

The Well-Tuned Brain: Neuroscience and the Life Well Lived

By Peter C. Whybrow MD

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In this optimistic and inspiring book, Peter Whybrow, the prize-winning author of *American Mania*, returns to offer a prescription for genuine human progress.

The Well-Tuned Brain is a call to action. Swept along by the cascading advances of today's technology, most of us take for granted that progress brings improvement. Despite spectacular material advance, however, the evidence grows that we are failing to create a sustainable future for humanity. We are out of tune with the planet that nurtures us.

Technology itself is not the problem, as Whybrow explains, but rather our behavior. Throughout its evolution the ancient brain that guides us each day has been focused on short-term survival. But fortunately we are intensely social creatures. Without the caring behaviors that flow from intimate attachments to others, we would be relying on a brain that is only marginally adapted to the complexity of the problems we must now face together. Today we must grapple with survival, not in its immediacy but over the long term.


The first step in finding our way forward is to reexamine who we are as creatures of this planet. To this end, Whybrow takes us on a fascinating tour of self-discovery, drawing extensively upon his decades of experience as a psychiatrist and his broad knowledge of neuroscience and human behavior.

Illustrated throughout with engaging personal stories, the book's trove of cutting-edge science is enriched by philosophical, historical, and cultural perspectives. What emerges is a summons to rediscover the essential virtues of earlier nurturing, of mentored education, and an engagement with the natural world through curiosity and imagination.

Neuroscience can open the search for a better future. But technology alone will not save us. To achieve success we will need the strength and wisdom of our better nature as humane social beings.

8 illustrations

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Editorial Review

Review

“Though *The Well-Tuned Brain* is packed with powerful recent research, its punch comes from the philosophical meditation at its core. Peter Whybrow ponders how living our best lives can make the best world. This book is a courageous manifesto about human frailty that delineates the care with which we need to treat ourselves and those around us. We ignore its message at terrible personal and social cost.” (Andrew Solomon, National Book Award–winning author of *The Noonday Demon* and *Far from the Tree*)

“In *The Well-Tuned Brain* Peter Whybrow combines gripping big themes with an abundance of fascinating stories. The big themes revolve around the collision between our ancient human habits, our human brains often operating on autopilot, and the seductive material success of our modern market economy. You’ll find this book as rich and as thought-provoking as it is enjoyable.” (Jared Diamond, Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and *The World Until Yesterday*)

“As we face the biggest problems civilizations have ever confronted?climate change above all?it’s crucial that we understand why our brains are being hijacked in the wrong direction. Peter Whybrow’s book does exactly that, making it possible for us to summon the grace and will necessary to do the right thing.” (Bill McKibben, author of *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*)

About the Author

Peter C. Whybrow, MD, is director of the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at the University of California, Los Angeles. Born and educated in England, he is the author, among other books, of *A Mood Apart* and the award-winning *American Mania: When More Is Not Enough*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Louise Richards:

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