

What Freud Didn't Know: A Three-Step Practice for Emotional Well-Being through Neuroscience and Psychology

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Poor Freud. He gets a bad rap these days, ending up as the punchline to penis jokes. His theories have been absorbed into pop culture, losing their meanings in the process. He's been disproved and displaced.

However, that's what makes *What Freud Didn't Know* so refreshing. For the jaded reader, author Timothy Stokes revives Freudian psychotherapy, framing the original concepts of Freud's work in modern, comprehensible terms. Better yet, Stokes adds to our understanding of Freud. He cites recent empirical evidence that describes the relationships between different parts of the brain once associated with the ego, super-ego, and id. Using Freud's beliefs about repressed memory as a base, Stokes elaborates, using examples from contemporary psychology, behavioral and cognitive science, and case studies. The result is altogether enjoyable.

What Freud Didn't Know stands squarely at the crossroads of self-help and hard science, which is both its strength and its weakness. It's not a textbook, though Stokes' writing is dense with neuroscience and anatomical terminology. The graphs are simple enough for a layman to understand. Even for those with the most basic grasp of psychology, the logic is clear, and the chapters are easy to follow and packed with plenty of examples.

The book's self-help core is Stokes' proposal that any person can rewrite his or her "amygdala scripts," which are basically conditioned emotional responses to triggering scenarios. For example, a woman who was criticized throughout her childhood by her parents feels herself getting defensive in meetings at work. Using what Stokes calls "mindfulness," this woman should be able to re-program her response and break out of a negative cycle. Stokes claims that the process is faster and more efficient when insight therapy is combined with cognitive-behavioral therapy. That is, when the trigger is initiated intentionally, in a controlled environment, the patient can learn a new response much faster than in real-world practice.

It's a fascinating idea that represents the scientific edge of self-help. There are plenty of emotional exercises, meditations, and even practical applications in the second half of the book. Stokes makes mindfulness seem like an achievable goal, and sets the steps to make it possible.

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