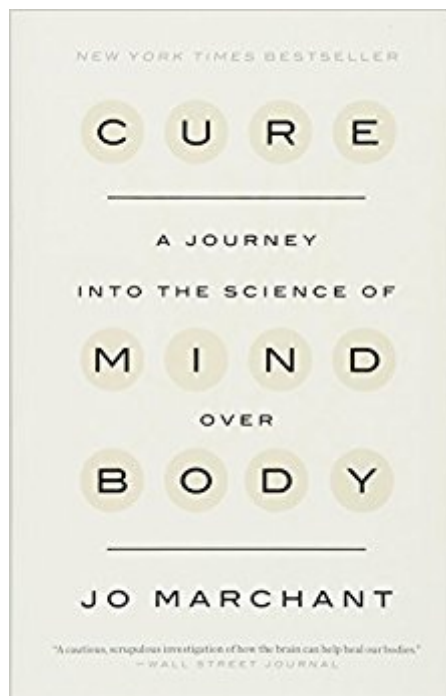




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# Cure: A Journey Into The Science Of Mind Over Body



## Synopsis

A rigorous, skeptical, deeply reported look at the new science behind the mind's surprising ability to heal the body. Have you ever felt a surge of adrenaline after narrowly avoiding an accident? Salivated at the sight (or thought) of a sour lemon? Felt turned on just from hearing your partner's voice? If so, then you've experienced how dramatically the workings of your mind can affect your body. Yet while we accept that stress or anxiety can damage our health, the idea of "healing thoughts" was long ago hijacked by New Age gurus and spiritual healers. Recently, however, serious scientists from a range of fields have been uncovering evidence that our thoughts, emotions and beliefs can ease pain, heal wounds, fend off infection and heart disease and even slow the progression of AIDS and some cancers. In *Cure*, award-winning science writer Jo Marchant travels the world to meet the physicians, patients and researchers on the cutting edge of this new world of medicine. We learn how meditation protects against depression and dementia, how social connections increase life expectancy and how patients who feel cared for recover from surgery faster. We meet Iraq war veterans who are using a virtual arctic world to treat their burns and children whose ADHD is kept under control with half the normal dose of medication. We watch as a transplant patient uses the smell of lavender to calm his hostile immune system and an Olympic runner shaves vital seconds off his time through mind-power alone. Drawing on the very latest research, Marchant explores the vast potential of the mind's ability to heal, lays out its limitations and explains how we can make use of the findings in our own lives. With clarity and compassion, *Cure* points the way towards a system of medicine that treats us not simply as bodies but as human beings. *Cure* is a New York Times Bestseller, Finalist for the Royal Society Insight Investment Science Book Prize and Longlisted for the Wellcome Book Prize.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Broadway Books; Reprint edition (January 10, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385348177

ISBN-13: 978-0385348171

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 148 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #52,929 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in Books > Health, Fitness &

Dieting > Alternative Medicine > Holistic #160 in [The New York Times Bestseller List](#) > Medical Books > Psychology > Neuropsychology #190 in [The New York Times Bestseller List](#) > Medical Books > Psychology > Psychotherapy, TA & NLP

## Customer Reviews

A New York Post Best Book of 2016  
A New York Magazine Best Science Book of 2016  
A Mindful.org Top 10 Mindful Book of 2016  
A Sunday Times Book of the Year  
An Economist Book of the Year  
A Spirituality & Health Best Mind/Body Book of 2016

“Ms. Marchant writes well, which is never a guarantee in this genre.”

“Second, [she] has chosen very moving characters to show us the importance of the research, and she has an equal flair for finding inspirational figures; the studies are irresistible, and they come in an almost infinite variety.”

•New York Times

“Cure is a cautious, scrupulous investigation of how the brain can help heal our bodies. It is also an important look at the flip side of this coin, which is how brains damaged by stress may make bodies succumb to physical illness or accelerated aging.”

“Cure points a way toward a future in which the two camps [mainstream medicine and alternative therapies] might work together. After all, any medicine that makes a patient better, whether conventional, alternative, or placebo, is simply medicine.”

•Wall Street Journal

“A well-researched page-turner”

“raises questions about the role of culture, environment and neurochemistry in our responses to treatment, and may very well lead to widespread changes in the ways we practice medicine.”

•Susannah Cahalan, New York Post

“Cure is for anyone interested in a readable overview of recent findings in mind-body phenomena, a reliably enthralling topic.”

“A rewarding read that seeks to separate the wishful and emotion-driven from the scientifically tested.”

•Washington Post

“Research-heavy but never dull, this revelatory work about the mind-body connection explains how the brain can affect physical healing.”

•Entertainment Weekly

“Marchant is a skeptical, evidence-based reporter, one with a background in microbiology, no less, which makes for a fascinating juxtaposition against some of the alternative treatments she discusses.”

•New York Magazine

“A thought-provoking exploration of how the mind can affect the body and can be harnessed to help treat physical illness.”

•Economist

“In a wide-ranging and compelling new book, science journalist Jo Marchant explores whether the mind can heal the body.”

