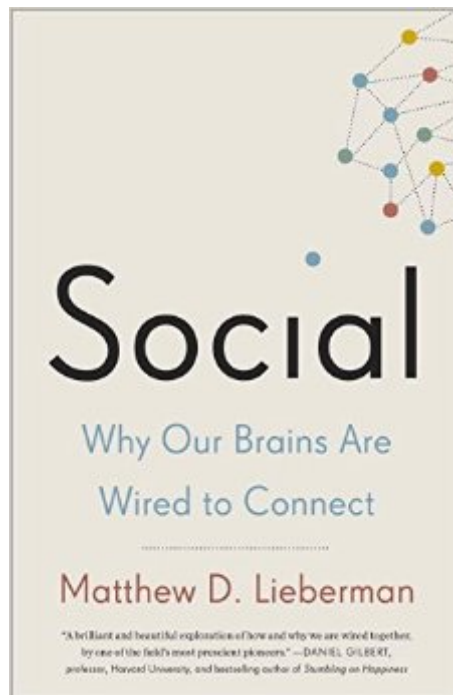# Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired To Connect

Synopsis

We are profoundly social creatures â " more than we know.Â In Social, renowned psychologist Matthew Lieberman explores groundbreaking research in social neuroscience revealing that our need to connect with other people is even more fundamental, more basic, than our need for food or shelter.Â Because of this, our brain uses its spare time to learn about the social world â " other people and our relation to them. It is believed that we must commit 10,000 hours to master a skill.Â According to Lieberman, each of us has spent 10,000 hours learning to make sense of people and groups by the time we are ten. Â Social argues that our need to reach out to and connect with others is a primary driver behind our behavior.Â We believe that pain and pleasure alone guide our actions.Â Yet, new research using fMRI â " including a great deal of original research conducted by Lieberman and his UCLA lab -- shows that our brains react to social pain and pleasure in much the same way as they do to physical pain and pleasure.Â Fortunately, the brain has evolved sophisticated mechanisms for securing our place in the social world.Â We have a unique ability to read other peopleâ ™s minds, to figure out their hopes, fears, and motivations, allowing us to effectively coordinate our lives with one another.Â And our most private sense of who we are is intimately linked to the important people and groups in our lives.Â This wiring often leads us to restrain our selfish impulses for the greater good.Â These mechanisms lead to behavior that might seem irrational, but is really just the result of our deep social wiring and necessary for our success as a species. Â Based on the latest cutting edge research, the findings in Social have important real-world implications.Â Our schools and businesses, for example, attempt to minimalize social distractions.Â But this is exactly the wrong thing to do to encourage engagement and learning, and literally shuts down the social brain, leaving powerful neuro-cognitive resources untapped.Â The insights revealed in this pioneering book suggest ways to improve learning in schools, make the workplace more productive, and improve our overall well-being.

Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books (October 7, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307889106

ISBN-13: 978-0307889102

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (132 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #12,130 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #28 inÂ Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Neuropsychology   #37 inÂ Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Neuropsychology   #58 inÂ Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Social Psychology & Interactions

Customer Reviews

"Social: Why Our Brains are Wired to Connect," by Matthew Lieberman, is an outstanding and fascinating layperson's guide to the new field of social cognitive neuroscience--an interdisciplinary field that "uses the tools of neuroscience to study the mental mechanisms that create, frame, regulate, and respond to our experience of the social world." In the process of investigating these mechanisms, this science advances our knowledge of the evolutionary path that continue to mold our social brain. The book seeks to answer: why are we wired to connect socially; what advantages did our species gain by evolving along this evolutionary path; how can we use this knowledge to improve society?This is the perhaps the fifth layperson's guide to neuroscience that I've read in the past few years. Not all have been easy or pleasurable to read. Much of neurology seems inherently difficult, but it doesn't have to be. It the right hands it can be accessible and mesmerizing. In my estimation, this book compares very well to last year's bestselling neuroscience book by V. S. Ramachandran entitled, "The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human." If you are not familiar with Ramachandran, saying this is high praise for Lieberman and this book. After all, Ramachandran is considered one of the leading lights of the academic neuroscience community. He is also a profoundly gifted writer. Lieberman is not far behind; like Ramachandran, he shows an extraordinary ability to convey difficult concepts clearly and personably.I've always loved psychology.

