

Rewire: Change Your Brain to Break Bad Habits, Overcome Addictions, Conquer Self-Destructive Behavior

Richard O'Connor

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We humans tend to get in our own way time and time again—whether it comes to not speaking up for ourselves, going back to bad romantic partners, dieting for the umpteenth try, or acting on any of a range of bad habits we just can't seem to shake. In *Rewire*, renowned psychotherapist Richard O'Connor, PhD, reveals exactly why our bad habits die so hard. We have two brains—one a thoughtful, conscious, deliberative self, and the other an automatic self that makes most of our decisions without our attention. Using new research and knowledge about how the brain works, the book clears a path to lasting, effective change for behaviors that include:

Procrastination

Overeating

Chronic disorganization

Staying in bad situations

Excessive worrying

Risk taking

Passive aggression

Self-medication

Bringing together many different fields in psychology and brain science, Dr. O'Connor gives you a road map to overcoming whatever self-destructive habits are plaguing you, with exercises throughout the book. We can rewire our brains to develop healthier circuitry, training the automatic self to make wiser decisions without having to think about it; ignore distractions; withstand temptations; see ourselves and the world more clearly; and interrupt our reflexive responses before they get us in trouble. Meanwhile, our conscious minds will be freed to view ourselves with compassion at the same time as we practice self-discipline. By learning valuable skills and habits—including mindfulness, self-control, confronting fear, and freeing yourself from mindless guilt—we can open ourselves to vastly more successful, productive, and happy lives. The book even demystifies how to overcome what Dr. O'Connor calls the “undertow” (the mysterious force that sabotages our best efforts when we're just on the edge of victory) for long-lasting change. Offering a valuable science-based new paradigm for rewiring our brains, *Rewire* is a refreshing guide to becoming a healthier, happier self.

Rewire: Change Your Brain to Break Bad Habits, Overcome Addictions, Conquer Self-Destructive Behavior Details


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David says

Skip it.

Nothing new, or helpful for that matter. Slim or none factual research and bland examples.

Kelsey Jones says

really analytical but super interesting

Deborah says

Painful. I'm listening to it vs reading it Never should have been an audio book. Someone reading lists of pathologies rich in jargon made me want to bite my face off. It's a shame because the information is important and accurate, but find a better book to access it. Recommend author John Medina.

Katrina Sark says

"Intelligence is a skill that can be learned, just like other skills. We get better at solving problems the more we try."

"The fundamental attribution error - we judge ourselves by our intentions, but others by their actions. We tend to think other people's mistakes are caused by character flaws, while our mistakes are due to situational factors."

"One single common element of self-destructive behaviour is fear. Often the prompt for any kind of self-destructive behaviour is an intolerable state of anxiety. Contemporary life with too many choices and too much information just adds to our anxiety level. When we are so anxious, we lose touch with the wise part of our brain and act on impulse, often to our regret."

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Shiloah says

I highly recommend that every adult who wants to make changes in his or her life read this book!

Martin Rowe says

I've found myself reading, professionally, quite a few books on addiction recently, and so thought I'd get this one to get a further perspective on it. I also don't like the amount of time I find myself noodling around on the Internet (!), and wanted to see if there were any arguments beyond the ones I've come across in other works. Although I don't think REWIRE offers any particularly new solutions, there are quite a few practical tips, and the book is most valuable, in my opinion, for the relentless honesty—even downbeat assessment—that O'Connor makes about human nature: our compulsiveness, our failure to be realistic and honest about our weaknesses and self-justifications, and our generally deluded and destructive ways of dealing with stressful situations. O'Connor hints at having been clinically depressed, and his no bullshit (although kindly) directness makes this book a refreshingly astringent addition to self-help literature. Fundamentally, he's interested in what works to stop you from falling into your addictive habit. Therapy, such as it is, is there to help; meditation works to rewire the brain; the whole point of doing any of it, he says, is first to stop what you don't want to do, and then change your brain patterns so you're not even tempted anymore. Good stuff.

Morgan Blackledge says

We are living in a period of unprecedented progress in the behavioral and social sciences. The progress has been primarily fueled by recent technological advances in neuroscience, specifically in brain imaging techniques such as fMRI, and by recent field-wide mandates in psychology for evidence based practices.

One of the major trends in psychology and psychotherapy over the past decade has been the incorporation of cognitive and emotional training exercises such as mindfulness and meta (loving kindness and compassion) meditation.

The afore mentioned imaging techniques have enabled investigators to observe the neurological changes that occur in ordinary people as well as experts, as they "exercise" their brains via meditation practices.

The big news is that we can literally change our brains by giving them a workout, and these "neuro-plastic" changes engender enhanced psychological and behavioral flexibility.

The news is not so earth shaking if you think about it like this. The psychological skills that get worked, get strengthened. Just like lifting weights. If you practice present moment awareness and equanimity, than you become more able to maintain present moment awareness and equanimity in more challenging situations.

The same goes for self/other compassion. Practice it and it gets stronger.

All this equipoise and compassion can be employed daily, moment to moment as you make the millions of little decisions that accumulate and comprise your life course e.g. should I eat that junk food, should I flip that rude driver off, should I drink that third glass of wine, should I go have that difficult conversation, should I spend the afternoon writing my dissertation or playing X-Box.

Any way. The idea is that by exercising our brains, we can become freer to make decisions that are more inline with our values and long term interests rather than based on our short term cravings and aversions.

If you're a drug addict or if you're depressed than you need to go against the grain of your cravings and aversions in order to recover. Mindfulness and compassion meditation turn out to be of great therapeutic benefit for these serious clinical issues.

But let's face it, we all self sabotage by procrastinating or making impulsive decisions that we regret later. That's why we're all hearing so much about mindfulness lately. The data is in and it's positive.

