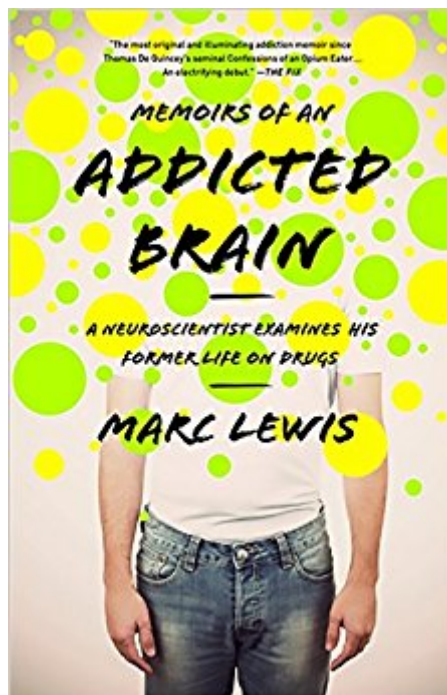




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Memoirs Of An Addicted Brain: A Neuroscientist Examines His Former Life On Drugs



Synopsis

Marc Lewis's relationship with drugs began in a New England boarding school where, as a bullied and homesick fifteen-year-old, he made brief escapes from reality by way of cough medicine, alcohol, and marijuana. In Berkeley, California, in its hippie heyday, he found methamphetamine and LSD and heroin; he sniffed nitrous oxide in Malaysia; and frequented Calcutta's opium dens. Ultimately, though, his journey took him where it takes most addicts: into a life of desperation, deception, and crime. But unlike most addicts, Lewis recovered to become a developmental psychologist and researcher in neuroscience. In *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain*, he applies his professional expertise to a study of his former self, using the story of his own journey through addiction to tell the universal story of addictions of every kind.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Kirkus "Developmental neuroscientist Lewis examines his odyssey from minor stoner to helpless, full-blown addict. As [he] unspools one pungent drug episode after another, he capably knits into the narrative an accessible explanation of the neural activity that guided his behavior. From opium pipe to orbitofrontal cortex, a smoothly entertaining interplay between lived experience and the particulars of brain activity." Publishers Weekly "Meticulous, evocative | Lewis's unusual blend of scientific expertise, street cred, vivid subjectivity and searching introspection yields a compelling perspective on the perils and allure of addiction." Wall Street Journal "Compelling | for readers grappling with addiction, Mr.

Lewis's approach might well be novel enough to inspire them to seek the happiness he now enjoys.

• *Chronicle of Higher Education* – “He proceeds deftly from episodes of his drug years to neuroscientific explanations of his brain’s response to drugs.

• *Boston Globe* – “A surprising and charming addition to this crowded genre. Yes, it embraces the classic redemption narrative - teenage experimentation, late-’60s Berkeley, exotic forays into Malaysia and Calcutta, the inevitable slide into deception, crime, and desperation. But he ends up a professional neuropsychologist, able to enliven the tired streams of addled consciousness with metrical rapids of semi-hard science.

• *The Guardian* – “Marc Lewis’s brilliant – if not wholly sympathetic – account of his many mind-bludgeoning drug experiences wears its biological determinism on its sleeve | Lewis has certainly woven his experiences into an unusual and exciting book | (*Memoirs of an Addicted Brain*) is as strange, immediate and artfully written as any Oliver Sacks case-study, with the added scintillation of having been composed by its subject.

• *The Fix* – “The most original and illuminating addiction memoir since Thomas De Quincey’s seminal *Confessions of an Opium Eater* | [an] electrifying debut.

• *Midwest Book Review* – “A powerful survey recounting the author’s powerful addiction and how he broke an intense hold on drugs | This will appeal to a range of collections, from those strong in autobiographies to science and health holdings alike.

Dr. Marc Lewis is a developmental neuroscientist and professor of human development and applied psychology at Radboud University in the Netherlands, and professor emeritus at the University of Toronto. He is the author of over fifty journal publications in neuroscience and developmental psychology and coeditor of *Emotion, Development, and Self-Organization: Dynamic Systems Approaches to Emotional Development*.

