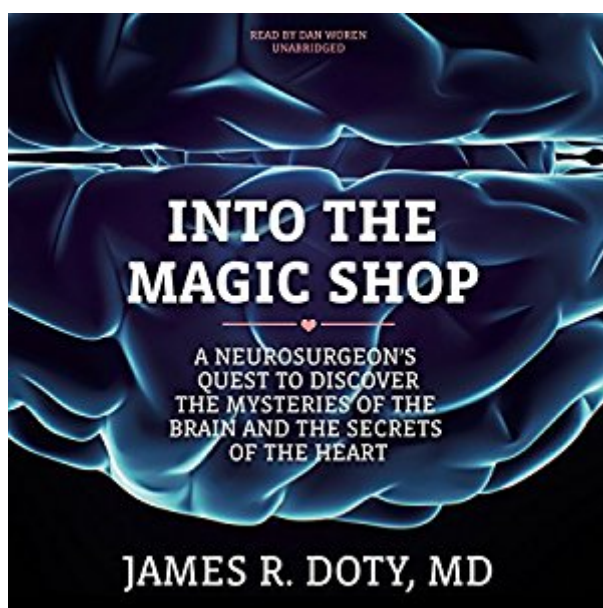


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Into The Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest To Discover The Mysteries Of The Brain And The Secrets Of The Heart



Synopsis

Extraordinary things happen when we harness the power of both the brain and the heart. Growing up in the high desert of California, Jim Doty was poor, living with an alcoholic father and a mother chronically depressed and paralyzed by a stroke. Today he is the director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University, of which the Dalai Lama is a founding benefactor. But back then his life was at a dead end - until at the age of 12, when he wandered into a magic shop looking for a plastic thumb. There he met Ruth, a woman who taught him a series of exercises to ease his own suffering and manifest his greatest desires. Her final mandate was that he keep his heart open and teach these techniques to others. Ruth gave Doty his first glimpse of the unique relationship between the brain and the heart. Doty would go on to put Ruth's techniques to work, bringing power and wealth that he could only imagine as a 12-year-old. But he neglected Ruth's most important lesson, to keep his heart open, with disastrous results - until he had the opportunity to make a spectacular charitable contribution that would virtually ruin him. Part memoir, part science, part inspiration, and part practical instruction, *Into the Magic Shop* shows us how we can fundamentally change our lives by first changing our brains and our hearts.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Back in the 1970's, I took a meditation course with a well-known Hindu teacher named Swami Rama, who was one of the first yogis whose significant mental powers were studied by Western scientists. What I learned from him about the tools of relaxation, meditation, focusing on a mantra

were very effective in my life. But like so many others, my best intentions were waylaid by daily living, and after a few years I stopped meditating. This was to my detriment since the constant stress of working, raising a family and trying to keep my head above water financially created havoc with my health. In the meantime, Swami Rama became a controversial character after being accused by several women of being sexually abused and exploited by the "holy man" in his Ashram. This kind of revelation has become almost common place as we've come to understand that great teachers can all-too-often possess a great ability to take advantage of those he or she teaches and who place so much trust and love in that person. Today, "mindfulness" is almost a buzzword in everything from sports to business as meditation has been studied and proven to be beneficial and rewarding to those who practice it. As I read through the first few chapters of "Into the Magic Shop", I felt a definite *deja vu* as Dr. Doty describes the "magic" he was taught by Ruth in the magic shop of his youth. I purchased the book because the blurb about Dr. Doty seemed intriguing, but I soon felt like the book was nothing more than a self-help book disguised as an autobiography, and while I understood that the magic described in the book is indeed powerful, I already knew all about what he was describing as the "magic" and was about to put the book aside; disappointed that the book never felt like it was going anywhere. I'm very glad that I didn't, however, since once Dr. Doty began to relate the amazing journey he took from Lancaster, California to the pinnacle of financial and professional success, the book became one I couldn't put down. The remarkable arc of his journey becomes a life lesson for so many people hell bent on success at all costs. Dr. Doty is frank about his failings in relationships and about how the magic he learned got him everything he wanted materially, but let him bankrupt in many other ways. It was only when he began to understand that only through Kindness, Compassion, Empathy and Love does a life truly become fulfilled that he understood how he had misused the magic he'd learned. In our society, the words above are used often, but they are not taken to heart, which is the organ Dr. Doty believes be the true seat of our greatest human virtues; not the brain. Dr. Doty's story of how the magic he learned as a child can be used toward good or ill is a vitally important one in a society that values material wealth, fame and irresponsible consumerism as the most desirable. Not one to just talk about Kindness, Compassion, Empathy and Love, he created the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University. CCARE states as its mission that it "investigates methods for cultivating compassion and promoting altruism within individuals and society through rigorous research, scientific collaborations, and academic conferences. In addition, CCARE provides a compassion cultivation program and teacher training as well as educational public events and programs." "Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of

the Heart" is both a fascinating journey of a successful neurosurgeon and entrepreneur as well as a remarkable prescription for creating a much happier and healthier individual so that those same benefits can be shared with the entire human population. It is an ambitious goal, but one that more and more people feel dedicated to achieving; especially in a world where hatred, injustice and intolerance seem to predominate in our media and in our politics.

This book is an interesting one that I read in one night. It is both a memoir and a metaphysical book, and is written by a neurosurgeon. The introduction has a graphic description of brain surgery which I stopped reading long before it was over. Chapter One then goes back to Lancaster, California in 1968, where the author is a twelve-year-old who feels like he is most unlucky where his family is concerned. His father is an alcoholic with unsteady employment, his mother is depressed and sometimes suicidal, his older brother is always frightened, and eviction is always a possibility. But then he walks into a magic shop one day, where Ruth, the owner's mother, decides he would be a good candidate to teach the magic of metaphysics. What she basically teaches him is meditation and visualization. Those are two topics I've read much about, since I've read hundreds of metaphysical books, but have never been truly enticed to practice. No, I'm not going to add "until now". Although if you are interested in those two things and don't want to get bogged down in "heavy" reading, this book would be an excellent one to read. What you will learn is relaxing the body, taming the mind, opening the heart and clarifying your intent. There are step-by-step instructions, of two to three pages, about each of those techniques after they are discussed. There are also audio versions of those instructions at a website mentioned in the book. Thus, this is a bit of a self-help book, too. Dr. Doty describes how his childhood is tremendously changed after spending six weeks learning Ruth's lessons. His family life doesn't really change, he is the one who changes. Sometimes while reading this book, it seems unreal a 12-year-old American boy in 1968 would have the patience and desire to learn those lessons, but I will believe that the good doctor is telling the truth. He then goes on to describe the rest of his life, where he beat all odds to go to college and medical school, and became a very successful and wealthy neurosurgeon. With success came arrogance, however, and there were some disastrous happenings. But once Dr. Doty realized he was listening too much to his brain and not enough to his heart, he balanced out his life and began teaching compassion and altruism. Like the Dalai Lama, he says kindness is his religion. The author has certainly come a long way from his days as an angry, envious child, who was afraid his life would always be defined by his unhappy, poor family

and circumstances beyond his control. A good read.

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