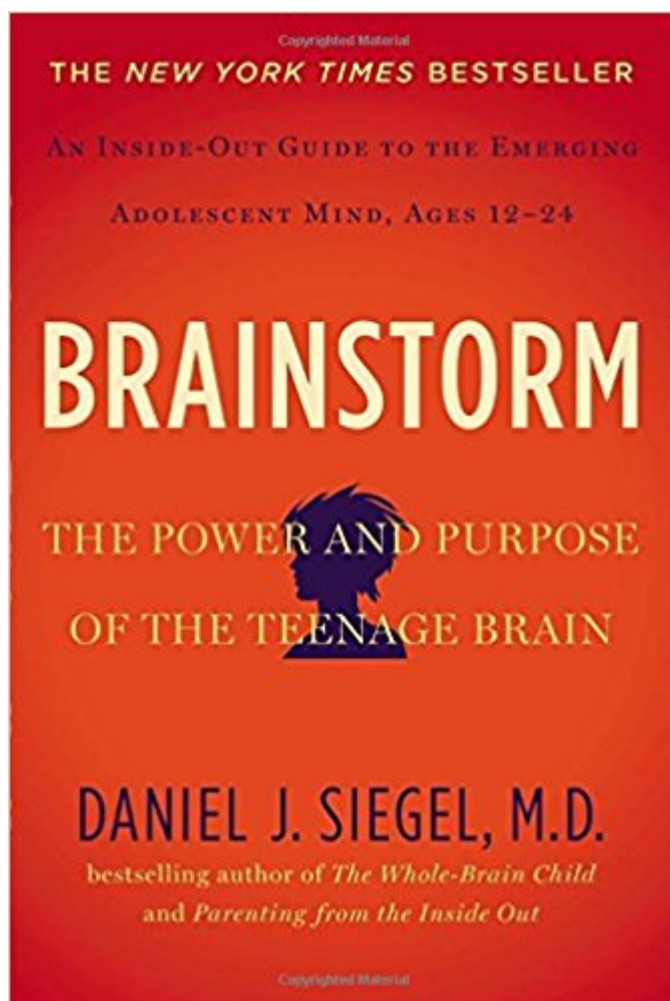


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Brainstorm: The Power And Purpose Of The Teenage Brain



Synopsis

In this New York Times best-selling book, Dr. Daniel Siegel shows parents how to turn one of the most challenging developmental periods in their children's lives into one of the most rewarding. Between the ages of twelve and twenty-four, the brain changes in important and, at times, challenging ways. In *Brainstorm*, Dr. Daniel Siegel busts a number of commonly held myths about adolescence—for example, that it is merely a stage of “immaturity” filled with often “crazy” behavior. According to Siegel, during adolescence we learn vital skills, such as how to leave home and enter the larger world, connect deeply with others, and safely experiment and take risks. Drawing on important new research in the field of interpersonal neurobiology, Siegel explores exciting ways in which understanding how the brain functions can improve the lives of adolescents, making their relationships more fulfilling and less lonely and distressing on both sides of the generational divide.

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Customer Reviews

"Brainstorm is a must read book for every parent if they want to avoid emotional turbulence in their own lives as their children go through adolescence. It's lifesaving for the whole family."—Deepak Chopra, MD
"Brainstorm is eye-opening and inspiring, a great gift to us all—teens, parents of teens, and anyone who wants a full and rich life on this planet. Daniel Siegel shows how the supposed downsides of the teen years all have upsides, and that the lessons for living that await teens are ones any of us, at any age, can learn

from. • Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence • "Siegel emerges as a bighearted writer, fully convinced that we all possess the fundamental virtues to navigate the choppy waters of adolescence, and he is eager for us to set them loose, working with adolescents to cultivate the positive aspects • and he is hugely convincing of the intense engagement and creativity that often accompany this time period in a person's life. Smart advice...on providing the most supportive and brain-healthy environment during the tumultuous years of adolescence." • KIRKUS REVIEWS • "This book is chock-full of cutting-edge knowledge as well as a deep compassion for teenagers, the adults they will become, and the teenagers in all of us. • Alanis Morissette • "Brainstorm is a necessary look at why adolescents do what they do that can put parents in an emotional frenzy. The information that Dr. Dan Siegel shares is not only invaluable for understanding your growing child's brain, but helps build more compassion and patience. A gift for us all. • Goldie Hawn • "By the end of this book, the teenager has been transformed from a monstrous force into a thinking, feeling, and entirely approachable human being." • PUBLISHERS WEEKLY • "I strongly recommend Brainstorm to teens and those who care for them. • Mary Pipher, author of Reviving Ophelia • "You just don't get me" is a common refrain from teenagers to their parents and teachers. Adolescents who read this book will discover that Daniel Siegel gets them . . . This respectfulness is why the book works so well as a manual for adolescents, as well as for their parents and mentors. • Lawrence Cohen, author of The Opposite of Worry

Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., is clinical professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, founding codirector of the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center, and executive director of the Mindsight Institute. He is also coauthor of Parenting from the Inside Out and The Whole-Brain Child, and the proud father of two children in their twenties.

I read with alacrity "Brain Based Parenting: the neuroscience of caregiving for healthy attachment", on which Daniel J. Siegel was the third author, and gave that book 5 stars in an .com review. So I started out with high expectations for Siegel's more recent work, Brainstorm. Really, I did. Unfortunately the weaknesses of the book far outweighed its strengths, for me anyway, as I'll outline below. There are multiple other books on raising and understanding teenagers I'd recommend before this one, as I'll list at the end. Strengths: (1) It's always good to remind oneself of the positive aspects of the developmental phase of the adolescent. Siegel lists these strengths as: intense and

spontaneous emotions, intense and powerful peer and social connections, a spark of uniqueness and originality, and a profound search for one's identity and place in the universe. Frustrated parents can easily fall into the trap of seeing only your teenager's faults and negative behaviors. Remembering to see the upside (which is really only discussed in the first chapter of the book) is a good thing. (2) Somehow Siegel wanders into the topic of healing your brain from trauma. During the course of this digression, he reviews an intriguing theory of psychological trauma (p. 176ff) that painful memories that are 'locked up' in the right hemisphere - the seat of emotion, imagery, and "implicit" (timeless and voiceless) memories - cause intense pain, fear, and flashbacks. When the right and left (verbal, analytic, logical and chronological) brain are integrated, the left side of the brain can give a coherent narrative to the trauma story and place it into a past perspective. Healing from trauma then occurs when what was formerly intense, limitless, and present danger, is transformed into more comprehensible, limited, and coherent past experience. This is a powerful theory of trauma and healing and helps to explain why social connections and social supports aid in the prevention and healing of PTSD. Note: the theory is not presented here for the first time, but Siegel's review of it is interesting.

Weaknesses: (1) In contrast to "Brain-Based Parenting", I found the book haphazardly organized and the writing style surprisingly poor. Siegel's sentences were run-on, off topic, and varied irritatingly between medicalese and schmaltzy sentimentality. His topics were all over the map, too: from the title topic, to attachment theory, to general advice for getting enough sleep and eating well, to "Mindsight" exercises for meditation and raising awareness. I was disappointed; I felt the book didn't stick to any consistent theme and was probably a hastily put together collection of blog posts. Search "teenage brain fitness" or "the adolescent brain" on .com and one will find many appealing titles on the topic that look more propitious than this one. (2) Siegel's stated intention is to write a book intended to be read by both parents and their teenagers, perhaps even read aloud from one to another. Despite a number of cute cartoons, I can hardly imagine a teenager in modern America today who could make it successfully through this meandering, poorly written volume. I have one teenager and one pre-teen, and I am involved in volunteering and in contact with many of my daughters' friends (and, well, I also happen to be a psychiatrist and have seen hundreds of teens in crisis through a psychiatric emergency center in Fairfax County, Virginia). The only thing I can say in response to the idea of an American teenager finding this book readable would be "fuggedaboutit." Or maybe "you must be Cray-Cray." I found the following books infinitely more useful, readable, and enjoyable than Brainstorm: (1) Haim Ginot's "Between Parent and Teenager", (2) Thoms Phelan's "surviving your teenager", (3) Anything by Gershen Kaufman, Ph.D., especially "personal power for teens", (4) "Brain-Based Parenting" (see

