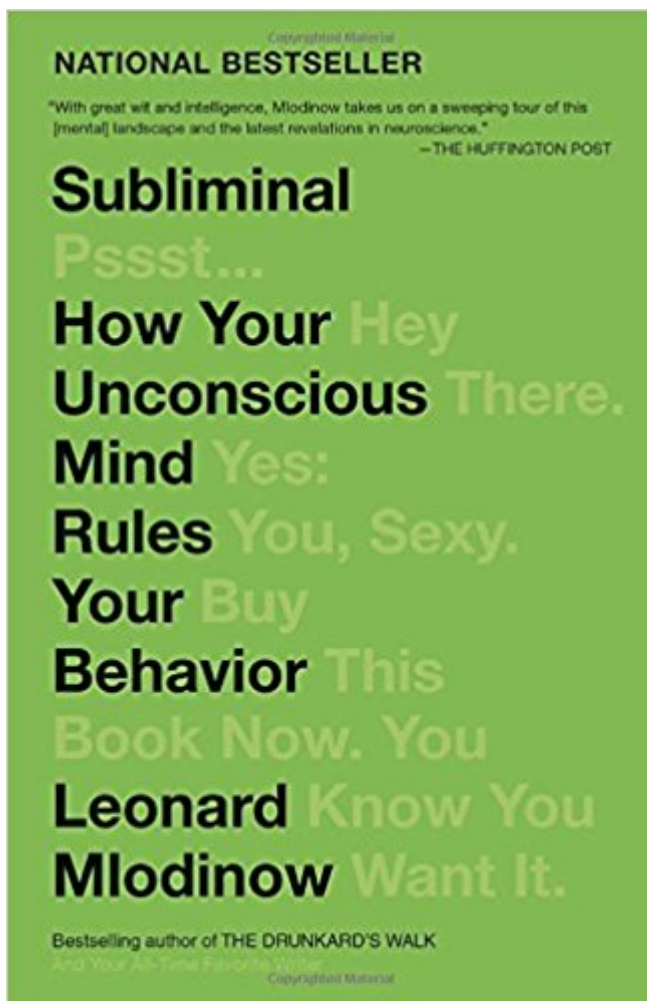


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# Subliminal: How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior



## Synopsis

From the bestselling author of *The Drunkard's Walk* and coauthor of *The Grand Design* (with Stephen Hawking), a startling and eye-opening examination of how the unconscious mind shapes our experience of the world. Winner of the 2013 PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award. Over the past two decades of neurological research, it has become increasingly clear that the way we experience the world--our perception, behavior, memory, and social judgment--is largely driven by the mind's subliminal processes and not by the conscious ones, as we have long believed. In *Subliminal*, Leonard Mlodinow employs his signature concise, accessible explanations of the most obscure scientific subjects to unravel the complexities of the subliminal mind. In the process he shows the many ways it influences how we misperceive our relationships with family, friends, and business associates; how we misunderstand the reasons for our investment decisions; and how we misremember important events--along the way, changing our view of ourselves and the world around us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Guest Reviewer: V.S. Ramachandran on *Subliminal* V.S. Ramachandran is a neuroscientist known for his work in the fields of behavioral neurology and visual psychophysics. The author of *The Tell-Tale Brain*, He is the Director of the Center for Brain and Cognition, and is currently a Professor in the Department of Psychology and the Neurosciences Graduate Program at the University of California, San Diego. This delightfully accessible yet intellectually rigorous book transcends traditional boundaries between neuroscience, psychology and philosophy, to tackle the riddle of the

unconscious mind. Freud bashing is a popular intellectual pastime these days (I myself have been guilty on occasion) but Mlodinow shows that by emphasizing the unconscious he was on the right track: we are completely unaware of the vast majority of events going on inside our brains. The book presents compelling evidence gleaned from a variety of sources to show that much of our behavior is governed not so much by our conscious mind which is prone to claim credit but by a cauldron of motives, drives and unconscious propensities of which we are largely oblivious. Indeed, most of our actions are carried out by the unconscious mind (or minds ) which exists in peaceful harmony with the conscious person "inside" your body. The question of why we are conscious of the tip of the iceberg of neural activity continues to remain elusive but, perhaps, the answer can be found by asking what you can do without being conscious; What's the IQ of the unconscious mind? Here Mlodinow offers dazzling new insights into what the unconscious can and does do, to influence our lives. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