“With lively, clear prose, Marchant surveys the evidence for the mind-body connection.”

•Science News

“Fascinating and thought-provoking. Marchant has travelled extensively around

Europe and the US, talking to health workers and ordinary folk, to produce this meticulously researched book. *Cure* is a much-needed counter to a reductionist medical culture that ignores anything that doesn't show up in a scan. [it] should be compulsory reading for all young doctors. • *New Scientist* "A revved-up, research-packed explication of the use of mind in medicine, from meditation to guided visualisation.

Marchant's nimble reportage on the work of scientists in novel fields such as psychoneuroimmunology and her discussion of placebos are as fresh as her reminders of how stress and poverty affect wellbeing are timely. • *Nature* "Could my belief that I'm going to feel better in itself heal me? It's a fascinating question, and one that British author Jo Marchant takes on with aplomb in her new book, *Cure*. • *Spirituality & Health* "Writing with simplicity, clarity and style, and covering an enormous range of material, [Marchant] surveys with grace what we think we know, and what we would like to know, about the mysterious and troubling relationship between our minds and our bodies. [She] is level-headed, always with one foot planted in the worlds of science and reason. Though open-minded, she is rigorous, her gently skeptical tone reassures, and she gracefully skewers quackery. • *The*

*Guardian* "Thought-provoking. This new generation of evidence-based mind-body researchers has produced some remarkable findings, which Marchant analyses with elegance and lucidity. • *Times Literary Supplement* "Jo Marchant makes her case so cogently that it is hard to disagree [with her]. The author has a gift for writing that is both clear and vivid, and communicates complex ideas in a way that is comprehensible and uncondescending. This is surely an area of medicine whose time has come. • *The Independent* "A diligent and useful work that makes the case for 'holistic' medicine while warning against the snake-oil salesmen who have annexed that word for profit. • *Sunday Times* "This is an important book, and one that will challenge those dismissive of efforts to investigate how our thoughts, emotions and beliefs might directly influence our physical wellbeing. The evolving science explored in *Cure* is intriguing and trailblazing, and Marchant's account of its pursuit is often gripping. There's a lot to this impressive book, and it has the potential to have the same dramatic impact on our understanding of our self as Norman Doidge's blockbuster, *The Brain that Changes Itself*. • *Sydney Morning Herald* "Marchant explores the possibilities of psychology-based approaches to improving physical well-being in this open-minded, evidence-based account. A powerful and critically needed conceptual bridge for those who are frustrated with pseudoscientific explanations of alternative therapies but intrigued by the

mind's potential power to both cause and treat chronic, stress-related conditions." Publishers Weekly (starred review) "A balanced, informative review of a controversial subject." Kirkus Reviews "Cure represents a journey in the best sense of the word: a vivid, compassionate, generous exploration of the role of the human mind in both health and illness. Drawing on her training as a scientist and a science writer, Marchant meticulously investigates both promising and improbable theories of the mind's ability to heal the body. The result is to illuminate a fascinating approach to medicine, full of human detail, integrity, and ultimately, hope." Deborah Blum, author of The Poisoner's Handbook and Love at Goon Park "This is popular science writing at its very best. Cure beautifully describes the cutting-edge research going on in the fascinating and until now, often unexplored area of mind-body medicine. I would recommend this book to anybody who has a mind and a body." Henry Marsh, author of Do No Harm: Stories of Life, Death, and Brain Surgery

Jo Marchant is the author of *Decoding the Heavens*, shortlisted for the Royal Society Prize. She has a PhD in genetics and medical microbiology and has written on everything from the future of genetic engineering to underwater archaeology for *New Scientist*, *Nature*, *The Guardian*, and *Smithsonian*. She has appeared on BBC Radio, CNN, and National Geographic. She lives in London.

As someone with an autoimmune disease (multiple sclerosis), I read quite a bit in the areas of health and medicine, alternative medicine, and the history of medicine. This book, written by a British journalist who also has a PhD in microbiology, gives us a vibrant look at the powers of the mind in healing. She studies the current research and presents it in an accessible way. I'm not at all surprised that this book has rocketed to several top-seller lists. Note that this book deals a lot with the powers of the placebo effect. The point here is not that doctors should be tricking everyone who is ill, just to make them feel good. Instead, the idea is that the placebo effect shows us certain things that can be harnessed to lead to wellness. For instance, being cared for really helps people heal, as does having belief and simply doing something to try to help with the problem. Our expectations are vitally important when it comes to healing, as are our previous experiences. Many factors determine how we respond to medical treatment and neglect. This book is about understanding those elements and bringing them into regular medical care instead of just relying on fake pills, as we can learn a lot from the placebo effect. Here are the main things I see as take-aways in this book:=====

Because of the importance of the mind/body connection, the placebo effect, and the studies cited by the author, it's extremely important to find a great healthcare provider you really trust. If you don't do this, your chances of doing well are simply undermined because you won't have belief in the person you're working with, and you might not even have belief in yourself. A good provider needs to be empathic and supportive, as their attitude is really beneficial to people going through treatment. The style and quality of your care provider matters a lot.

