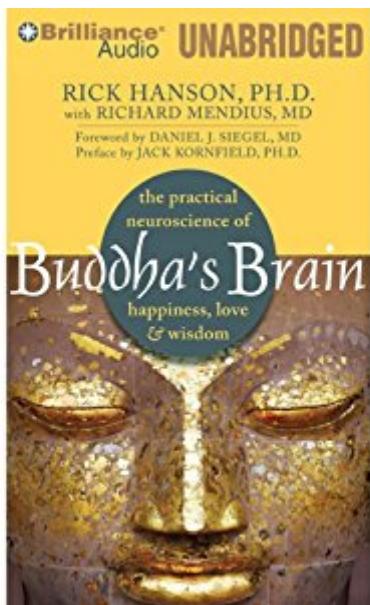


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# Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience Of Happiness, Love & Wisdom



## **Synopsis**

The Buddha and other great teachers were born with brains built essentially like anyone else's - and then they changed their brains in ways that changed the world. Science is now revealing how the flow of thoughts actually sculpts the brain. By combining breakthroughs in neuroscience with insights from thousands of years of contemplative practice, you, too, can use your mind to shape your brain for greater happiness, love, and wisdom. Buddha's Brain draws on the latest research to show how to stimulate and strengthen your brain for more fulfilling relationships, a deeper spiritual life, and a greater sense of inner confidence and worth. You'll learn how to activate the brain states of calm, joy, and compassion instead of worry, sorrow, and anger. This clear, down-to-earth book is filled with practical tools and skills that you can use in daily life to tap the unused potential of your brain and rewire it over time for greater well-being and peace of mind.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I got interested in this book after a So. Cal doctor ,experiencing burnout, stated that this book "changed my life" Well organized rapid progression thru mindfulness as it relates to modern neuroscience. Well developed concept of the I or self , it's reasons of evolving, and its limitations including the about of pain and suffering associated with it. Humans for the past 3000 years have been working out a better way to be. Rick Hanson masterfully presents an optional way of being. Bravo. I feel change already.

I just read Rick Hanson's book Buddha's Brain, a wonderful 'experience near' evoking presentation of the confluence of neuroscience, evolution, and 'felt sense' practice. A deceptively sophisticated 'book' that is in the 'service' of 'lived practice' enabling the reflective awareness of one's unique unfolding life source to nudge into experience within the mystery of the expanse, unnamable, of the ever emergent oneness. With less convoluted words a heartfelt journey at a number levels.

The authors have created both an interesting examination of the neuroscience underlying happiness and contentment, and a nice practical resource for how to use contemplative practices to cultivate serenity and emotional peace as well. This book will be profitable to anyone interested in either of those subjects, and will be especially attractive to anyone interested in both of them.

Rating: 4.5 stars out of 5 Buddha's Brain is a thought-provoking text that has many fascinating themes. Rick Hanson, the author of this book attended University California Los Angeles at age 16, and received one of the four "outstanding senior" awards. He later entered the graduate program at San Francisco State University earning his PhD in clinical psychology. Richard Mendius, the other author of this book also graduated from UCLA. Hanson has written other books prior to this particular one, but in 2009 Mendius and Hanson teamed up and the result was Buddha's Brain. The Buddha's Brain incorporates the practice of meditation and field of neuroscience to explain how it can change one's brain. This book is informative, and easy to understand. Therefore, I would highly recommend it to anyone yearning to learn more about the ancient practice and teachings of Buddhism, and how it relates to neuroscience of the brain. Buddha's Brain explains to its audience of how one's mind can shape their brain. This book takes into account the importance of one's mind and the effectiveness it has on changing his or her life positively. The four main categories offered are suffering, happiness, wisdom, and love. Within the major sections there are chapters having to do with nutrition, kindness, relationships, focus, and relaxation. These aspects are all put into perspective from an ancient teaching point of view, more specifically Buddha's instruction. Supported by science the book offers the reader ways of overcoming any suffering in order to live a healthier and happier life. Each major section of the book provides neuroscience as a supplemental guide to the reader. Brain and neuron anatomy are offered within the text, providing helpful understandings of why and where things like feelings, moods, or thoughts may occur. The book is set up in a systematic fashion, which works well in order to make clear portrayals to the reader. For example, the book begins with the theme of suffering, probably to draw the reader in almost like an infomercial, enabling one to relate to problems

