neuroplasticity" is overthrowing the centuries-old notion that the human brain is immutable. In this revolutionary look at the brain, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Norman Doidge, M.D., provides an introduction to both the brilliant scientists championing neuroplasticity and the people whose lives they've transformed. From stroke patients learning to speak again to the remarkable case of a woman born with half a brain that rewired itself to work as a whole, *The Brain That Changes Itself* will permanently alter the way we look at our brains, human nature, and human potential.

## Book Information

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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 Sachs, 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) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

“The power of positive thinking finally gains scientific credibility. Mind-bending, miracle-making, reality-busting stuff...with implications for all human beings, not to mention human culture, human learning and human history.”—The New York Times  
“Brilliant...Doidge has identified a tidal shift in basic science...The implications are monumental.”—The London Times  
“Fascinating. Doidge’s book is a remarkable and hopeful portrait of the endless adaptability of the human brain.”—Oliver Sacks, MD  
“Two years ago, when the journal Cerebrum at the Dana Foundation in the US updated its list of great books about the brain for the general reader, it found there were already 30,000 brain-related books in English. Aided by scientific advisers and readers, it produced a new list - with *The Brain That Changes Itself* at No. 1.”—The Melbourne Age  
“Lucid and absolutely fascinating. It satisfies in equal measure the mind and heart.”—The Chicago Tribune  
“Doidge turns everything we thought we knew about the brain upside down.”—Publisher’s Weekly  
“Brilliant...This book is a wonderful and engaging way of re-imagining what kind of creatures we are.”—Jeanette Winterson, novelist, Order of the British Empire, Guardian, Best Book of 2008  
“Superb. Brilliant. I devoured it.”—V.S. Ramachandran, MD, PHD, Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition, University of California, San Diego, Author of *Phantoms of the Brain*  
“Doidge... is a master ... at explaining science to the rest of us. Doidge is the best possible guide. You don’t have to be a brain surgeon to read it, just curious about your brain.”—Buy this book. Your brain will thank you.  
—The Globe and Mail  
“Readers will want to read entire sections aloud and pass the book on to someone who can benefit from it. [Doidge] links scientific experimentation with personal triumph in a way that inspires awe.”—Washington Post  
“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. 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  
“The most readable and best general treatment of this subject to date.”—Michael M. Merzenich, Ph.D., Keck Center for Integrative Neurosciences, University of California at San Francisco  
“A riveting,

essential book. These stories are most emotionally satisfying. Doidge addresses how cultural influences literally "shape" our brain. [And] our response to the world around us is not only a social or psychological phenomenon, but often a lasting neurological process.

• Montreal Gazette, Liam Durcan, MD, Neurologist & Novelist  
"A hymn to life."  
• Panorama Italy  
"The Brain That Changes Itself...is without question the most important book of the year, and maybe the most important book we have ever read."  
• Kiril Sokoloff, 13D Research Inc  
"This book is like discovering that the earth isn't flat."  
• Gretel Killeen, Sun Herald, "The Books That Changed Me"  
"A rich banquet of brain-mind plasticity, communicated in a brilliantly clear writing style."  
• Jaak Panksepp, Ph.D., Head, Affective Neuroscience Research, Falk Center for Molecular Therapeutics, Northwestern University;  
"A masterfully guided tour through the burgeoning field of neuroplasticity research."  
• Discover Magazine  
"Norman Doidge has shown that what and how we think can change our brains. He has illuminated the foundations of psychological healing."  
• Charles Hanly, Ph.D. President, International Psychoanalytical Association  
"Astonishing. This book will inevitably draw comparisons to the work of Oliver Sacks. Doidge has a prodigious gift for rendering the highly technical highly readable. It's hard to imagine a more exciting topic--or a better introduction to it."  
• Kitchener Waterloo Record  
"Perfect for fans of Oliver Sacks"  
• Quill & Quire  
"Beautifully written and brings life and clarity to a variety of neuropsychiatric problems that affect children and adults... It reads a bit like a science detective story and -you do not need a Ph.D. to benefit from the wisdom imparted here."  
• Barbara Milrod, M.D. Psychiatry, Weill Medical College, Cornell University, New York  
"A panoramic examination of plasticity's profound implications."  
"A  
• Toronto Daily Star  
"An eloquently written book about the boundless potential of the human brain."  
• The Jewish Week  
"Norman Doidge has written a fascinating, highly readable account of the new brain science."  
• John Cornwell, Literary Review, England  
"You really should read this book... this remarkable work will lead us to see ourselves in a new light."  
•  
• Mail on Sunday, England  
"An 'essential primer' for anyone who wants to better understand their own brains and the considerable advances in

