



# THE EMOTIONAL BRAIN

by Joseph E. LeDoux

## *The Emotional Brain*

THE MYSTERIOUS  
UNDERPINNINGS OF  
EMOTIONAL LIFE  
by Joseph E. LeDoux

Description

Advance Praise

*New York Times*  
Book Review

*New Scientist* □  
Bestseller Review

*Trends in Cognitive  
Sciences* □ Book Review

*New York Times*  
Related Article

Other reviews and  
related links

Foreign Publications



## Book Description

What happens in our brains to make us feel fear, love, hate, anger, joy? Do we control our emotions, or do they control us? Do animals have emotions? How can traumatic experiences in early childhood influence adult behavior, even though we have no conscious memory of them? In *The Emotional Brain*, Joseph LeDoux investigates the origins of human emotions and explains that many exist as part of complex neural systems that evolved to enable us to survive.

Unlike conscious feelings, emotions originate in the brain at a much deeper level, says LeDoux, a leading authority in the field of neural science and one of the principal researchers profiled in Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*. In this provocative book, LeDoux explores the underlying brain mechanisms responsible for our emotions, mechanisms that are only now being revealed.

*The Emotional Brain* presents some fascinating findings about our familiar yet little understood emotions. For example, our brains can detect danger before we even experience the feeling of being afraid. The brain also begins to initiate physical responses (heart palpitations, sweaty palms, muscle tension) before we become aware of an associated feeling of fear. Conscious feelings, says LeDoux, are somewhat irrelevant to the way *The Emotional Brain* works. He points out that emotional responses are hard-wired into the brain's circuitry, but the things that make us emotional are learned through experience. And this may be the key to understanding, even changing, our emotional make up. Many common psychiatric problems—such as phobias or posttraumatic stress disorder—involve malfunctions in the way emotional systems learn and remember. Understanding how these mechanisms normally work will have important consequences for how we view ourselves and how we treat emotional disorders.

Far-reaching in its implications for our understanding of human nature, *The Emotional Brain* is a surprising and thought-provoking account of the latest research on emotions in neuroscience.

---

Send questions and comments about this website to: [hou@cns.nyu.edu](mailto:hou@cns.nyu.edu)

The emotional brain is also referred to as the paleomammalian brain, due to the development of the component brain structures occurring early in the evolution of man. The paleomammalian brain is not only important due to the role it plays in emotion and motivation; this brain structure is also responsible for enhancing learning and memory, providing greater flexibility in our behavior, and enabling us to monitor events outside and inside our bodies, which is an essential quality for the development of the 'self'. "The Emotional Brain is an excellent introduction to the strange history of the neurobiology of emotion and a preview of what lies ahead." - - Antonio R. Damasio, Scientific American. "Engrossing and engaging..." - - Richard Restak, The New York Times Book Review. "Highly accessible...LeDoux's musical and literary references reveal a man clearly in touch with his own emotional feelings. The Reinforcing Function of Emotions at the Populational Level: the Phenomenon of Emotional Resonance - Analysis of Criticism of the Information Theory of Emotions. - The Term "Information" as Applied to the Study of Emotions. - The Need-Informational Organization of the Integrative Activity of the Brain. The Psychology of Emotions. - Needs as a Basis and Moving Force in Human Behavior.