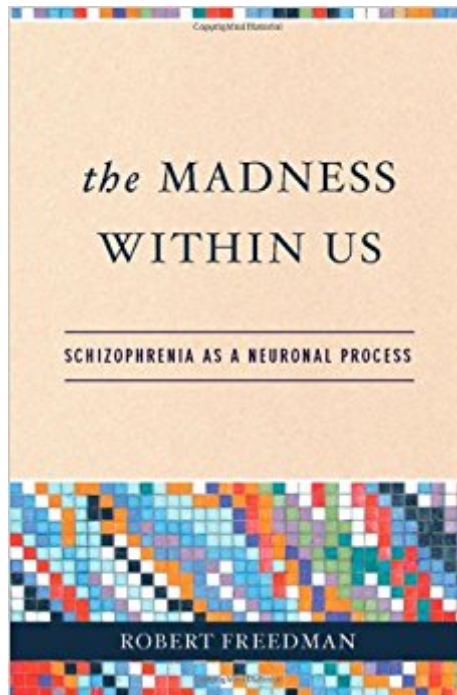


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The Madness Within Us: Schizophrenia As A Neuronal Process



Synopsis

Schizophrenia is one of the most devastating and mysterious mental illnesses. People with schizophrenia have the unique sensation that their brain is being taken over by external entities and that their heads are filled with voices that are not their own. Although it is increasingly recognized as a biological illness of the brain, it also has profound psychological implications for how we perceive reality. *The Madness Within Us: Schizophrenia as a Neuronal Process* is an illuminating discussion of these two aspects of the illness. Dr. Robert Freedman, who is both a neuroscientist and a practicing clinical psychiatrist, outlines the emerging understanding of schizophrenia as a neurobiological illness and shows how these new insights can be used as a bridge to the psychological understanding of the delusions and hallucinations. He combines the findings of modern brain science with insights from the clinical practitioner's empathic listening to patients as they describe their problems.

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Customer Reviews

"Anyone who has ever wondered how something as compelling and complex as schizophrenia could be explained by a molecular malfunction in the brain will want to read this book. Woven through the stories of patient's lives, Dr. Freedman tells the sweeping history of a disorder; how families and society have defined and confronted it over the centuries; and where psychiatry now stands. I expect this book to be required reading for students of psychology, psychiatry and mental health. [Dr. Freedman's book] has met the challenge of psychosis and beautifully tells its tale. Like

modern neuroscience, *The Madness Within Us* delivers some solid answers to the mysteries of the mind."--Dolores Malaspina, MD, Steckler Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Institute for Social and Psychiatric Initiatives (InSPIRES), New York University"Dr. Robert Freedman is a world leading, human source of up-to-date wisdom about neurobiological and social insights regarding schizophrenia. Freedman has pioneered the use of neurophysiological and genetic probes into the basis of schizophrenia, a devastating "no fault" clinical brain disorder that strikes 1% of the world's population with cruel abandon... This is a truly unique and wonderfully insightful "scientific novel" from a world-renowned and empathetic psychiatric neuroscientist: it is a 'must read' book for mental health professionals and a lay audience alike."--David Braff, MD, Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Schizophrenia Program at the University of California, San Diego, School of Medicine"Dr. Robert Freedman has written a remarkable book. He moves seamlessly from history to philosophy to neural systems, and he provides compelling case examples to hold it all together. He accomplishes this task in a lively, engaging, and accessible narrative style. The book will be informative to family members who struggle to understand the experience of loved ones, as well as to clinicians who work with schizophrenia and are seeking a broad and knowledgeable perspective. Schizophrenia occurs at so many levels: genetic, neural, cognitive, pharmacological, and societal; but ultimately it exists at a human and personal level. This book masterfully touches on all these levels to provide insights on the most enigmatic of diseases." --Michael F. Green, PhD, Professor, Semel Institute of Neuroscience and Human Behavior at University of California, Los Angeles"Anyone who reads this instructive book on the neurobiology of schizophrenia will become more informed about this serious and complex illness."--Doody's"...beautifully written, brilliant, comprehensive, and thoughtfully integrated...There are other excellent books on schizophrenia and the experience of the disorder, but this volume brings us up-to-date on neuroal processes and behavior and does so with clarity. The writing is accurate and interesting for professionals, and it will be helpful to many outside the profession, including some families of patients. Thin, tightly packed, quickly paced, alive, inspiring, and of remarkable intellectual power and depth, Freedman's volume should be widely read--it is one of the most important books dealing with mental illness of the past two decades."--Reviewed by Jack D. Barchas, MD, New York, NY in the American Journal of Psychiatry

Robert Freedman, MD is Professor and Chair of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado and the Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Psychiatry. He is a graduate of Harvard Medical School and a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science.

The title and subtitle describe the intent of this work quite well: human genetic variations are such that schizophrenia is one possibility and the perspective being that of schizophrenia as a neuronal process. It is a work from a neurobiological viewpoint with metaphysical awareness, illustrated by references to actual cases from clinical praxis. This combination makes for a very readable and informative introductory text for the interested lay reader. A major discussion concerns one pathological trait - the abnormality of sensory processing - and more specifically the neuronal aspects of a deficit in sensory gating. A gating deficit leads to a heightened sensitivity to the environment and the individual being overwhelmed due to the "absence of a fully functional filtering mechanism" (the point is also raised that this gating deficit could actually lead to an enhancement of learning brain functions in certain individuals). The focus is on hippocampal functions and the hippocampus CA1 and CA3 areas. This discussion is then extended to an extensive and interesting discussion of nicotinic receptors, in particular of the $\alpha 7$ -nicotinic receptor - the principal receptor of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine - and schizophrenia. A further major discussion deals with the genetic aspect. The risk for schizophrenia is inherited, although no specific gene can be considered causal. The gene for the $\alpha 7$ -nicotinic receptor subunit, CHRNA7 (cholinergic receptor nicotine $\alpha 7$), is discussed as a potential factor in genetic risk. The limitations of the dopamine theory of schizophrenia are pointed out, as well as the fact that it is difficult to assert that newer medications, apart from clozapine [new being in this case, 1971], are more effective than older medications. Present medications have a positive, but not a curative effect on schizophrenia, and better, more innovative medications are needed. In his chapter 'Beyond the Dopamine Theory' a truly new approach - DMXB-A (a nicotinic cholinergic agonist) for which clinical trials are now running- is described. This is a very well-written and thoughtful work, see for example, the author's closing words: "Evolution has left us with a range of capacities, seemingly based on the random assortment of alleles when eggs and sperm are made. We are frail in many ways. We begin life as a single cell, we are born defenseless, and we live with a brain that can easily become psychotic. These vulnerabilities are not restricted to a few unfortunate individuals. They are part of all of us."

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