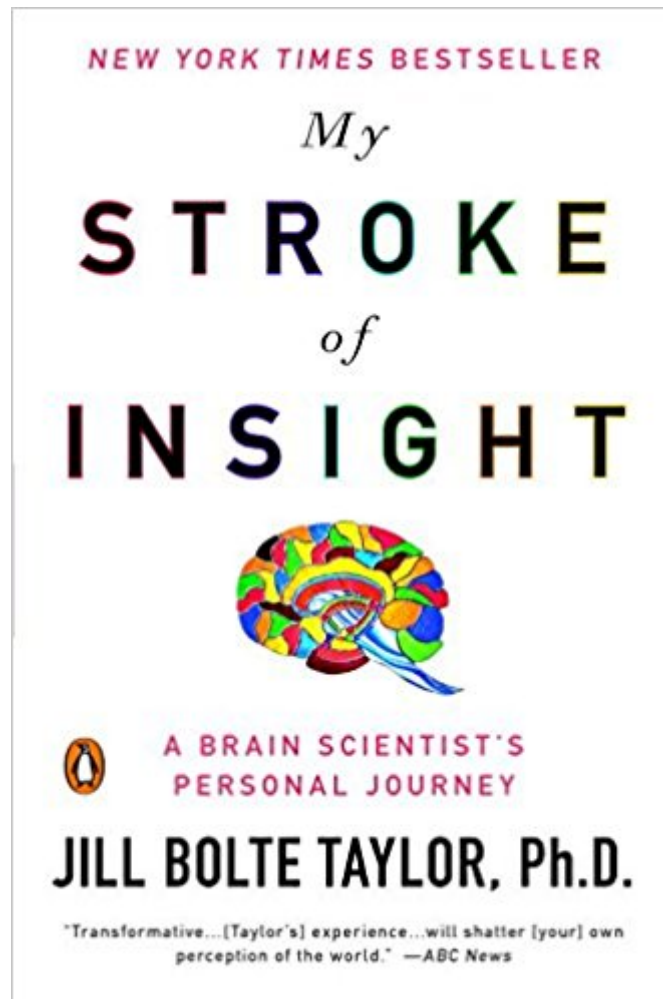


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My Stroke Of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey



Synopsis

The astonishing New York Times bestseller that chronicles how a brain scientist's own stroke led to enlightenment On December 10, 1996, Jill Bolte Taylor, a thirty-seven-year-old Harvard-trained brain scientist experienced a massive stroke in the left hemisphere of her brain. As she observed her mind deteriorate to the point that she could not walk, talk, read, write, or recall any of her life-all within four hours-Taylor alternated between the euphoria of the intuitive and kinesthetic right brain, in which she felt a sense of complete well-being and peace, and the logical, sequential left brain, which recognized she was having a stroke and enabled her to seek help before she was completely lost. It would take her eight years to fully recover. For Taylor, her stroke was a blessing and a revelation. It taught her that by "stepping to the right" of our left brains, we can uncover feelings of well-being that are often sidelined by "brain chatter." Reaching wide audiences through her talk at the Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) conference and her appearance on Oprah's online Soul Series, Taylor provides a valuable recovery guide for those touched by brain injury and an inspiring testimony that inner peace is accessible to anyone.

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Customer Reviews

I first came across Jill Bolte Taylor, Phd when her speech at TED (an annual conference devoted to Technology, Entertainment, Design) went viral. In it, she describes how she witnessed herself having a stroke and the subsequent feeling of peace that enveloped her when her logical left brain shut down and her right brain became dominant. I became intrigued after watching the video and

then read the book. The book expounds on her experience while having the stroke and her subsequent recovery. It was amazing on many levels: (1) She gives a 1st person narrative of her experience of the stroke and recovery but she doesn't portray it as something we should all pity and feel sorry for. Instead, she lays it out not unlike an explorer discovering new territory, full of suspense and wonder. (2) She gives incredible tips on how to communicate with and care for stroke victims. For e.g., some people would yell at her after they saw she didn't understand what they were saying. However, she wasn't deaf. She could only process one word at a time. If those people would have spoken more slowly rather than loudly, she would have been able to understand them. This is something that would never have occurred to me if I hadn't read this book. (3) She takes us on a tour of the 'mystical' right side of her brain which little is known about and whose capabilities in today's world seem to be dismissed. She says the right side of the brain is the gateway to enlightenment and nirvana. She shares tips on how to 'tend the garden of your mind' and to interrupt or stop those stories we all tell ourselves over and over again (usually about how we are deficient, not good enough, etc.). She calls them loops. Dr.

I was expecting an Oliver Sacks sort of experience, in which she both provided us with a great deal of scientific information regarding the brain, thoughts and consciousness while simultaneously weaving us a larger narrative in which she pondered more existential questions about the nature of being and consciousness itself. That's not this book. Rather, the book has an odd sort of disjointed feel to it. The first chapter explains her own unique perspective on the stroke experience. She was both a researcher in psychology and anatomy at Harvard University, and an individual with a great deal of personal experience in the fields of psychology and consciousness. She describes growing up with a schizophrenic brother who was a mere year and a half older than herself -- thus, from the beginnings of her life, she has been fascinated with questions about how our brains work, what we perceive and why as humans sometimes perceive things so differently. By far the best chapter in my mind is the second, where she describes what actually happened the morning she had her stroke -- on both a physiological and emotional level. In essence, she reconstructs the event, noting that "I was feeling this while this was happening in this section of my brain." She explains, for example, why it was impossible to dial 911, since during the experience she would have been hard pressed to understand what a phone was, what one did with it, what numbers were or how they related to the telephone. The chapters on her recovery are where the book starts to get weak. Her overall message in the last half of the book is admirable, but somewhat poorly executed.

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