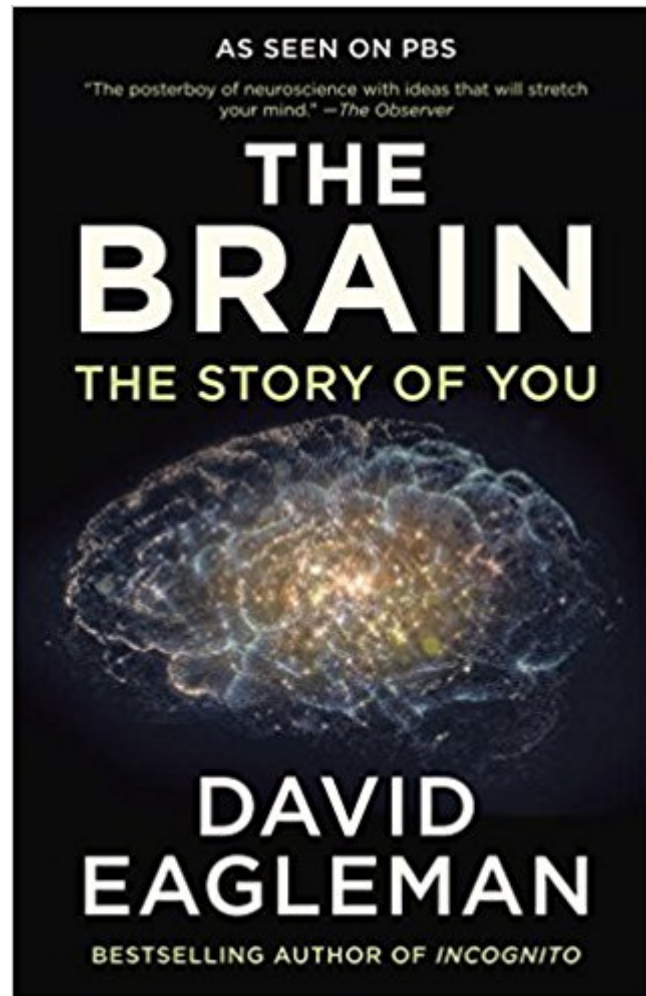




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# The Brain: The Story Of You



## Synopsis

Locked in the silence and darkness of your skull, your brain fashions the rich narratives of your reality and your identity. Join renowned neuroscientist David Eagleman for a journey into the questions at the mysterious heart of our existence. What is reality? Who are *you*? How do you make decisions? Why does your brain need other people? How is technology poised to change what it means to be human? In the course of his investigations, Eagleman guides us through the world of extreme sports, criminal justice, facial expressions, genocide, brain surgery, gut feelings, robotics, and the search for immortality. Strap in for a whistle-stop tour into the inner cosmos. In the infinitely dense tangle of billions of brain cells and their trillions of connections, something emerges that you might not have expected to see in there: *you*. This is the story of how your life shapes your brain, and how your brain shapes your life. (A companion to the six-part PBS series. Color illustrations throughout.)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nature "An ideal introduction to how biology generates the mind.... structured around crucial and wide-ranging questions, saturated with personal and social relevance. And Eagleman's answers are consistently clear, engaging and thought-provoking." Brian Eno "David Eagleman's wide-ranging roundup of the current state of knowledge about the brain is concise, accessible and often very surprising. It's a strange new world inside your head." Stephen Fry "David Eagleman's *The Brain* is an astonishing read. On every page there is a revelation so fantastic

as to make one gasp. It would be impossible to take in if we didn't all possess that impossibly extraordinary thing, a brain. Eagleman comes closer than anyone to solving the mystery of how to find the self inside the grey electric mush between our ears. •Ruby Wax"David Eagleman makes it easy to comprehend the most complex collection of cells in the Cosmos - our brain. If neuroscience had a rock legend this would be him. •

David Eagleman is a neuroscientist at Stanford University. His scientific research is published in journals from Science to Nature, and he is also the author of the internationally bestselling books *Sum* and *Incognito*. He is the writer and presenter of the companion BBC television series *The Brain*. [www.eagleman.com](http://www.eagleman.com)

*The Brain: The Story of You* by David Eagleman "The Brain" is an excellent companion piece to the six-part PBS series of the same title. Neuroscientist and best-selling author David Eagleman, educates and fascinates the general public with a wonderful popular-science examination of our brains. This captivating 224-page book includes the following six chapters: 1. Who am I?, 2. What is reality?, 3. Who's in control?, 4. How do I decide?, 5. Do I need you?, and 6. Who will we be?.