The author sets out to tell us that human brains have evolved to weigh social considerations, our interactions with other people, far more heavily than we realize. Unfortunately, he chooses to accomplish this by telling us we never had any idea that they were important at all. Everyone knows social factors matter. Even when you're fed up with everyone and just want to be left alone to read a book or play with your toys, you rely on others to write the book or make the toys. And you always rely on others for food, protection, healthcare, hey, for existence--even if you care nothing for love, companionship, stimulation and other pure social joys. On the flip side, interactions with people can be deadly, so you have to care. There may be a few hermits who live solitary and self-sufficient

lives, but everyone knows they are both rare and weird.This is not a single annoying sentence at the beginning of the book, it is pounded home every few pages. For example, "People often talk as if their company, job, or workplace is solely about getting a paycheck and helping the company increase profits. This is all predicated on the norm of self-interest--the belief that material self-interest is the only thing that motivates people individually and corporately. We have been bombarded with this idea for so long that it's the only conversation we know how to have about the workplace." Huh? Someone may be following the author around bombarding him, but I have seldom heard that idea expressed. Read any book, watch any movie or TV show, and you see it's about people pursuing goals with respect to other people: love, sex, respect, kindness, fear and lots of other stuff. Most organizations are not for-profit corporations, they have explicit social goals and often no material ones.

Let me say up front that I enjoyed this book, but I had some issues with it. Let me say what I did *not* like first, and then what I did.The title ends "Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect," leading the reader to expect this book to be largely about evolutionary psychology -- explaining *why* the brain does what it does requires investigating the adaptive value of brain features over the history of humans and beyond. That is absolutely *not* what this book is about. Just striking the word "Why" from the title would make it much more appropriate to the book's actual content.In fact, there were places where I thought the author *should* have dived into the evolutionary mechanics but did not. For example, in the discussion about altruism there was nothing about the fact that altruism is perfectly explained when you stop focusing on individuals as the unit of selection and correctly focus on the genes themselves. No mention of Tit-for-Tat and related strategies, ESSes, or anything of the sort. In fact the author seemed to imply that explanations from other quarters got it wrong, and the book was setting the record straight. Hmmm. In another section the author talked about our social wiring as though it had evolved for the good of the species, but again, evolution operates primarily at the level of genes, not species. A gene or gene combination that makes an organism more successful at reproducing will increase in frequency in a population, that's all -- evolution is not a mystic hand trying to make a better species. A for-the-good-of-the-species argument is not a good one.The margins of my copy of the book are filled with notes, many of which are objections to conclusions drawn or the way something was presented.

Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect Wired to Connect: The Surprising Link Between Brain Science and Strong, Healthy Relationships The Crazy Makers: How the Food Industry Is Destroying

Our Brains and Harming Our Children Social Anxiety: Ultimate Guide to Overcoming Fear, Shyness, and Social Phobia to Achieve Success in All Social Situations (BONUS, Anxiety Relief, Social Anxiety Treatment) Social Security: Time for a Life of Leisure - The Guide of Secrets to Maximising Social Security Retirement Benefits and Planning Your Retirement (social ... disability, social security made simple) Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software Zombie Haiku: Good Poetry For Your...Brains Minds, Brains, and Law: The Conceptual Foundations of Law and Neuroscience Sex: This Book Includes - Tantric Sex: A Beginners Guide For Couples Based On The Art Of Tantra, Sex Positions: 21 Illustrated Sex Positions To F*ck Her Brains Out (Sex Techniques, Kama Sutra) Sex Positions:: 21 Illustrated Sex Positions To F*ck Her Brains Out Planes for Brains: 28 Innovative Origami Airplane Designs Why Can't My Child Behave?: Why Can't She Cope? Why Can't He Learn? The Feingold Diet updated for today's busy families IS THIS WHY AFRICA IS? (Why Africa is poor, Why Africa is not developing, What Africa needs, What Africa needs to develop): Africa, Africa, Africa, Africa Africa, Africa, Ebola, Ebola, Ebola, Ebola The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need—and What We Can Do About It Social Security Works!: Why Social Security Isn't Going Broke and How Expanding It Will Help Us All Social Security Works!: Why Social Security Isn't Going Broke and How Expanding It Will Help Us All The Cult of the Amateur: How blogs, MySpace, YouTube, and the rest of today's user-generated media are destroying our economy, our culture, and our values Our Story: 77 Hours That Tested Our Friendship and Our Faith Modified: GMOs and the Threat to Our Food, Our Land, Our Future Vaccine Epidemic: How Corporate Greed, Biased Science, and Coercive Government Threaten Our Human Rights, Our Health, and Our Children

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