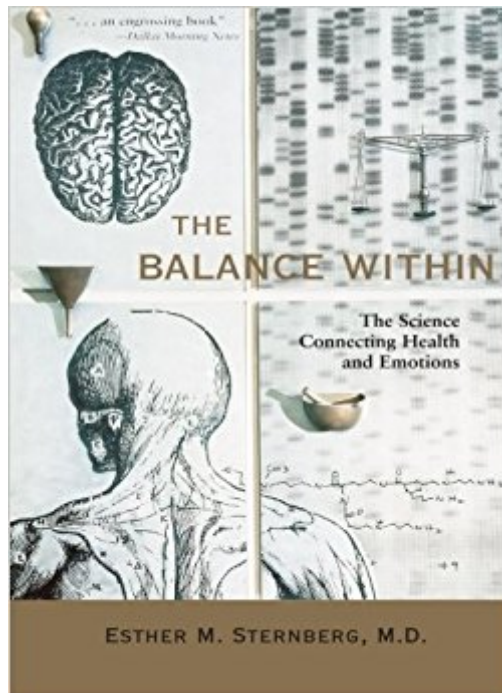




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# The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health And Emotions



## Synopsis

Since ancient times humans have felt intuitively that emotions and health are linked, and recently there has been much popular speculation about this notion. But until now, without compelling evidence, it has been impossible to say for sure that such a connection really exists and especially how it works. Now, that evidence has been discovered. A thrilling scientific detective story, *The Balance Within* tells how researchers finally uncovered the elusive mind-body connection and what it means for our health. In this beautifully written book, Dr. Esther Sternberg, whose discoveries were pivotal in helping to solve this mystery, provides first hand accounts of the breakthrough experiments that revealed the physical mechanisms - the nerves, cells, and hormones - used by the brain and immune system to communicate with each other. She describes just how stress can make us more susceptible to all types of illnesses, and how the immune system can alter our moods. Finally, she explains how our understanding of these connections in scientific terms is helping to answer such crucial questions as "Does stress make you sick?" "Is a positive outlook the key to better health?" and "How do our personal relationships, work, and other aspects of our lives affect our health?" A fascinating, elegantly written portrait of this rapidly emerging field with enormous potential for finding new ways to treat disease and cope with stress, *The Balance Within* is essential reading for anyone interested in making their body and mind whole again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The immune system was long believed to be autonomous--unconnected to the brain; Sternberg, a neuroscientist at the National Institute of Mental Health, focuses here on research done over the last

few decades that disproves this belief. She methodically details the history of this science--describing, for example, the Nobel prize-winning work of three French scientists who, in 1958, discovered the "interleukins" (molecules that signal between cells), which led to further investigations into how immune cells communicate with the brain, and discussing the seminal but controversial work of Hans Selye, who in the 1950s explored the body's response to stress. Although Sternberg leavens her account with anecdotes and historical snapshots of early medical treatment, her litany of scientific experiments (mostly performed on rats) into the body-mind connection may overwhelm readers without any scientific background. Of greater interest are her reflections on the implications of this research for maintaining health and treating disease. According to Sternberg, physical and psychological stresses--such as prolonged lack of sleep, divorce or social isolation--can make people sick by adversely affecting their immune and hormonal responses. Conversely, a strong belief in healing rituals and prayer may help make them well (via the placebo effect). All in all, Sternberg is optimistic about the idea of bridging disciplines to develop new treatments for disease. B&w illustrations. BOMC selection; author tour. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The director of the Molecular, Cellular, & Behavioral Interactive Neuroscience Program at the National Institutes of Health gives us one of the best recent books on emotions and health. Sternberg effectively draws on her ample research and clinical experience to provide detailed descriptions of the interrelationships of the immune, nervous, and endocrine systems and how they in turn relate to emotions and the body. Into her clear scientific exposition, she folds the lives and works of such fascinating researchers as Wilder Penfield and Hans Selye. She has the personal touch, as when she stresses the importance of face-to-face communication and contrasts it to the impersonal aspects of Internet communication. She has a feeling for place and vividly depicts Montreal and other settings. Finally, in her citation of medical cases, she enlightens and stimulates, as, for example, when in recalling a classic case of alert perception, she reveals the importance of total-body tattoos in the study of the lymphatic system. William Beatty --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is an excellent intro for those not familiar with the field. It discusses the relationship between the hormone system and the immune system, an expanding field of scientific research. The enunciation of the mechanisms, where the understanding exists today, is done well. And the extension to the placebo effect, and to belief as a physiological driver, is a bold hypothesis. Clearly

