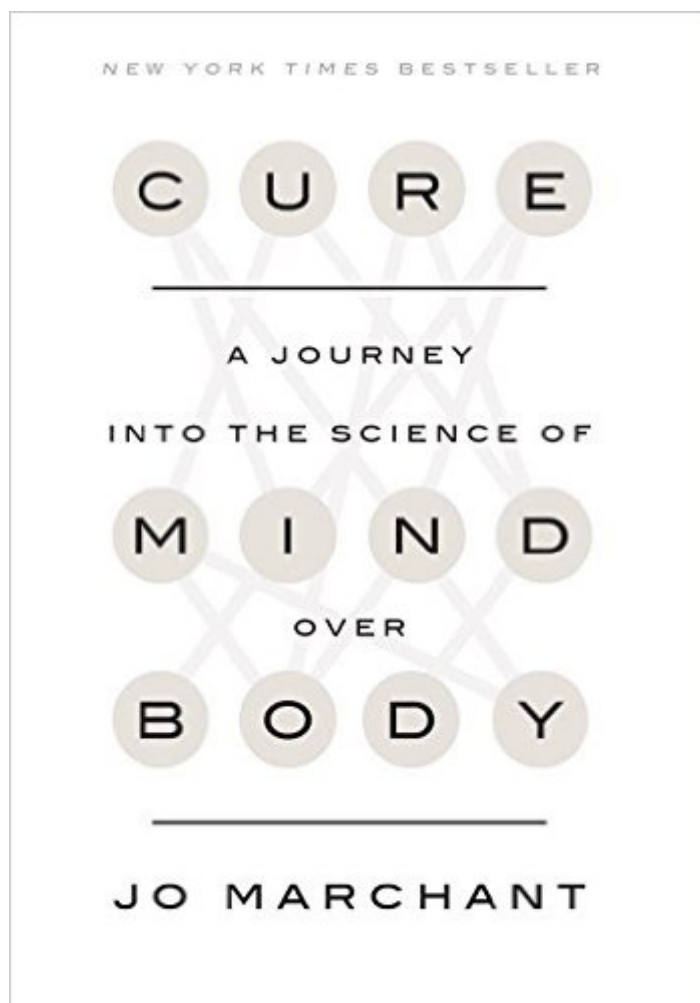


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Cure: A Journey Into The Science Of Mind Over Body



Synopsis

A New York Times Bestseller
Finalist for the Royal Society Insight Investment Science Book Prize
A rigorous, skeptical, deeply reported look at the new science behind the mind's surprising ability to heal the body
Have you ever felt a surge of adrenaline after narrowly avoiding an accident? Salivated at the sight (or thought) of a sour lemon? Felt turned on just from hearing your partner's voice? If so, then you've experienced how dramatically the workings of your mind can affect your body. Yet while we accept that stress or anxiety can damage our health, the idea of "healing thoughts" was long ago hijacked by New Age gurus and spiritual healers. Recently, however, serious scientists from a range of fields have been uncovering evidence that our thoughts, emotions and beliefs can ease pain, heal wounds, fend off infection and heart disease and even slow the progression of AIDS and some cancers. In *Cure*, award-winning science writer Jo Marchant travels the world to meet the physicians, patients and researchers on the cutting edge of this new world of medicine. We learn how meditation protects against depression and dementia, how social connections increase life expectancy and how patients who feel cared for recover from surgery faster. We meet Iraq war veterans who are using a virtual arctic world to treat their burns and children whose ADHD is kept under control with half the normal dose of medication. We watch as a transplant patient uses the smell of lavender to calm his hostile immune system and an Olympic runner shaves vital seconds off his time through mind-power alone. Drawing on the very latest research, Marchant explores the vast potential of the mind's ability to heal, lays out its limitations and explains how we can make use of the findings in our own lives. With clarity and compassion, *Cure* points the way towards a system of medicine that treats us not simply as bodies but as human beings.

