



The Private Life of the Brain: Emotions, Consciousness, and the Secret Life of the Self

Susan A. Greenfield

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"Drawing on many different sources-the effects of neurological disorders and injuries, the actions of drugs, the character of thought in dreams, in schizophrenia, in reverie, and in childhood-Susan Greenfield has given us a synthesis which is challenging, original, readable, and personal."-Oliver Sacks How does the human brain produce your private world?

In this groundbreaking exploration, neuroscientist and author Susan Greenfield demystifies the private life of the brain. She examines the physical basis of our emotions and searches for the answer to one of the most enduring mysteries in modern science: How does the brain create a unique, subjective experience for each one of us?

Utilizing cutting-edge research and compelling personal anecdotes, Greenfield reveals that emotions, triggered by individual life experiences, are the very foundation upon which our brains build our unique minds. In this absorbing, lyrical exploration, Dr. Greenfield presents a provocative new theory that provides an illuminating glimpse into the human brain and reveals the astonishing essence of who we are.

"This is one of those rare books that can make a reader happy to have been led to think."-Booklist

The Private Life of the Brain: Emotions, Consciousness, and the Secret Life of the Self Details

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From Reader Review The Private Life of the Brain: Emotions, Consciousness, and the Secret Life of the Self for online ebook

Daniel Wood says

"What is happening in the brain when we drink too much alcohol, get high on Ecstasy or experience road rage?"

These and other questions neuroscientist Susan Greenfield attempts to answer whilst proposing a hypothesis on how emotion, consciousness and mind are formed within the brain.

A fairly heavy read that had me rereading several parts to properly understand the reasoning, this is nonetheless a very enjoyable book. The chapters on The Child and The Junkie I found particularly interesting.

A criticism is that Greenfield tends to go to some lengths to poke holes in conflicting theories proposed by others. Where explaining the logical or scientific flaws might suffice, Greenfield has a tendency to pick up on analogies used by authors and then deliberately stretch these beyond breaking point.

Aneta Jackowska-Musiol says

The author's attempt to explain how consciousness is represented in our brain made me marvel on how perfectly God has created us. Noticing a light requires a compatible work of 10.000.000 neurons in our brain that cooperate with each other with a speed of 10.000 cm per second. It is enough to remove a fluid-filled microtubules from a cell and this process would slow down to one meter per 50 years!

Sonal says

Enjoyed every bit, very enlightening, pleased to know why somethings happen

Darron says

I agree that it's a tough read at times, but overall found it to be a very interesting and thought provoking book. Has certainly equipped me with a better understanding of the workings of the brain and it's myriad of chemical, electrical and cellular processes/interactions. Susan's model of consciousness and emotions is heavily based on research and comes across as being at the forefront of books covering neuroscience. Whether this is your field of interest or not it's certainly worth reading

Luca Campobasso says

Though it was a rather difficult read, because of the author's digression habits, the content was pretty

enjoyable and I got many more insights in emotions' inner working. Who is searching for a read dense of information but not too heavy, it is suggested. Also for whom doesn't know anything about this field, because of the lack of too-technical language.

Wade Profe says

Interesting like most neuroscience books, but like most neuroscience books, many issues are coloured by the authors presuppositions and become a little convoluted.

Lise says

I enjoyed the book a lot, but found it a bit difficult to slog through, probably because I don't have any background in neurology at all. The endnotes are very clear and helpful, though, and she lays out her model very clearly.

I'm still a bit confused on the working definition of consciousness, though. If it's purely 'self awareness' then why are dreams considered non conscious? I was also bothered that the quantum association was added, since it seems to be predicated on a pretty wacky strong-copernican interpretation of quantum theory.

Other than those two points, I enjoyed the book very much.

Colin Richardson says

A little too theoretical for my liking, but a good overview of current neuroscience research.

MiChAeLPaUl says

The inner workings of the brain ignite as the gates of consciousness open up for the mind.

Frank Jude says

Nueroscientist Greenfield offers up a hypothesis waiting for more advanced technology to test it. The good news is that it IS falsifiable, so it's scientifically coherent. Central to her thinking is that the brain creates consciousness and the unique sense of a self from the mechanics of neuronal functioning that correlate with emotions. Thus, Greenfield says, emotions are the most basic form of consciousness and determine, ultimately, the depth and or breath (or lack of such) of consciousness. The more intensively we feel, the less sense of self is experienced. This sounds true from experience (think orgasm, drug-induced euphoria, dance etc). Sensorial presence fully embodied in the present moment leaves little space for what Patanjali might call *asmita* the thought of "I-am-ness" to arise.

Greenfield sounds like a Buddhist when she writes:

"We are not fixed entities, certainly not as we grow up, but neither once we live as adults from one year to the next, and even from one day to the next. Even within a day, within an hour, we are different. All the time, experiences leave their mark and in turn determine how we interpret new experiences.... self consciousness itself is not fixed. According to the idea developed here, it will ebb and flow in inverse relation to emotions, from one moment to the next. Most important of all, then, we cannot expect, or even want, to be in a state of pleasure all the time. Such is the paradox of adult human existence -- the private life of the brain."

Gael says

Easy to grasp. Very interesting.

Laura says

I had to read this for one of my classes in college. I really enjoyed reading it. I am glad that there are more than one kind of intelligence, and I don't have to be book smart to be considered intelligent.

Azn says

This book provides a wonderful insight into the brain.

It is a challenging read which will serve to broaden your linguistic capabilities whilst enlightening you about the complexities of the human brain and its interaction with the environment. I recommend it to those who are passionate about neuroscience and overall human emotion.

However, I would have liked for there to be a greater discussion on neuroplasticity, which was only vaguely touched on.

Adrienne says

This took me two attempts and months to get through. Interesting content but I took issue with the language. Especially the lack of person first language. This was published 16 years ago so I would be interested to know if Greenfield would write the book any differently now.

Pirronne says

not as readable as "a user's guide to the brain," but very interesting. it takes a while to get used to her sophisticated lines of logic, but it's totally worth looking at. just read the user's guide first, i'd say.
