

Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom

By Rick Hanson

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If you change your brain, you can change your life.

Great teachers like the Buddha, Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, and Gandhi were all 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, and more and more, we are learning that it's possible to strengthen positive brain states.

By combining breakthroughs in neuroscience with insights from thousands of years of mindfulness 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 your brain for more fulfilling relationships, a deeper spiritual life, and a greater sense of inner confidence and worth. Using guided meditations and mindfulness exercises, you'll learn how to activate the brain states of calm, joy, and compassion instead of worry, sorrow, and anger. Most importantly, you will foster positive psychological growth that will literally change the way you live in your day-to-day life.

This book presents an unprecedented intersection of psychology, neurology, and contemplative practice, and is filled with practical tools and skills that you can use every day to tap the unused potential of your brain and rewire it over time for greater well-being and peace of mind.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A wonderfully comprehensive book. The authors have made it easy to understand how our minds function and how to make changes so that we can live happier, fuller lives."
—Sharon Salzberg, author of *Lovingkindness*

"This is simply the best book I have read on why and how we can shape our brains to be peaceful and happy. This is a book that will literally change your brain and your life."
—Jennifer Louden, author of *The Woman's Comfort Book* and *The Life Organizer*

"Buddha's Brain is a significant contribution to understanding the interface between science and meditation in the path of transformation. Illuminating."
—Joseph Goldstein, author of *A Heart Full of Peace* and *One Dharma*

"Buddha's Brain is compelling, easy to read, and quite educational. The book skillfully answers the central question of each of our lives—how to be happy—by presenting the core precepts of Buddhism integrated with a primer on how our brains function. This book will be helpful to anyone wanting to understand time-tested ways of skillful living backed up by up-to-date science."
—Frederic Luskin, PhD, author of *Forgive for Good* and director of Stanford Forgiveness Projects

"I wish I had a science teacher like Rick Hanson when I went to school. *Buddha's Brain* is at once fun, fascinating, and profound. It not only shows us effective ways to develop real happiness in our lives, but also explains physiologically how and why they work. As he instructs us to do with positive experiences, take in all the good information this book offers and savor it."
—James Baraz, author of *Awakening Joy* and cofounder of Spirit Rock Meditation Center

"With the mind of a scientist, the perspective of a psychologist, and the wise heart of a parent and devoted meditator, Rick Hanson has created a guide for all of us who want to learn about and apply the scintillating new research that embraces neurology, psychology, and authentic spiritual inquiry. Up-to-date discoveries

combined with state-of-the-art practices make this book an engaging read. *Buddha's Brain* is at the top of my list!"
—Richard A. Heckler, PhD, assistant professor at John F. Kennedy University in Pleasant Hill, CA

"An illuminating guide to the emerging confluence of cutting-edge neuropsychology and ancient Buddhist wisdom filled with practical suggestions on how to gradually rewire your brain for greater happiness. Lucid, good-humored, and easily accessible."
—John J. Prendergast, PhD, adjunct associate professor of psychology at California Institute of Integral Studies and senior editor of *The Sacred Mirror* and *Listening from the Heart of Silence*

"*Buddha's Brain* will show you how mental practices, informed by the contemplative traditions, can increase your capacity for experiencing happiness and peace. This book provides a scientific understanding of these methods, and clear guidance for practices that cultivate a wise and free heart."
—Tara Brach, PhD author of *Radical Acceptance*

"This book enables us to understand the whys and hows of our human operating system so we can make more informed actions that allow us to live our lives more fully, compassionately, and with greater well-being and kindness towards others and ourselves. What I find exciting about *Buddha's Brain* is Rick Hanson's ability to clearly delineate the root causes of suffering and explain pertinent ways we can actually change these causes and effect lasting change on all levels of our mind, body, and interpersonal relationships. His informative, relaxed, and easy-to-read style of writing made me want to pick up this book again and again and dive ever more deeply into the complexities of our human engineering. Buddha's Brain is now on my recommendation list for all my students and teachers-in-training."
—Richard C. Miller, PhD, founding president of Integrative Restoration Institute