• For those of us with a serious disease, doing something about it is so much better and more important than doing nothing. This is because doing something -- if it's taking a drug or following a lifestyle "cure" -- harnesses the powers of the mind and body to work for you. Doing what you believe in really matters.

• For some things, the mind/body connection is really helpful: Things like pain, depression, fatigue, nausea, and generally "how we feel" are the most able to be influenced by mind/body interaction.

• Following from this, autoimmune responses are often influenced by the mind/body connection. Said another way, autoimmune diseases are particularly susceptible to mind/body interaction.

• For other things, the mind/body connection is much less relevant. Things like infections need antibiotics and things like broken bones need casts.

• Stress is a real killer, as is emphasized in this book over and over. Stress is rooted in our flight-or-fight ancestry, switching on to save our lives. But switching this response on for a long time can result in things like high blood pressure and really damaging your body. With chronic stress, inflammation kicks in, which is not really what you want all the time (especially for those with MS). Stress can even rewire the brain (based on brain-scan research), and this has been documented.

For people with MS in particular and autoimmune diseases in general, there are a few particular take-aways in this book:

• Biofeedback and meditation can be particularly helpful, but you really need to "put in the hours" giving them time to rewire your brain and whole self. These practices don't heal us over night. You really need to take time to rewire your brain away from a stressed-out neural network.

• When people with MS have flare-ups, not getting too anxious about it is vitally important. This is for two reasons: 1) imagining improvement and thinking positively can actually bring it about, and 2) this point of view can help mitigate stress, thus keeping the exacerbation from getting worse.

• With MS, inflammation is the real source of the problem (as our white blood cells are attacking the central nervous system), and stress has been shown to cause swelling. As a result, limiting stress is utterly vital for those of us with MS. Negative worries and anxieties can be equally destructive. Stress kills us in particular, because of the way MS

works. **• Treating MS in ways you believe in really matters. Belief and healing go hand in hand. For me, this means that mainstream and alternative approaches can all "work" or be helpful, as long as you are invested in them and coming from a position of belief and positivity.** **• Being cared for well is also essential, as the placebo effect is tapped into when you're feeling cared for.**

This book is a great introduction to mind/body phenomena in medicine, because it approaches the topic from a rigorously scientific, evidence-based standpoint. Ms. Marchant is a science and history journalist with a doctorate in microbiology, and without any touch of New Agey credulity. She looks at the ways in which the mind can affect the body's ability to cure itself, looking at individual case histories and at studies of many cases. Much of the evidence she cites is compelling; her arguments are strong enough to make me consider a non-traditional approach to my chronic hip pain, and for someone as science-based as I, that's quite a concession. Beyond convincing arguments and evidence, Ms. Marchant has written an eminently readable and engrossing book. She makes one thing very clear: the antipathy of the current medical establishment to non-traditional medicine, even when it is shown to be helpful. This is based on the sad fact that it is at present very difficult to make money from an approach that leans to fewer pills, less intervention, and more human contact. Perhaps efforts at cost saving will bring this approach more into the limelight. In the meantime, this book is well worth reading, particularly for those with intractable medical issues.

Review first posted on [jenasbookreviews.blogspot.com](http://jenasbookreviews.blogspot.com) Jo Marchant goes around the world exploring the concept of just how much influence over our body the mind actually has and the results are incredible. It's long been established that stress and anxiety have a detrimental effect on our bodies but now research is finally catching up that healing thoughts, placebos, and most of all human connection can have incredibly beneficial results on not only our mental well being but our physical well being as well. It may be that homeopathy doesn't work because of the memory of some chemical compound but rather that it's the fact that the practitioner takes the time to sit and talk with the patient, something that is lacking more and more in the Western medical culture where it's how many people can you get in and out with a pill. Studies are even finding that placebos can have amazing affects on the mind and body even when the patient knows that they are taking a placebo but that simply the act of doing something can cause the brain to release it's own cures. I found it interesting that as I was reading the book the neurological/immune system link that was

talked about having to exist but not yet found was discovered. The whole book was a fascinating read about what our minds are capable of.

VERY interesting read. A keeper for this health care professional for the authors take on everything from homeopathic to placebo interventions conjunction with instead of in opposition to most mainline medical treatments and approaches.

Very thorough. It is good to see professionals take this idea seriously! I heard about it in a support group. Having been one of the more 'healthy' ones, Cure, Mind & Body goes perfectly with many of same truths, I've found in maintaining momentum towards good goals.

Marchant is a science writer and the prose is very well done. She cites many studies without it being boring, and it is more readable because she includes many peoples' stories to illustrate her points. I read everything I see on the subject but have already (half-way through) learned things I didn't know. I've recommended it to several colleagues. One just wrote to say she can't put it down. It was recommended to me by an MD/PhD who is well versed in science and medicine. All health professionals should read this one.

Beyond merely interesting, Cure is nothing short of mind-blowing in some respects, and even where the research conducted to date raises more questions than yields answers on the inter-dependence of mind and body, it is ultimately empowering. Highly recommended

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