



# The Secret Life of the Grown-up Brain: The Surprising Talents of the Middle-Aged Mind

By Barbara Strauch

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**A leading science writer examines how our brains improve in middle age.**

Pulitzer Prize-winning science writer Barbara Strauch explores the latest findings that demonstrate how the middle-aged brain is more flexible and capable than previously thought. In fact, new research from neuroscientists and psychologists suggests that the brain reorganizes, improves in important functions, and even helps us adopt a more optimistic outlook in middle age. We recognize patterns faster, make better judgments, and find unique solutions to problems. Part scientific survey, part how-to guide, *The Secret Life of the Grown-up Brain* is a fascinating glimpse at our surprisingly talented middle-aged minds.

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**The Secret Life of the Grown-up Brain: The Surprising Talents of the Middle-Aged Mind** By Barbara Strauch **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

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Along with bulging waistlines and graying hair, declining mental faculties have long been seen as an inevitable drawback of middle age. When New York Times science editor Strauch first began research for this follow-up to *The Primal Teen* (2004), her book on adolescent intelligence, faltering midlife brain fitness was considered a given. To her pleasant surprise, her forays into contemporary neuroscience revealed a reassuring discovery. Aside from usual short-term memory lapses of forgetting names and mislaying keys, the middle-aged brain is more vigorous, organized, and flexible than has been previously believed. In 11 easily digested chapters, Strauch overviews the latest findings of high-tech brain scans and psychological testing that demonstrate cognitive expertise reaching its peak in middle age. Although distractions and oversights may more easily prey on the mind, the continued growth of myelin (or white matter) increases problem-solving skills, pattern recognition, and even wisdom. Supplemented by a section on keeping one's brain in top shape, Strauch's work proffers a welcome dose of optimism to every aging baby boomer. --Carl Hays

Review

#### Praise for *The Primal Teen* by Barbara Strauch

"Provocative...A contender for every parent's reading list."

-*Newsday*

"Upends the longstanding belief that the teenage brain is largely complete, concluding instead that it is undergoing dramatic changes that can help explain what appears to be a gap between intelligence and judgement."

-*The Hartford Courant*

"This is such a smart book...Barbara Strauch acts as a world-class guide to a mysterious place, taking us on a journey through the teenage brain and making sense of the scenery. In turns funny, curious, explanatory, vivid, she does an absolutely compelling job of helping us to understand our children-and ourselves."

-Deborah Blum, author of *Love at GoonPark: Hanny Harlow and the Science of Affection*

"Through interviews with parents, physicians, neuroscientists, and teens, Strauch has compiled impressive insights about the nature of being a teen or the parent of one."

-*Science News*

"Entertaining as well as informative."

-*Teacher* magazine

"An intriguing look at cutting-edge studies that now tell us the brain is not finished growing in a child's early years but continues into the teens."

-*The Plain Dealer*

"Can knowing more about the teenager's brain help us to understand the teenager's behavior? Can an account of the neuroscience of adolescence be lively and readable? Barbara Strauch provides convincing evidence that the answer to both questions is yes."

-Judith Rich Harris, author of *The Nurture Assumption: Why Children Turn Out the Way They Do*

"Readers will be struck by the wonderfully candid comments by those interviewed as well as Strauch's insightful narrative."

-*Publishers Weekly*

"Strauch's well-researched book explains studies that were impossible, without such advanced technology as the MRI in clear, compassionate, layperson's language...A parents' must-read."

-*Booklist*

"Strauch [has]...a light, anecdotal style and a sense of humor. This is a very useful book...[These] are conclusions parents will want to consider carefully."

-*The Washington Post Book World*

"Strauch tackles [loaded questions] with all the scientific instruments at her disposal...the latest findings neurological, biochemical, and psychological, with an illuminating dose of anecdote thrown in."

-*The New Scientist*

"An important book...Strauch writes masterfully, making scientific research understandable to lay readers."

-*Library Journal* (starred)

About the Author

**Barbara Strauch** is the medical science editor at *The New York Times* and the author of *The Primal Teen: What the New Discoveries About the Teenage Brain Tell Us About Our Kids*. She previously directed Pulitzer Prize-winning news at *Newsday*.

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