neuroscience of the past two decades. —Melbourne Age— “A book that everybody should read... it is nothing short of miraculous. Get it!” —Yoko Ono, Yoko Reads Book Recommendations— “Fascinating —| Doidge has accomplished a rare feat. He has written a book that accurately conveys cutting-edge scientific discoveries while simultaneously engaging both scientific and popular audiences. —Neuro-Psychoanalysis— — “A remarkable book ... a highly readable exploration of a branch of science that has the potential to change all our lives. —Hobart Mercury— “Why isn’t this book on the top of the bestseller list of all time? The recognition that the brain is plastic and can actually change itself with exercise and understanding is a huge leap in the history of mankind, far greater than landing on the moon. — Jane S. Hall, International Psychoanalysis— “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 neurorehabilitation. 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 Sack, MD, author of The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat

I was born with Cerebral Palsy in 1949. In those days, Neurology was not a medicine. I saw my first neurologist when I was 27 due to seizures. I then had my first ever EEG. At my follow up appointment, this doctor questioned my occupation as a violinist. He said it was impossible for me to play the violin because the right side of my brain did not function properly. I then told him he could come to a symphony rehearsal that following week, he did and was so shocked that he said that I had done the same thing as climbing Mt. Everest. The truth of the matter, instrumental music started in my school in the 4th grade. I really wanted to play an instrument. My grandfather had a violin and that was it. Little did I know that the orthopedist that I saw suggested that I begin something like music for physical therapy for my left arm and hand. I only knew that I could not walk without a brace until I was 16. I was very strong willed and I thought that everyone who was right handed - the left hand did not work. I was very determined and went to college as a Music Education Major with violin being my instrument. I always told people who ask what my walking problem was, that I had to

make detours in my brain to my left leg and if I was tired, my brain didn't send the messages. I FELT LIKE THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN ABOUT ME. Today they call what I accomplished as Neuroplasticity. I have been teaching violin for over 42 years and have had many wonderful students along with my Symphony work.

I have Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy it was caught two years too late from the beginning of the crippling symptoms. 15 years after stage one which had been misdiagnosed. I bought this book for a better understanding of plastic pain. Most people along with health care providers don't know what RSD other name CRPS is. The book chapter on pain gave me a better understanding and a clear way I can start describing to others.

Stunning writing from Norman Doidge in his second book on new discoveries and therapies for our brains. As with his first book the writing is lucid and compelling with highly informative background stories to ground-breaking therapists. At every turn these discoveries challenge conventional medical teaching from a few decades ago which visualised the brain more as a computer control centre for the body. Certain areas of the brain controlled specific functions and activities. Injuries and strokes permanently affecting these areas would result in long term loss of those functions. Also we were taught the brain could not repair itself lacking stem-type cells to facilitate this. Nobel Prize winning discoveries have shown the limited understanding of this approach. These stories give hope and new therapeutic possibilities to many of the debilitating and challenging medical issues many face. The brain and body are revealed as a much more integrated unit. Read this to blow your mind, to be open to even more dramatic possibilities for our future. I have read some comment that these changes could be explained by the placebo effect. Either this comment was not based on reading the book, or from not fully engaging with its content. There is no way placebo effects could explain the pervasive and dramatic changes ground-breaking therapists are bringing with mental, to physical to sound-based and other exercises.

This book has opened my eyes to the immense plasticity and possibilities of our brains. I was moved to tears by the example in the first chapter of the woman who had been completely incapacitated for years by a lack of balance due to a previous, unrelated treatment and had been told to go home and deal with it. In her first session with an experimental scientist, she could stand unassisted. The book continues the way it starts, with the most miraculous and amazing examples of people who had been given up by mainstream medicine, making full recoveries or incredible

rehabilitation improvements. I recommend this book to my biology, education and nursing students as an example of our fantastic capacity to adapt and not to take current knowledge as an end.

Not an overly scientific book as this book was written for the masses instead of the clinicians. This book will literally blow your mind with tangible information on how the brain can physically and literally change itself. Different parts of the brain operate different parts of the body, but can change over time based on the proper recipe. This is not a self help book, but an informative deep dive on neuroplasticity. You'll be interested in the topic at a deeper level after completing this engaging read, and Dr. Doidge provides many many resources at the end of the book. Highly recommended!

Good introduction with many case studies illustrating how our brains are soft-wired, not hard as used to be the belief. Case studies illustrate how, with practice, we have the capability to change many negative factors whether physical or emotional or cognitive, into positive ones and thus lead a happier and healthier life. I wish that I had read it a decade or two ago, but in my 75th year I am feeling more hopeful for maintaining a brain that can still retain info. and keep on learning more.

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