Positives:

1. Popular science at its best. Accessible, enlightening and fun to read.
2. The fascinating topic of neuroscience in the masterful hands of David Eagleman.
3. Full of colorful illustrations that complement the excellent narrative.
4. Eagleman's writing style is easy on the brain.
5. His goal is to educate the general public and he succeeds.
5. Full of interesting facts spruced throughout the book. As many as two million new connections, or synapses, are formed every second in an infant's brain. By age two, a child has over one hundred trillion synapses, double the number an adult has.
6. A good description of the teen's brain. Beyond social awkwardness and emotional hypersensitivity, the teen brain is set up to take risks.
7. Goes over some of the key components of the brain.
8. The scientists were particularly interested in a small area of the brain called the hippocampus "vital for memory, and, in particular, spatial memory.
8. Includes interesting stories. The story of Charles Whitman is quite enlightening with major repercussions on a society that values evidence.
9. Describes how memories are formed. Our past is not a faithful record. Instead it's a reconstruction, and sometimes it can border on mythology. When we review our life memories, we should do so with the awareness that not all the details are accurate.
10. Describes some of the tools of a neuroscientist. One way to measure that is with electroencephalography (EEG), which captures a summary of billions of neurons firing

by picking up weak electrical signals on the outside of the skull. 11. Considers important philosophical questions. Does the idea of an immaterial soul reconcile with neuroscientific evidence? Find out. 12. Describes reality. "One way to measure that is with electroencephalography (EEG), which captures a summary of billions of neurons firing by picking up weak electrical signals on the outside of the skull." "Everything you experience "every sight, sound, smell" rather than being a direct experience, is an electrochemical rendition in a dark theater. "The slice of reality that we can see is limited by our biology."

13. Describes consciousness. "the conscious you is only the smallest part of the activity of your brain. Your actions, your beliefs and your biases are all driven by networks in your brain to which you have no conscious access." "I think of consciousness as the CEO of a large sprawling corporation, with many thousands of subdivisions and departments all collaborating and interacting and competing in different ways."

14. Describes how the brain decides. "It's easy to think about the brain commanding the body from on high" but in fact the brain is in constant feedback with the body.

15. An interesting look at willpower. "willpower isn't something that we just exercise" it's something we deplete.

16. A look at social neuroscience. "Our social skills are deeply rooted in our neural circuitry" and understanding this circuitry is the basis of a young field of study called social neuroscience.

17. A fascinating look at Syndrome E and its repercussions. "Syndrome E is characterized by a diminished emotional reactivity, which allows repetitive acts of violence." "Genocide is only possible when dehumanization happens on a massive scale, and the perfect tool for this job is propaganda."

18. A look at the future of neuroscience. "The secret to understanding our success" and our future opportunity "is the brain's tremendous ability to adjust, known as brain plasticity."

19. Can consciousness be uploaded? Find out.

20. A helpful glossary of terms.

Negatives:

1. As expected, a book this succinct will leave some interesting neuroscientific topics on the table. The topic of free will gets shortchanged.
2. A book intended for the general public and a companion piece no less, will lack depth.
3. The eBook edition has some glitches, as an example, extra blank pages inserted.
4. Endnotes included but no formal bibliography.

In summary, this book exemplifies my love for science. Eagleman is a master of his craft and a skilled writer. He covers complex topics on the neuroscience with ease and provides the general public with an appetizer of knowledge. Neuroscience is a fascinating field in its infancy and Eagleman successfully whets the public's interest. I highly recommend it!

Further recommendations: "Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain" by the same author,

• and • by Ray Kurzweil, • by Michael S. Gazzaniga, • The Human Brain Book • by Rita Carter, • The Tell-Tale Brain • by V.S. Ramachandran, • Hallucinations • and • The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat • by Oliver Sacks, • A Whole New Mind • by Daniel H. Pink, • In Search of Memory • by Eric R. Kandel, • Self Comes to Mind • by Antonio Damasio, and • The Mind • edited by John Brockman.

One of the best books I've read in a long time. I often get bored with a book and don't finish, but this kept my interest. Eagleman does such a great job of explaining himself that you don't have to be a scientist to understand it. This book made so much sense and it answered those questions that you have wondered your whole life. I highlighted much of it and find myself rereading parts. I would recommend it to anyone even remotely interested in why human beings act the way they do.

An interesting read, but it read like a transcript from a PBS series (which it might have been). Covered a lot of information at a pretty high level and the last chapter (of six) was pure speculation about how we may try and recreate our brains digitally so that we never die. I could have done without the last chapter. Overall a decent book if you want to get an appreciation for the complexity of the brain, but if you have some prior knowledge, I would guess this would leave you a bit disappointed. And...if you want to save time, watch the PBS series on this instead.

This book should not only be read by everyone, but reread and digested. This new concept of how the brain has become our self and our window to the world can be our beginning of a more accurate idea of who we are and how we fit into the universe. His examples of scientific studies of how the brain works are described convincingly, bringing the reader face to face with the reality of how human beings fit into the scheme of the universe.

I bought this book to clarify how the brain works in the wake of a cerebral hemorrhage. It was the most informative of any of the books I bought.

Very interesting book with lots of clinical examples . An easy read. Read it twice to let concepts sink in.

It is a good companion to the TV series, although I must say I enjoyed his previous brain book far more ("Incognito").

Very interesting read. I recommend print version over audio because of the images needed for some parts.

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