"Numerous writings in recent years have exacerbated the traditional rift between science and religion; however, there has been a refreshing parallel movement in the opposite direction. Neuroscientists have become increasingly interested in using first-person introspective inquiries of the mind to complement their third-person, Western scientific investigations of the brain. Buddhist contemplative practices are particularly amenable to such collaboration, inviting efforts to find neurobiological explanations for Buddhist philosophy. Stripped of religious baggage, *Buddha's Brain* clearly describes how modern concepts of evolutionary and cognitive neurobiology support core Buddhist teachings and practice. This book should have great appeal for those seeking a secular spiritual path, while also raising many testable hypotheses for interested neuroscientists."
—Jerome Engel, Jr., MD, PhD, Jonathan Sinay Distinguished Professor of Neurology, Neurobiology, and Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles

"*Buddha's Brain* makes a significant contribution to the current dynamic dialogue among neuroscience, psychology, and Buddhist disciplines of mind training. Drawing on the wisdom born of their own meditation practice and their scientific backgrounds, the authors point again and again to the possibilities of the deep

transformation of our minds and lives."
—Christina Feldman, author of *Compassion* and *The Buddhist Path to Simplicity*

"Recent developments in psychology and the neurosciences have led to clear and powerful insights about how our brains work and how these neurological functions shape our experience of the world. These insights are profoundly congruent with the wisdom that has been developed over thousands of years in the contemplative traditions. The authors of *Buddha's Brain* have given us a concise and practical guide to how these two currents of knowledge can be used to transform our capacity to engage both ourselves and others with wisdom, compassion, and mindfulness."
—Robert D. Truog, MD, professor at Harvard Medical School, executive director of the Institute for Professionalism and Ethical Practice, and senior associate in critical care medicine at Children's Hospital, Boston

"A clear introduction to some basic principles of neuroscience and dharma."
—Roger Walsh, MD, PhD, professor at the University of California, Irvine, and author of *Essential Spirituality*

"*Buddha's Brain* brilliantly reveals the teachings of the Buddha in the light of modern neuroscience. This is a practical guide to changing your reality. This is your brain on Dharma!"
—Wes "Scoop" Nisker, author of *Essential Crazy Wisdom* and editor of *Inquiring Mind*

"Solidly grounded in the latest neuroscientific research, and supported by a deep understanding of contemplative practice, this book is accessible, compelling, and profound—a crystallization of practical wisdom!"
—Philip David Zelazo, PhD, Nancy M. and John E. Lindahl Professor at the Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota

From the Publisher
In **Buddha's Brain**, a clinical psychologist and a senior neurologist explain how the brain benefits from contemplative practice and show readers how to develop greater happiness, love, and wisdom by drawing from breakthroughs in modern neuroscience.

About the Author

Rick Hanson, PhD, is a psychologist and meditation teacher. A *summa cum laude* graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles, he cofounded the Wellspring Institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom and edits the Wise Brain Bulletin. He and his wife have two children.

Richard Mendius, MD, is a neurologist and cofounder of the Wellspring Institute for Neuroscience and Contemplative Wisdom. He has taught medicine at University of California, Los Angeles, and Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA. He also teaches weekly meditation classes at San Quentin State Prison. He and his wife have three children.

Foreword writer Daniel J. Siegel, MD, is executive director of the Mindsight Institute and an associate clinical professor of psychiatry in the School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is author of *The Developing Mind*, *The Mindful Brain*, and other books, and is founding editor of the Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology.

Preface writer Jack Kornfield, PhD, is cofounder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA, and a founding teacher of Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, CA. He is author of many books, including *A Path with Heart* and *The Wise Heart*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Colleen Holden:

Are you kind of stressful person, only have 10 or 15 minute in your moment to upgrading your mind skill or thinking skill possibly analytical thinking? Then you are experiencing problem with the book in comparison with can satisfy your small amount of time to read it because all of this time you only find guide that need more time to be learn. Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom can be your answer as it can be read by you actually who have those short time problems.

Melanie Roberts:

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