the field is interesting and will see great advances in the coming decades. The descriptions of historic structures are not the best sections of the book. The writing style there is still scientific, when I would have appreciated a more literary style. But any description of these places is still nice.

Esther Sternberg's book is not well known but deserves to be. The connection between the brain and the body historically been dismissed as "no connection". This book provides the background to this complex area and explores the connection. It is of course chemical (peptides). The mystery was, how do these molecules explain the fact that pain in say arthritic hips get worse as a result of emotional upset? Sternberg offers some experimental evidence. She also does it in an easily readable manner. A well written scientific book! I do not know of another book on this subject.

I took Biology and Chemistry in college and although I am not a health professional it is very interesting to have learned the general approach our physiology follows when faced with stress and emotions. The first 65 pages of the book describe the physiology of the brain and then some very interesting hypothesis is concluded. One among which is an elaborate description of test animals that revealed a link between stress and inflammatory diseases, arthritis being one of them. You should read this book because I'm not going to tell you how it concludes. What would be the point? What I loved about the book is that it's written to adults and it's written very well. The author really knows how to put things in order. When dealing with such a complicated system as the human nervous system this is a good idea and certainly made the reading smooth and fast. Some very interesting history is woven into the fabric of this book, making it less like a textbook and more like a non-fiction novel. I haven't changed my minds about personality types and the author does point out to interesting relationships between people. She talks about type characteristics like traits, the ones we use to describe people. I do believe that majority of what psychologists observe as Intuitive people is now directly related to human stress response.

Unfortunately, I have read Sapolsky's "Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers" 3rd ed. prior to reading this book. If I hadn't have done that, I would have given this book 5 stars-- it is well researched, well written, and is accessible for anyone regardless of science background. However, it is difficult to compete with Sapolsky, a prominent figure in the stress research field, in writing style with all his wit, charm, random anecdotes and the like. Also, Sapolsky's book is more up-to-date, has greater breadth, and, I feel, it is a little more substantial. However, I do feel like Sternberg's book may be a little more accessible to someone with no science background, while Sapolsky's may be difficult to

follow, especially when he gets carried away with scientific terminology (though, I would still recommend sticking through those difficult parts, of which there are few, because the author never ceases to return from the heavily scientific woods with a quick and easy-to-grasp summary of the main points).

I do not recommend this book with you don't have a scientific expertise, due to the way the writer base her arguments. It turn out that the book is very interesting, but the scientific data makes everything more confusing.(i will reread the chapter about the scientific discoveries to full understand the book)I recommend this book if you are enthusiastic of immunology, neurology, endocrinology and research...

After reading the first time I have gone straight back to the first page just in case I missed anything the first time

I work as a physician. For a long time I believe emotions have a great input into the daily routines we go through. As physicians we are very dependent that the information we provide has to be based on data backed by research. I am so happy to see that those popular believes are not any more just believes, that we can say hey, there is research that proves that is not only a "believe". However believe is what makes the difference; believe is what triggers the body mechanics to achieve, reach the objective we pursue; believe is what gives energy and meaning to the people who does the research. Believe is what makes things happen: believe in oneself, believe in your partner, your friend, your team. And yes, we are so lost and at the same time full of such hopes, that we can show through research that our doubts are incorrect. It is there! I thank you Ms Rosenberg for compiling all that evidence together. I have read her other book: Healing spaces, and I have been to Lourdes and feel in my own body what she describes. May you be well.

This well written & interesting book became my bible in learning how stress can influence and/or cause an autoimmune attack. Understanding the connection between mind and body, and learning to cope with stress, is paramount to a complete recovery, so well explained by Dr. Sternberg.

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