"With great wit and intelligence, Mlodinow takes us on a sweeping tour of this [mental] landscape and the latest revelations in neuroscience. The Huffington Post "Mlodinow plunges into the realm of the unconscious mind accompanied by the latest scientific research . . . [with] plenty of his trademark humor. Los Angeles Times "Clever [and] engaging. . . . A popular-science beach book, the sort of tome from which cocktail party anecdotes can be mined by the dozen. The Oregonian "Fascinating. . . . Shows how the idea of the unconscious has become respectable again. The Economist "A must-read book that is both provocative and hugely entertaining. Jerry A. Webman, chief economist, OppenheimerFunds, Inc., and author of MoneyShift "Leonard Mlodinow never fails to make science both accessible and entertaining. Stephen Hawking, author of A Brief History of Time "An assault against the idea that we control our decisions and our beliefs in the way that we think we do . . . . A useful addition to the growing body of work arguing convincingly against the idea of the rational human brain. The Daily Beast "Mlodinow thinks in equations but explains in anecdote, simile, and occasional bursts of neon. . . . The results are mind-bending. Fortune "Mlodinow argues his case persuasively and with humor. The Montreal Gazette "In a loose, easygoing style, Mlodinow combines numerous accounts of scientific studies with pop-culture references and even personal anecdotes. Kirkus Reviews "Mlodinow is the perfect guy to reveal the ways

unrelated elements can relate and connect. — The Miami Herald — “This very enlightening book explores the two sides of our mental lives, with a focus on the subconscious or subliminal element. Drawing on clinical research conducted over a period of several decades and containing a number of rather startling revelations . . . the book appeals to readers with an interest in the workings of the human mind. — Booklist — “Think you know the whys and hows of your choices? Think again. Follow Mlodinow on a gorgeous journey into the enormous mental backstage behind the curtain of consciousness. — David Eagleman, neuroscientist and author of *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain* — “With the same deft touch he showed in *The Drunkard’s Walk*, Mlodinow probes the subtle, automatic, and often unnoticed influences on our behavior. — Daniel J. Simons, professor of psychology, University of Illinois, and coauthor of *The Invisible Gorilla* — “If you liked *The Drunkard’s Walk*, you’ll love *Subliminal*. This engaging and insightful book not only makes neuroscience understandable, it also makes it fascinating. You will look at yourself (and those around you) in a new way. — Joseph T. Hallinan, author of *Why We Make Mistakes* — “A highly readable, funny, and thought-provoking travelogue by Mlodinow, a trusted traveler in this treacherous region, who leads us on a tour of the little-known country that is our unconscious mind. — Christof Koch, professor of cognitive and behavioral biology, California Institute of Technology

This book is full of cogent stories in my estimate that keep you perusing on and on to finish the end of the chapter. I found the information to be well research and very insightful, as well as a bit risible from time to time. Most books presenting anything about neuroscience can be a bit drudging but Leonard’s writing style was able to keep my interest till the end. I finished it in less than a week and I believe I was able to learn quite a few things from the author. Very satisfied, would recommend to anyone interested in psychology or cognitive studies.

*Subliminal: How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior* by Leonard Mlodinow “Subliminal” is the provocative and fascinating look at the unconscious part of our minds. One of my favorite authors and physicists, Leonard Mlodinow, takes the readers on a journey into the science of the unconscious. What a fun and enlightening book this was. Mlodinow is the master of making the difficult accessible and fun for the masses. How our mind works is one of the most interesting subjects and I was thrilled to see that the coauthor of both *The Grand Design* and the equally

interesting book War of the Worldviews makes his latest venture into this intriguing science. This excellent 272-page book is composed of the following ten chapters: 1. The New Unconscious, 2. Senses Plus Mind Equals Reality, 3. Remembering and Forgetting, 4. The Importance of Being Social, 5. Reading People, 6. Judging People by Their Covers, 7. Sorting People and Things, 8. In-Groups and Out-Groups, 9. Feelings, and 10. Self-Positives:

1. A fascinating topic (science of the unconscious) in the hands of a master.
2. Elegant, conversational tone that makes this book a treat to read.
3. Mlodinow consistently produces great books and this one lived up to my expectations.
4. As accessible a book as you will find. A difficult topic made easy and fun to read.
5. The book is loaded with great and I mean great examples to help the reader grasp the latest in the science. One of the books strengths.
6. Great use of science history.
7. The pioneers of the science of the unconscious.
8. Great use the latest scientific research in this fascinating topic to support well-stated positions.
9. You will end up with a better grasp at how our brains work.
10. A good use of illustrations.
11. Great quotes and factoids abound, "The truth is that our unconscious minds are active, purposeful, and independent."
12. Evolution...why our brains evolved to be what they are.
13. A truly exceptional study that mirrors the subjects' sexual preferences.
14. What modern neuroscience tells us about our brains and how we perceive the world.
15. How our memory system works. Who does it change over time? Find out.
16. Social interactions and the subliminal. Theory of mind. The three regions of the brain and the three basic types of nonverbal communication.
17. An interesting look at stereotyping.
18. Popular misconceptions analyzed.
19. What do we know about our feelings our emotions? Find out.
20. The ways to the truth...our worldviews.
21. How our brain creates unconscious biases.
22. Is unrealistic optimism good for you?
23. Great links.

Negatives:

1. Notes are great but a formal bibliography never hurts.
2. Nothing about supernatural beliefs and why they are so prevalent.
3. Having to get multiple copies to share.

In summary, I loved this book. It was an intellectual treat. The science of the unconscious is a fascinating topic and this book was loaded with a lot of great research. Mlodinow is a great author who is able to tackle complex topics and make it fun and interesting to read. If you want to learn about the science of the unconscious, make a conscious decision to get this one, I highly recommend it!!