Was looking for some insight into my own addiction to pain meds, but didn’t really find it. It was an excellent memoir and also insightful on how the brain in addiction works. His method for getting off of it seems similar to mine, but I think he’d have found it easier if he’d added exercise as a coping mechanism.

Unfortunately, the author, so exquisitely positioned as a former drug addict now neuroscientist, missed the opportunity to write a truly interesting book. That book would have provided some insight into how he made the change. To his credit, the author promised no such thing. The title, after all,

only guarantees a memoir examining his former life on drugs. So what we're left with is 306 pages of sordid drug-use stories and the occasional superficial drug-use "neuroscience". This, despite having entitled the last chapter "Healing". Oh, the author does leave us with a concluding paragraph in which he notes that there are only a few things that can be done to beat addiction and that addicts have to change many parts of themselves., But still no information as to what those things are. He further assures us that understanding the brain may be a first step in addressing addiction and even understanding being human, but I guess those things are better left to other scientists and authors.

I purchased this memoir in order to better understand what my son may be experiencing, both from an experiential sense, as well as scientifically. Lewis does a very good job explaining the neuro-chemistry underlying the effects of various drugs. Having no personal experience with these drugs, I found his descriptions to be both informative and enlightening. I bought my son a copy of the book as well, which he initially ignored. However, he did finally pick it up and at least began reading it, saying that he was interested in learning what he was doing to his brain. I fear that Dr. Lewis doesn't do sufficient justice to the negative effects of these drugs, but rather seems (as I have noted that other former heavy drug users do) sometimes seems to almost fondly reminisce in his past drug use. I also felt that the book started out very strongly, but seemed a bit rushed at the end. I would have preferred to hear more about how his adoption of "no" as a philosophy enabled his recovery. His "lessons learned" seemed far too short given the seriousness of his addiction. All in all and enjoyable read. However I would be cautious in giving this to a young person with an early drug problem, as it may present addiction in a somewhat acceptable light. Having a nephew who died of a heroin overdose has taught me that the dangers of addiction are very real, and often fatal.

Amazing insight into the lie of an addict and the role the brain plays in keeping an addict addicted. Also makes it easier for one to respond to those suffering with an addiction with more compassion and understanding which is what they need most.

By the end of this book, you'll hate the author. At least, I did. Marc Lewis painfully describes his personality, behavior, needs, wants, morals, and a lot more, going back to childhood. They lead to his injecting, swallowing, and inhaling just about every drug of abuse you can think of, to gain relief. He details his inner and behavioral responses to each drug. Since he surprisingly wound up studying neuroscience, he then tells us - step by step - just what those powerful molecules do in our

body. The brain's handling of dopamine, glutamate, serotonin, and other neurotransmitters - as a response to the drugs - is well described. Sadly, we also learn how the drugs change our brain. This is required reading for anyone planning a career in psychopharmacology. Medical, pharmacy, nursing, and medicinal chemistry students will just enjoy a terrific read. It will also hit close to home.

I found this book enlightening trying to understand the concept behind addiction, addiction triggers, and how the brain is affected. Working in the medical field, I still had a very difficult time understanding the brain's role in addiction and the role of the brain when trying to become sober, and stay sober. I would highly recommend this book to others who may be experiencing a hard time understanding addiction as well.

I've read more addiction memoirs than anyone I know. This is a standout, especially for anyone who really wants to understand how addiction takes hold. It's a unique and important work, up there with Gabor Mate, Johann Hari, and David Sheff. Way up there, in fact.

This book is mostly war stories about drug use with some brain science play by play commentary put in easier to read layman's terms. The author is a good narrator and the memoir flows well making it easy to read. This Book also came in quite handy for helping me to understand some of my more - ahem - wayward friends if you will, and get a good scientific glimpse into what the heck is going on in their heads as they spiral downwards. An interesting train to watch go by but not one you want to ride on if your smart.

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