



THE EMOTIONAL BRAIN

by Joseph E. LeDoux

The Emotional Brain

THE MYSTERIOUS
UNDERPINNINGS OF
EMOTIONAL LIFE
by Joseph E. LeDoux

Description

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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.

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