mentioned. The cause of distress within your mind, which ultimately hinders your brain, is introduced along with other aspects of misery. Suffering is then later explained in a more scientifically, while giving the reader information about the evolution of the brain and where some of these feeling are associated with regard to the human brain. The next section titled " Happiness" begins by relating the Buddhists Noble Eightfold Path to happiness, where this would prevent or eliminate harmful memories. This part then goes on to give the reader techniques in order to eliminate things from the mind that may affect one's happiness. Things like meditation are mentioned, followed by the science supporting these techniques. The third part to the book is called " Love" which begins with the evolution of relationships and love. Later chapters provide useful techniques for the reader to acquire love in their life through relationships while suppressing hate. The last section of the book is titled, "Wisdom" and immediately jumps into the "how" of the function of your brain while paying attention and how mindfulness leads to wisdom. Wisdom in the neuroscience explanation is related to the five traditional factors that steady the mind. Later chapters in this section are similar to the other three sections by providing techniques for the readers to achieve more wisdom in his or her life. The authors also provides the reader with a section at the end of each chapter called, "Key Points," which helps the reader better understand the main message Hanson is trying to get across and what should be taken away from that particular section. This "summary" section of the book was something I enjoyed the most, because it enabled me to piece things together. Another section in the book I will keep in mind for the future is the last chapter of the book, which goes more into more neuroscience. The chapter is called, "Nutritional Neurochemistry," and is written by Jan Hanson. It covers many different chemicals that are in foods and vitamins that should be taken or minimized in order to benefit your daily lives. For example, in this chapter Hanson states things such as sugar intake should be limited because overtime it has a wearing effect on the hippocampus. Also, a piece of information that is very interesting in this chapter had to do with taking omega-3 fatty acids, because it is something more and more people are doing lately. This paragraph informs the reader that omega-3 fatty acids are crucial for brain development, and the promotion or neuronal growth. This chapter in the book was perhaps my favorite. The Buddhist teachings were all supported by neuroscience, which was what personally kept my attention. Hanson provides diagrams and pictures to better explain the "how" some of the techniques work. An example of this was in a chapter about suffering and its evolution, where Hanson provides a picture of the brain labeled with areas like the amygdala and the hippocampus and then later explains that the amygdala sends pulses for both a general warning and a fast-track signal to the fight-or-flight neural and hormonal systems. The Buddhist tradition and

techniques that offer people to find love, wisdom, and happiness are now supported by neuroscience, and Hanson has provided us a guide to better our daily lives. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in improving his or her life or simply learning more about neuroscience. This book is a quick and easy read, that although seems repetitive in structure at times, will keep the one's attention, simply because it has the potential to relate to other peoples' lives if they let it. The techniques suggested throughout can be a healthy solution to many common problems and feelings people have. Being a competitive athlete, college student, and leading a stress filled life like many other people I found the relaxing techniques such as meditation very interesting. The scientific support Hanson offers only makes these techniques more believable, which in itself makes them much more likely to work. The way I relate to the book is in a subtle manner compared to all of the information Hanson has to offer. He provides multiple ways for people to improve their quality of life. The Buddhist undertone of this book was linked to modern science throughout the text and stylistically, was presented in a very understandable manner. Overall this book offers interesting information that is general and basic enough for anyone to understand. One does not have to be a neurosurgeon to understand the major themes and information given. Buddha's Brain: happiness, love and wisdom, offers readers both the "how" and the "why" one should go about changing to ensure a life with more happiness, love, and wisdom. This is done in a very fascinating style, relating the roots and teaching of Buddhism, which are then tied in with neuroscience. Having a scientific theme, the book is general enough for a non-science audience. Although there is some repetitiveness with the formatting of this book making different ideas almost blend together, I recommend it because it has the potential to aid people to live a better life, by using techniques that Hanson proves through science.

This is a very well thought out book. As a former Psych/Physiology major I, for one, appreciated the well researched information about the inner workings of the brain during meditation, emotional expressions, relaxation and so on. Aside from the intellectual stimulation, I was also taken by the practices of various mind exercises in order to relax the mind and achieve some sort of meditative state. I am not the type that follows any one practice or any one "guru" but this book really has tons of useful information on how to achieve inner peace through various strategies. Definitely a great read.

A very fine book, very clearly written. Even those unfamiliar with Buddhism can find this book to be useful. It successfully ties the philosophy and practice of Buddhism to neuroscience, explaining how

it's possible to reshape your life by reshaping your thinking. Not just a straight narrative, it's well organized in sections of easy-to-learn skills that can bring the reader closer to living a more fulfilling life. I have a copy myself, but this one was purchased as gift for a teenager, skeptical that everyday mindfulness and meditation could alleviate anxiety, fear, anger. Knowing all too well about the emotional roller coaster ride of adolescence, I felt this book could teach some of the valuable methods needed to cope, without the (perceived) preaching of parents, teachers, and other books, more aptly categorized as "self-help." Linking it to science rather than spiritualism increased its credibility. I believe it's already having a positive effect that will grow over time. Helpful to me as well, it speaks to a wide audience. Readers of all ages and backgrounds (including various religious beliefs -- it's not about worship or prayer) can benefit from the insights here. I consider it life's "how-to manual".

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