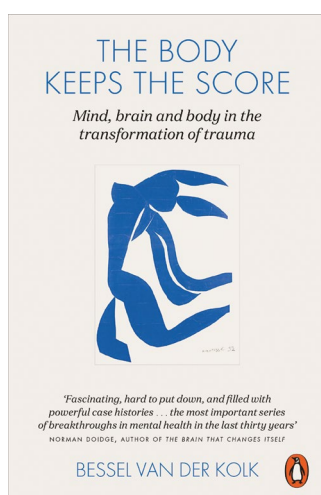


BOOK REVIEW

The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma

by Bessel van der Kolk

Patrick Macaskill-Webb



I found the recommendation for *The body keeps the score*¹ from multiple different places before engaging with it. I discovered that this book ties together two parts of humanity that deservedly require connection: mind and body. Bessel van der Kolk, the author, uses fresh metaphors to flesh out his interesting commentary on the field of psychiatry. A particularly insightful metaphor was how van der Kolk compares psychological trauma to a splinter, because when a "splinter... causes an infection, it is the body's response to the foreign object that becomes the problem more than

the object itself."^{1(p246-7)}

As a reader, I was guided to have a deeper empathy for traumatic experience by being shown how post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was first recognised as an illness. The author gained a lot of professional and academic understanding from PTSD sufferers early in his career. As a reader, I too was taken through the discoveries that have developed current-day trauma therapy. Van der Kolk stops to point out the scientific and societal hurdles that needed to be cleared before trauma as a medical issue could be appreciated as it is now. At the same time, future hopes and likely breakthroughs in psychiatry are frequently earmarked to be expanded upon later. Overall, the tone was surprisingly positive and honest about the human stories involved. Trauma is an otherwise very inaccessible and indescribable subject that was spelt out with care in this book.

After reading this book, I found that I had greater respect for the invisible stories which others may hold close. An alienating side effect of this was wondering about the possible hidden stories and trauma of those around me, such as friends and family. Overall, I learned an incredible amount and plan to come back to the fascinating potential of neurofeedback therapy that was touched on toward the very end of the book. To anyone with a curiosity for human psychological potential and the diligent advance of psychiatric science, I am now passing on a passionate recommendation to commit to this fantastic read.

References

1. van der Kolk B. *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma*. United Kingdom: Penguin Books; 2015.

About the author

- > Patrick Macaskill-Webb is a second-year medical student at the University of Auckland.