There is an enormous wealth of good information out there right now on behavior and the brain. Not only are there tons of amazing books available, but the Internet makes loads of podcasts, blogs and journal articles freely available. All that competition sets the bar pretty high for anyone writing in this area.

All of this is a lengthy disclaimer for what I'm about to say.

This book is not the best one to read if you're interested in this exciting emerging field of research and therapy.

Although the book has some great moments, for the most part it feels a little confused, as if the author was tossing any and every available research finding out there to see what sticks.

Unfortunately it's hard to imagine any of the good stuff in the book (and there is some really good stuff) sticking due to a major lack of an orienting through line, central metaphor, or organizing structure.

The book also feels a little dated. A little behind the curve. In fact, I almost bailed on this book in the first few chapters due to its old-school psychodynamic underpinnings. To be fair, the author is very eclectic in his orientation. He gives a lot of time to more contemporary orientations including some of the cutting edge 3rd wave mindfulness based orientations. But the foundation of his message is psychodynamic, and for me that's a bit of a deal breaker.

He also uses a lot of popular psychology truisms such as fear of success, codependency, daddy issues etc. These ideas are so common in the popular imagination, and sound so true (to some any way), but I find these ideas to be way past their prime as far as being useful clinically, and most of them are actually hugely problematic.

I challenge my clients (I'm a psychotherapist) nearly every time I hear one of these cliché ol' psychological chestnuts leave their mouths because they more often than not, are part of the problem.

Anyway. I hate negative reviews. I hate reading them. I hate writing them. I always feel bad because the authors clearly work hard, and it's comparatively easy to consume and be critical. And this author in particular seems like a great guy and he's probably an amazing therapist. But I would feel remiss in my

duties as a reviewer if I didn't warn the would be reader to the best of my ability.

So I have to hold my nose and do this....three stars :(

♥ Ibrahim ♥ says

The author has the right ideas, but his method of communication didn't get to me. For some reason I felt he was a bit stiff and there was a need somehow for some Miralax to loosen things up. I was charmed by a book of French grammar and decided to take a break by reading this book, and I guess I am going back to my French grammar lessons for better ease of living.

Paula says

This is an impressive book by an impressive therapist. Dr. O'Connor has written an excellent book that is beyond the typical self-help book. He uses his many years of experience, skill and knowledge of neuroscience research to explain why we have bad habits, including addictions, and what we can do to change them.

Dr. O'Connor is very honest and open about how difficult it is to change behavior, especially addictions. He explains the reasons for, mechanisms of, and methods for changing bad habits, ranging from procrastination (which one can probably deal with on his own) to severe addiction (which does usually require professional aid). His advice is excellent and places this book far above the self-help genre.

Dr. O'Connor's knowledge of neuroscience is amazing. He understands the hard science behind the studies used to support and explain his book. Very well done.

Something else, and most impressive of all about Dr. O'Connor, is his sympathy and compassion for all those who suffer, and his desire to help those who really, really want to change for the better.

Lilly Minasyan says

With self-help books you either hit a jackpot or you are utterly disappointed! With this book I felt it helped me immensely. Understanding the good and bad side of the brain, or the automatic or conscious brain. The automatic brain helps you to do the daily tasks without thinking and sometimes it wants to "protect" you, but it will damage you in some cases. For example, when you exercise and you feel some pain, your automatic pain will tell you to stop, but your conscious brain will know it won't damage you.

Understanding this helps to separate your thinking. It gave me lots of tools to help and motivate myself. The one thing that I come across in self help books is focus on one habit. If you try to do more, it will backfire. Also, it talks about depression and how it affects your brain and your daily life. I don't have a depression but it did help me to understand the problem some people face and also it is good to know about it. You never know when you will need the tools.

Overall, really enjoyed it. Was listening to it instead of reading it and the reader's voice was motivating. Highly recommend it!

Ryan Dejonghe says

Author Richard O'Connor just combined two of my favorite books: Daniel Hahneman's THINKING, FAST AND SLOW and Eckhart Tolle's THE POWER OF NOW. Not only did he combine them, he did it quite well, making it his own. This was an enjoyable, insightful read that I highly recommend.

Ouch!" That's the first thing you'll say. O'Connor lists out the bad habits—one by one. At first, you may not think you are that bad off. Then you flip the page. And another page. He's got your number. Several of your numbers. Then O'Connor goes into detail of how we minimize our bad habits, thinking they aren't that destructive, and then he systematically proves how they are bad. Yeah, "ouch!"

But read on, fellow readers! You wouldn't be looking at this book if you didn't want to change. O'Connor doesn't leave you in the heaps of disappointment; he shows various methods to change. He gives the scientific background of what works and doesn't work, and then offers exercises to change. My favorite, as alluded to before, is mindfulness techniques and awareness. But this isn't all breathing and meditating. O'Connor offers plenty of techniques for the "I don't want this 'ah-om' stuff" folks (though the 'ah-om' stuff works—trust me...and trust O'Connor). He talks about journaling, and many other hearty techniques that are easy to implement and rid those nasty ol' habits.

Bottom line: we all do things that we want to change or eliminate. O'Connor blends the best of what is out there and makes it practical, real, and obtainable. This is a great book that'll give you a better life.

Thanks to Hudson Street Press and Penguin Group for providing this to me electronically for review.

Muthuvel says

The brain doesn't tell us what to do; it is part of a system in which our life experience teaches our brain what to do. A part of assessment of looking upon self destructive patterns that could develop inside the brain.

Vfields Don't touch my happy! says

This was a challenge from work and it is very outside my comfort zone. The first half of the entire book was very clinical for me and hard to read. I got what O'Connor was trying to say when he used stories to illustrate situations. The second half moved faster and gave ideas and practices that could be used for many different habits anyone would like to overcome.

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