Further suggestions: "The Grand Design" and "War of the Worldviews: Science Vs. Spirituality" coauthored by this same author were excellent, "Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time" and "The Believing Brain: From Ghosts and Gods to Politics and Conspiracies---How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce Them as Truths" by Michael Shermer, "The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature" by Steven Pinker, "Hardwired Behavior: What Neuroscience Reveals about Morality" by Laurence Tancredi, "Who's in Charge?: Free Will and the Science of the

Brain" Michael S. Gazzaniga, "The Belief Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny, and the Meaning of Life" by Jesse Bering, "50 Popular Beliefs That People Think Are True" by Guy P. Harrison, "Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts" by Carol Tavris. For the record, I have reviewed all the aforementioned books, enjoy.

I always thought of myself as a rational unbiased (usually) individual. This book convinced me there could be a completely different story! My brain finds a way to give "objectivity" to my implicit biases. This is a well researched complete explanation of the "truth" behind our reasoning. The book is Well worth the read. Easily understandable, well written, and sometimes humorous; the author is superb.

Some of the best introductions to a work of non-fiction such as Subliminal are found when an author is sharing final thoughts. That is why I always read the epilogue or final chapter first. Here is what Leonard Mlodinow has to say when concluding his brilliant book:"We choose the facts that we want to believe. We also choose our friends, lovers, and spouses not just because of the way we perceive them but because of the way they perceive us. Unlike phenomena in physics, in life, events can often obey one theory or another, and what actually happens can depend largely upon which theory we choose to believe. It is a gift of the mind to be extraordinarily open to accepting theory of ourselves that pushes us in the direction of survival, and even happiness. And so my parents did not sleep that night, while my father taught my mother to sew."The details of that scene are best revealed within the narrative, in context, and have significance only if you have thought about all that Mlodinow has previously shared. I remain unconvinced that my subconscious mind rules my behavior or that it rules Mlodinow's but I realized decades ago that the subconscious was -- and remains -- one of the most powerful and yet least understood forces in neuroscience. Only recently has it been possible to quantify at least some of its influence on decision-making, for example. The Latin root of the word "subliminal" translates to "below threshold," suggests that there were a few curious souls who sensed, at least, that there was something other than reason involved with choices. One of Mlodinow's primary purposes is serve as a travel companion for his reader during an exploration, in his words, "of our evolutionary heritage, of the surprising and exotic forces at play beneath the surface of our own minds, and of the impact of those unconscious instincts on what is usually considered willed, rational behavior -- and impact that is much more powerful than we have previously believed it to be."These are among the dozens of business subjects and issues of special interest and value to me, also listed to indicate the scope of Mlodinow's coverage.o

Interpretation of behavior (11-126, 38-41, 79-80, and 115-118) o Collective behavior (26-29) o Sensory input for brain (45-51 and 96-100) o Phonemic restoration (48-50) o Groups (68-70 and 161-175) o Aggressive behavior 92-96) o fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging (100-104) o Perception (107-125, and 199-203) o Impact of physical appearance (Pages 126-144) o Competitive behavior, in-groups, and, conscious behavior (161-175 and 30-35, 42-45) o Illusions (183-188) o Introspection and self-identity (196-218) o Motivated reasoning (200-214) Mlodinow's narrative is lively and eloquent. However, *Subliminal* is by no means an "easy read but will generously reward those who read it with a combination of curiosity, attention, and patience. I re-read it before setting to work on this review and, as with a great novel rich in compelling drama involving memorable characters, my mind picked up points of information, insights, and wit I previously missed. For non-scientists such as I, Mlodinow manages somehow to cover a great deal of important material without dumbing it down. In this context I am reminded of the works of Richard Feynman and, more recently, Daniel Dennett. Frankly, I have always been suspicious of "positive illusions" which, in my opinion, are actually delusions. Mlodinow has convinced me that such positive illusions/delusions can sometimes help people to overcome or at least cope more effectively with unpleasant realities. The value of this book will be determined almost completely by how receptive and accessible a reader is to material that may be unfamiliar or inaccessible. Trust him and trust yourself. So, I urge you to read this book if you are curious to learn more than you know now about (a) the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind, (b) how they interact and sometimes compete, (c) what their interactions and separate activities reveal about decision-making, and finally (d) how an increased (albeit incomplete) understanding of what is happening "below threshold," ours and everyone else's. New knowledge and understanding await you, as do Leonard Mlodinow and his book. Let the journey of exploration begin.

A very interesting look at research on the unconscious which ends on a very positive and optimistic note. The unconscious, however, can also lead us down some very dark roads in our lives through complexes - our learned negative reflexes and instincts. "Turning the lights on" through self understanding in those dark places, where we habitually and \*unconsciously\* think the worst, can also lead us to a far better place. Yes, we are overly optimistic - at times - about ourselves and it can be an asset - sometimes. We also need to learn how to understand ourselves when the unconscious takes us down the wrong roads. I don't think this book addressed that enough. As a final note, if you make it through the last chapter and believe that someday you will fly or walk on water, you may need to consult a real psychologist.

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