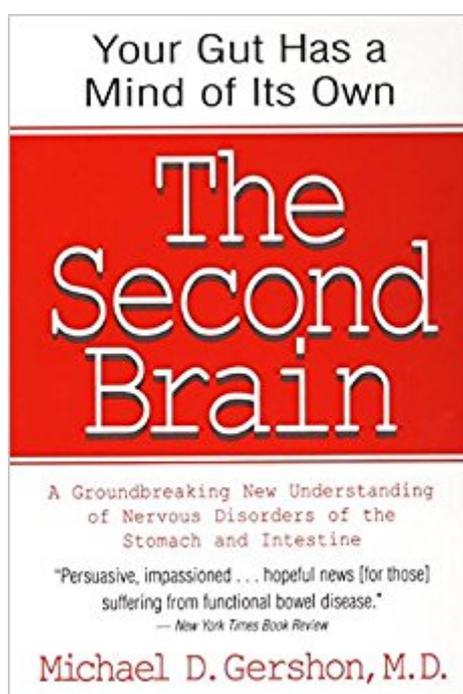


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# The Second Brain: A Groundbreaking New Understanding Of Nervous Disorders Of The Stomach And Intestine



## Synopsis

Dr. Michael Gershon has devoted his career to understanding the human bowel (the stomach, esophagus, small intestine, and colon). His thirty years of research have led to an extraordinary rediscovery: nerve cells in the gut that act as a brain. This "second brain" can control our gut all by itself. Our two brains -- the one in our head and the one in our bowel -- must cooperate. If they do not, then there is chaos in the gut and misery in the head -- everything from "butterflies" to cramps, from diarrhea to constipation. Dr. Gershon's work has led to radical new understandings about a wide range of gastrointestinal problems including gastroenteritis, nervous stomach, and irritable bowel syndrome. The Second Brain represents a quantum leap in medical knowledge and is already benefiting patients whose symptoms were previously dismissed as neurotic or "it's all in your head."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Persuasive, impassioned... hopeful news [for those] suffering from functional bowel disease." -- New York TimesBook Review  
"Persuasive, impassioned... hopeful news [for those] suffering from functional bowel disease." -- New York TimesBook Review

Michael D. Gershon M.D., is chairman of the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City.

Having been a scientist all of my adult life, I understood the book completely, and it's outstanding! I just think that many of the terms when newly introduced should be highlighted for the sake of the lay audience. I also think there should be more illustrations, but that's just stingy publishers.....A great book!

If you are planning to be a student of medicine or neuro-psychology, then you seriously might start with this book. Gershon shares his 30 years of research of the gut and its enteric nervous system in a detailed narrative account, which is technical but very readable to the interested student. Until his research in this book revealed that the gut has nerve cells that act as a second brain, the gut went far too long unrecognized as capable of being an independent functioning organism, and its importance in both medical health as well as psychological health had taken a back seat to the head brain. I have used his remarkable work as a primary reference in my own book to further validate psychological findings in my own clinical studies on the intelligence of the gut instincts and a new gut psychology. Without his work, my thesis would have lacked the neurological and biological validation it needed to come forth as a viable new theory in modern psychological thought. I highly recommend Dr. Michael Gershon's groundbreaking book. Martha Love author of "What's Behind Your Belly Button?: A Psychological Perspective of the Intelligence of Human Nature and Gut Instinct"

Interestingly written by a scientist--perhaps that's a first! Information was very helpful in understanding the way serotonin acts in our bodies.

This book is not for the lay person and is not reader friendly. I may be a great book but I had a hard time understanding what the author was trying to say.

Hard read - very scientific

This book is too 'deep'. I was looking for something educational that I can apply into my daily life, but this is too scientific for me. The concept is great but the writing is complicated.

I really loved this book. Reading it was like taking a "Fantastic Voyage" into the microcosm of the gut, and it is an entire universe all by itself. Mixed with that is the story of how the politics worked,

and the personal adventures of the author and researcher. It is a keeper.

I am used to reading very dry working papers in mathematics, medical research, econometrics and other scientific endeavors. Usually, such papers are 20 pages or less. A few are up to 50 pages. However, this book is pretty much a 300 page scientific paper! In other words, it is rather unreadable. There is way too much detail to impart the key information to a general audience. As an example, the entire Part I of the book that covers 80 pages can be summed up in the following paragraph. In Part I, the author discloses that he rediscovered that human beings have essentially a third nervous system or rather nervous/motor system. The first one is the voluntary skeletal one whereby your brain essentially controls all your voluntary actions through orders transmitted with the acetylcholine neurotransmitter among many others. The second one is the involuntary automatic one that controls most of your physiological necessities and responses (breathing, cardiovascular system functioning, glands, visceral muscles, etc.). It is governed by the peripheral central nervous system (spinal cord, etc.). This system is subdivided into two. One is the sympathetic one that responds to the neurotransmitter noripenephrine (a precursor of adrenaline) and is responsible for the flight-or-fight mechanism among many other reflexive reactions. The other one is the parasympathetic nervous system that responds to the acetylcholine neurotransmitter that governs many physiological activities. In addition, the author's contribution to the field is his rediscovering a third and pretty independent nervous system: enteric nervous system governing your digestive system (your gut) through the neurotransmitter serotonin. He states that he "rediscovered" the enteric nervous system because it was first discovered by an earlier set of scientists a long time ago. Bayliss and Starling came up with the "Law of the Intestine" in the 1890s; Langley publishes his seminal book on the subject "The Autonomic Nervous System" in 1921. Both treaties described the workings of the enteric nervous system in detail. And, Gershon graciously gives them full credit for their work. If you find the above paragraph too heavy going, this book is not for you. The above paragraph is a piece of cake compared to the real thing: an 80 page Part I with many more details describing cellular level physiological reactions entirely unfamiliar to a lay public. Also, the author imparts some drama regarding the rather Galilean reception he got from other neuroscientists for re-advancing the theories of the gut having its own independent nervous system. Later, when he is able to turn things around and finally convince the world that the enteric nervous system is real, he spends an entire 33 pages on a single event, a neuroscientist convention workshop that took place in Cincinnati, where he presented his theories and they were finally well

accepted. He describes in extensive details his friends and foes participants at this convention. It is interesting to a certain point. Lay readers will probably feel that this topic warranted no more than 8 pages instead of 33. The remainder of the book, beyond Part I, continues to read as something like a graduate school biochemistry textbook. The New York Times Book Review that is quoted on the cover page as stating regarding this book: "Persuasive, impassioned | hopeful news [for those] suffering from functional bowel disease" has most probably had no staffer actually reading this book. That's because it has very little practical health advice. It mentions that modern anti-depressants (SSRIs) are really bad for your intestine because their reuptaking serotonin does reduce the amount of serotonin generated by your intestine and greatly affects your digestive function. Also, dietary fiber is really good for you because it enhances the muscular fitness of your colon. And, that's it as far as practical health advice goes. As far as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), the author goes on an entire chapter (chapter 8. A Bad Bowel) how that disease is really ill-defined and is a catch all for all sorts of digestive ailments that the medical profession does not understand and does not know how to cure. In view of that the anthological comments by The New York Times Book Review are really inaccurate.

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