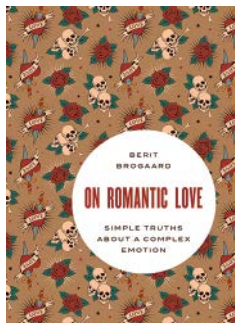


HEAD VS. HEART

On Romantic Love

by **Berit Brogaard. Oxford University Press, 2015 (\$21.95)**



In spite of what you may have heard, love—at least the healthy kind—is actually pretty simple. If you have strong positive feelings for someone, want to protect him or her and want to be with him or her, you are feeling love. If you also feel, at least sometimes, that you

want to be physically intimate with that person, you have crossed over into the world of romantic love.

Unrequited, intense and baseless love has, over the centuries, inspired thousands of poems and works of art—perhaps millions, if we include the ones that ended up in the trash—not to mention more than a few suicides, murders and wars.

Enter Brogaard, a philosopher at the University of Miami, with a largely upbeat message about what we can do when love is going wrong. Drawing on analyses of real romantic mishaps and assertions she makes (mainly speculative) about how the brain and mind process emotions, Brogaard argues that we can exercise some degree of rational control over the love we feel, even when it is driven by unconscious processes. In so doing, we can learn to flee from harmful relationships before too much damage is done, heal more quickly after painful breakups, and, more important, use our heads and not just our hearts to manage love relationships worth keeping.

On the downside, Brogaard sometimes gets lost in tedious debates, such as one about whether love is really an emotion (she says it is), and seems unaware of the hundreds of experimental studies conducted in recent decades on how emotional bonds are formed. She even overlooks some of the most basic contemporary theories of love, focusing instead on ideas that are sometimes a century old.

Brogaard makes her case mainly by surveying a variety of modern therapy techniques that alter how people think and feel. Even simple acts such as moving things around in your house can release you from the hold that sour feel-

ings have on you after a breakup, she says. She is persuasive, but her advice is easier said than done when the madness of imperfect love actually hits.

—Robert Epstein

WAITING GAME

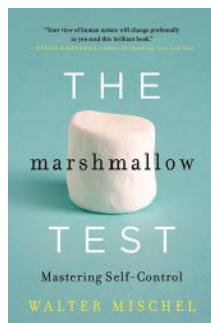
The Marshmallow Test: Mastering Self-Control

by **Walter Mischel. Little, Brown, 2014 (\$29)**

Fifty years ago Mischel, a psychologist, presented preschoolers with a difficult choice. The youngsters could opt for immediate enjoyment of a single delectable treat—a marshmallow—or they could wait up to 20 minutes and get two of them. Over time Mischel found that kids who

could hold out for greater rewards had better social and cognitive development, self-worth and SAT scores later in life.

These curious correlations are at the heart of *The Marshmallow Test*, which surveys dozens of studies that document the power of self-control. Along the way, Mischel reveals the techniques that sepa-



rate highly disciplined kids from their peers, tricks that anyone can use to sidestep the snares of temptation.

The choice between instant or delayed rewards pits two factions within the brain against each other. One side, the “hot” limbic system, which includes the emotionally reactive amygdala, focuses on the mouthwatering marshmallow and urges us to enjoy it now. The other side, the “cool” prefrontal cortex, which oversees planning and problem solving, reasons that greater pleasure is worth the wait.

Each child will respond differently to this mental tug-of-war, and factors such as genetics, parenting and environment can shape the reaction. For example, kids raised in unstable homes with unreliable adults are more apt to take their rewards right away. Experience has taught them to distrust the promise of future treats. Stress can also tip the balance toward hot thinking, which can explain why otherwise even-tempered adults will still succumb to inappropriate enticements when under duress.

Fortunately, anyone can learn to delay

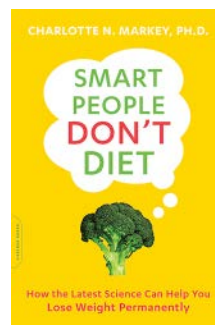
gratification. Mischel’s observations have revealed that people can study their lapses in self-control and develop personal coping strategies. Distraction, for example, can shift focus away from the siren call of a sweet snack or the lure of a cigarette. Cognitive reappraisal—in which we reinterpret our emotional response to something—can help us think of our greatest temptation as a toxin rather than a treat. And imagining how our future self would assess our decisions can keep shortsighted desires in check.

The Marshmallow Test is a wonderfully rich treat in itself, laden with advice and detailed research. Mischel presents all his conclusions with nuance, reminding readers of the wide variation in human behavior. He also acknowledges that the occasional lapse in self-control could be good. A life spent working and waiting can be just as deleterious as one spent giving in to every reward or vice. Still, in most cases, the science of self-control is clear: good things really do come to those who wait. —Daisy Yuhas

WEIGHT LOSS FOR NONDUMMIES

Smart People Don't Diet

by **Charlotte N. Markey. De Capo Press, 2014 (\$16.99)**



Though not perfect, this is possibly the best book on weight loss ever written. Markey, a psychology professor who teaches a course called “The Psychology of Eating” at Rutgers University–Camden, is a true expert who has done what experts seldom do well. She has translated good science on eating and dieting

into clear, friendly, informal language that virtually anyone with concerns about weight will find both interesting and helpful. Even more important, Markey has organized myriad findings about eating and dieting into a highly organized, practical format. If supersizing is on your mind, the only thing better than reading this book would be, I imagine, to sneak into her classroom.