above), and (5)Ginsburg's "Roots and Wings." I tried hard to find the positives in this book; I read around five books per month so I am not averse to working hard to get something from a read, so I don't give out the dreaded "2 star" rating casually. I had to put this one down for long stretches and really force myself to punch on through, however. There are any number of other books on teenagers and their development I would encourage readers to turn to before, or instead of, this one.

I love this guy's books and the concepts contained therein. My foster son (now a Mental Health Nurse Practitioner) turned me on to Daniel J. Siegal when he was attending Oregon Health Sciences University. I helped him edit his papers and Master's thesis and have learned a lot from all the exposure to psychotherapy. I will be ever grateful to Michael for that among a host of things!

This is an excellent book! Provides great insight into developing minds. We all like to think that we haven't forgotten what it's like to grow up, but I must admit that this gave me an added perspective on my own adolescence as well. As tough as it can be to raise children, this has really helped me [re]focus my efforts. I got both the MP3 disk (for my long commute) and the paperback (for reference).

Absolutely, hands down, one of my favorite authors. I'm not completely done reading this book, but so far so good. You cannot be completely without knowledge of behavioral sciences to comprehend this easily, but I feel like he did a very good job to explain it to those without prior experience. I purchased this for a friend without such training previously and she said it was something she only partially had to re-read.

This is not a book I would typically read. However, my wife gifted it to me last Christmas, as we have a pre-teen son who is on his way to being a teen son. I can't say that I opened to the first page with a fully open mind, but I was intrigued by how the book was billed as more a text on the science of adolescent neurology than a self-help book. If it were a science book, I could get into that, but there was a lot of self-help themed exercises that were more distracting than helpful to the casual reader. This is not to say I didn't find anything of value in "Brainstorm." In Part III, Dr. Siegel describes various forms of attachment, which is "in effect the way in which our brains remember the attachment relationship(s) we have had, or still have, and how we adapted

to these formative attachment experiences. The more secure our early attachments the more integrated our brains develop; the more avoidant our early attachments, the more likely it is that our brains have encoded a response to relationships that can lead to lasting problems. Not only was there some science in this section of the book, but it also made me think about what the signs of secure and avoidant attachments revealed about me and my upbringing. It did make some things make more sense. There were also some interesting sections on how teen moodiness and poor risk assessment is the result of the development of the brain and not “raging hormones.” Ultimately, maturity comes as a result of the various parts of the brain learning to be more “integrated.” That said, the rest of the book is full of acronyms and mnemonics to help us build health relationships and self-awareness that, while perhaps being useful in the therapist’s office (I’m sure Dr. Siegel has a successful practice), as self-help tools that seemed a little hokey. Most of these are found in “Mindsight” practice sections of the book. There’s the “inner mental sea,” the “metaphoric lens” on a “tripod” with openness, objectivity, and observation as the “three legs,” cultivating relationships by being “PART” (present, attune, resonate, and trust), “SNAG” (stimulate neuronal activation and growth), and the seven activities on “the healthy mind platter.” I didn’t go into this book looking for yoga-like exercises on how to be a better father, so those chapters were a bit of slog. So, be forewarned: you might ultimately find that this book has useful advice on how to deal with your teen, but it’s not a scientific text.

I’m grateful to Daniel J. Siegel MD. He gifted the world with a wonderful, easy-to-follow look at life experiences, relationship bonds and the effects on the brain. Vice-a-versa: how brain development influences our love relationships. I’ve read many developmental psychology books for study and pleasure. This is the best I’ve ever read on the subject of optimizing the brain in order to improve connection with ourselves and our loved ones. I prefer the simpler title, *Brainstorm*, because the information is universal.

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