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Customer Reviews

I thoroughly enjoyed this wide-ranging inquiry into the myriad ways the "workings of the mind" can affect your body. Jo Marchant, a PhD in genetics and medical microbiology, and a seasoned author, began her investigation into these phenomena with a great deal of skepticism towards "alternative medicine", and through the course of the book helps the reader understand what pieces of the non-traditional pie are worth further investigation. If you are skeptical about whack-a-doodle ideas related to your health, Marchant is the ideal author to open your eyes to the possibility that there are clinically-tested ways in which some seemingly whack-a-doodle ideas have proven their mettle. She is ideal because her writing is lively and engaging, and she maintains the open mind and clear eye of the scientist you wish more scientists would emulate. Throughout the book, though, you can see the challenges presented by the massive medical Establishment and the pharmaceutical industry. Not only are doctors hesitant (or downright hostile) to adopt alternative mind-based practices into their regimen, but there is very little interest in funding research where, at the end of it, no drug can be marketed and profited from. And in this way, the book transforms itself from an "isn't it interesting what the mind can do?" book to more of a wake-up call for the entire medical industry. Clearly in our society we are dangerously over-medicated. Marchant tells us "the top ten highest grossing drugs in the US help only between 1 in 25 and 1 in 4 of the people who take them." and "psychiatric drugs are responsible for more than half a million deaths in the western world each year.

Marchant gives us a thorough, entertaining and, most importantly, clear headed, open eyed, and open minded look at how our mind affects our body. This is not hocus pocus, unsubstantiated wishful thinking. Marchant had visited a number of researchers in various fields and describes their research here in an enjoyable to read, easy to understand style. The book makes extensive use of research findings to find valid mind-body effects. As Marchant explains, "So although I believe that the alternative medicine advocates are deluded with their talk of water memory and healing energy fields, I don't think the skeptics have got it completely right either. I started to write this book because I wondered whether they, along with conventional doctors, are missing a vital ingredient in physical health; an omission that's contributing to the rise of chronic disease and sending millions of sane, intelligent people to alternative practitioners." If you have doubts about

the mind's effect on the body, consider Marchant's words, "We've accepted that negative mental states such as stress or anxiety can damage health long-term (though even this was highly contested until a few decades ago). But the idea that the opposite might happen, or that our minds might have healing powers, is seen as flaky in the extreme." Then there are those who do believe that the mind can have a positive effect on the body, but have trouble separating the real effects from the hocus pocus and fall victim to scams or simply ineffective methods. As Marchant says, "By acknowledging the role of the mind in health, can we rescue it from the clutches of pseudoscience?" Is it worth taking a look? I think so.

As someone with an autoimmune disease (multiple sclerosis), I read quite a bit in the areas of health and medicine, alternative medicine, and the history of medicine. This book, written by a British journalist who also has a PhD in microbiology, gives us a vibrant look at the powers of the mind in healing. She studies the current research and presents it in an accessible way. I'm not at all surprised that this book has rocketed to several top-seller lists. Note that this book deals a lot with the powers of the placebo effect. The point here is not that doctors should be tricking everyone who is ill, just to make them feel good. Instead, the idea is that the placebo effect shows us certain things that can be harnessed to lead to wellness. For instance, being cared for really helps people heal, as does having belief and simply doing something to try to help with the problem. Our expectations are vitally important when it comes to healing, as are our previous experiences. Many factors determine how we respond to medical treatment and neglect. This book is about understanding those elements and bringing them into regular medical care instead of just relying on fake pills, as we can learn a lot from the placebo effect. Here are the main things I see as take-aways in this book:=====—• Because of the importance of the mind/body connection, the placebo effect, and the studies cited by the author, it's extremely important to find a great healthcare provider you really trust. If you don't do this, your chances of doing well are simply undermined because you won't have belief in the person you're working with, and you might not even have belief in yourself.

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