The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom

Buddha’s Brain
Rick Hanson Ph.D
Richard Mendius MD
New Harbinger Publications, Inc
Price : $17.95
Pages : 360

Reviewed by Neel Kamal Sharma


The aim of the book is to educate people to enhance the power of positive emotions in their lives. In this book the author explains how our brains have evolved towards keeping us safe from external threats. Our intrinsic negativity leads to suffering. The author indicates that by using meditation and by the ways of the Buddhism, we can cause the reactions in the brain which stimulate the nervous system to become more positive. And it is rightly said that if we act positively then positive things follow. Therefore, we can use the Buddhist’s philosophy to achieve scientific mental health benefits.

This book is very helpful to those who are not familiar with Buddhism and are seeking alternative therapies to reduce stress. We have been taught that to remain happy one has to change thoughts. This book is combination of Psychology, Neuroscience and Buddhism which guide one to offer effective methods to live a life which is fully present in the moment. The authors describe how thousands of generations of social and environmental evolutionary pressures have wired our brains and bodies to work the way they do, and how we can use our mind to handle stress better, and experience greater peace and joy.

In this book, Buddhism not only tells that why one should act on good things but also tells you how to get positive output with some basic awareness skills. This book tells the readers how to create positive feelings and how emotional and health benefits can induce strong immune and cardiovascular system creating a positive cycle.

The chapters are very powerful and contain a lot of information. These are divided into smaller sections, which are easy to read. There is also a chapter summary at the end of each chapter. The key points explain how brain works, how one can pay better attention to the way one thinks.

Many of their methods show how to activate brain states by consciously changing the association between an event and its painful or pleasurable feelings. This can take a long time. Understanding the neuroscience behind the process can help us to be compassionate with ourselves when “swimming against ancient currents within our nervous system.” This is a good working manual to help us to become who we already are.

This book presents scientific knowledge about the brain using meditation in daily life. It is a very good book in many ways, but it has one drawback. Basically, the authors do not explain that the exercises they describe may lead to pain and frustration. Authors inform if any one exercise is uncomfortable then the reader should stop it.

Neel Kamal Sharma
Senior Research Fellow
Neuroscience research Lab
PGIMER
Chandigarh, INDIA
E-mail: kmlbio@yahoo.co.in

doi : 10.5214/ans.0972.7531.1118110