

BOOK REVIEW

Brain and Spinal Cord Plasticity: An Interdisciplinary and Integrative Approach for Behavior, Cognition and Health

Authors: Amy Jo Marcano-Reik (Baldwin Wallace University, Department of Psychology, Neuroscience Program, Berea, Ohio, USA, and others)

“Amy Jo Marcano-Reik is known for her engaging, personable, simplified and enthusiastic presentation of complex aspects of psychology and biology, and this book is no exception. This book reads like you’re having a cup of coffee with a wise, warm friend who is explaining the brilliant connections she sees among some of the most important research on the brain and spinal cord, while describing the research in just enough detail to really grasp the conclusions, which revolve around the hopeful message of plasticity -- the ability of the brain and spinal cord to grow and change over time in response to experience. This book is jam-packed with information ranging from the accomplishments of Nobel Prize Winners, details about ground breaking neuroscientific methods, the latest on brain and spinal cord plasticity across the lifespan, typical and atypical cognitive functioning, and tips on how to use all that information to live a healthier life. The author’s precise attention to detail in accurately describing the most fundamental research in the field, combined with her wide-lens approach to integrating this research with health and medicine applications, tell a multidisciplinary and integrative story about plasticity in the brain and spinal cord across the lifespan that has not been comprehensively told until now.

At a time when companies are profiting from making unfounded claims about brain training programs, Marcano-Reik draws reasonable, scientifically supported conclusions about the scientific evidence of brain and spinal cord plasticity across the lifespan in relation to cognitive functioning, health and medicine. If you been curious about brain training programs, then you owe it to yourself to read this book.

As a cognitive psychologist who has lost my own mother to a brain tumor, I see this book as not only a knowledgeable and artful description of current research, but also a story of hope – of what we know to be possible within neuroscience and what is on the horizon for future research. I will recommend this book to my colleagues, use it in my graduate and undergraduate courses, and send a copy to a special friend whose daughter is living with a brain tumor.

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