What makes her book strong, alas—and as a researcher myself and co-author of a fitness book, I cannot overstate how strong it is—also makes it frustrating. The hitch is that the volumes of research she is digesting for us support ideas that most well-informed peo-

ple are already familiar with. If you want to control your weight, no crash diets, please; slow and steady wins the race. Get a good night's sleep and don't forget to exercise. Eat a good breakfast, cut down on snacks and sugar, keep a food diary (at least for a while), weigh yourself (but not every day), refrain from emotional eating, cut back on condiments, and avoid drive-through restaurants and high-calorie drinks. Most important of all, be mindful of the food you eat.

These are the lessons of decades of recent research—but we knew that. Probably most frustrating is when Markey gives us the kind of advice that is virtually impossible to follow: form good eating habits, she says, and “develop a taste for healthy food.”

If only it were that simple. It isn't, and Markey knows this better than just about anyone on the planet. Her candid acknowledgment of complexity is what makes this book so especially compelling and credible. She knows how difficult weight loss can be in a culture that encourages people to shovel unhealthy food down their throats from morning until night. She knows that no matter how high one's motivation, no matter how great one's needs, no matter how well intentioned one's plan, weight loss in an affluent, consumer-oriented society is hard to achieve and even more difficult to maintain. Markey under-

On Our Shelf

Anatomy of an Epidemic

by Robert Whitaker. Crown, 2010

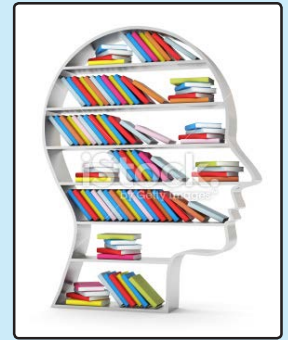
Whitaker, a longtime medical journalist, builds a disturbing and enthralling case that long-term prescriptions for psychiatric medications damage the brain and are directly responsible for the rising rates of mental illness in the U.S.

—Karen Schrock, contributing editor

Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration

by Ed Catmull, with Amy Wallace. Random House, 2014

As a child, Catmull, a co-founder of Pixar Animation Studios, had two heroes: Walt Disney and Albert Einstein. His dual passions for artistry and technical wizardry were integral to Pixar's founding. Yet the company's growth from scrappy little studio to Hollywood mainstay kept threatening to throttle workers' creativity. In this book, Catmull shares the lessons he learned about inspiring employees to think freely even as a company grows.



Ha! The Science of When We Laugh and Why

by Scott Weems. Basic Books, 2014

Ever wonder what happens in your brain when you decipher the punch line of a joke? In *Ha!*, cognitive neuroscientist Weems divulges the answer to this question, along with many other scientifically-backed factoids on the nature of humor. I discovered, for example, that the duck is the funniest animal in the English language and that my response to a joke could reveal personality traits. And best of all, *Ha!* left me with a score of groan-worthy wisecracks for amusing friends and family.

—Daisy Yuhas, associate editor

stands the challenges, sympathizing with the reader on every page while staying the course—teaching, informing, and, yes,

sometimes only reminding us about what works and what doesn't. What more can an honest author do? —R.E.

MOBILE APP

Concussion Coach

For iPhone and Android (free)



First, let's get something straight: concussions are miserable. Despite having edited countless stories on traumatic brain injury, I never fully grasped how painful,

frustrating and debilitating the recovery from a concussion can be. One rollerblading accident later, I'm singing a new tune—for nearly six weeks, I have been plagued by persistent headaches, fatigue, dizziness and difficulty concentrating. Lucky for me, just before my accident, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs released a smartphone app called Concussion Coach to help manage these symptoms. (The app was developed in collaboration with the

department's National Center for PTSD and was led by Julia Hoffman.)

Concussion Coach was designed with military veterans in mind because many soldiers suffer brain injuries from blasts or physical trauma. The app is useful to anyone who suspects they might have a concussion, however; it is packed with information about diagnoses and symptoms to help patients understand what their brain is going through and, more important, describe their symptoms accurately to their doctor. An easy-to-use, surveylike symptom tracker helps to log trends over time.

By far the best and most surprising part of the app, however, is the coach. That's what I call her, anyway. Her calm, warm voice is hidden behind the Manage This Moment tab, which aims to help relieve symptoms in real time. You simply choose what is bothering you—headache? dizziness? irritability? worries?—and the app suggests a particular exercise that targets the symptom. Click “start,” and the coach's tranquil voice guides you through a five- to 10-minute regimen of

soothing mental or physical exercises. The techniques, such as muscle relaxation, deep breathing and emotional acceptance therapy, are based on well-established psychotherapeutic strategies.

Incredibly, most of these exercises work. The first time I tried one for a killer headache—turning to the app in desperation after weeks of skeptical avoidance—I was so relieved to find my pain lessened at the end of the mindfulness regimen that I cried. Out the window flew my plans to write a snarky review pointing out the irony of offering smartphone-based therapy to people whose condition often makes it painful to look at glowing screens; a few seconds of seasickness as I navigate to the couch is a small price to pay for sweet relief. Even when I am no longer recovering from a concussion, I will still open this app when I have a headache or feel stressed or sad. The techniques within are that powerful—and they speak to the potential of guided home remedies for all kinds of mental maladies. The future of therapy has arrived.

—Karen Schrock Simring