A User's Guide to the Brain: Perception, Attention and the Four Theaters of the Brain

John J. Ratey

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For the first time ever, discoveries in our under-
standing of the brain are changing anthropology, linguistics,
philosophy, and psychology--indeed, the brain itself may become a catalyst for transforming the very nature
of these inquiries.
In A User's Guide to the Brain, Dr. John Ratey, best-selling co-author of Driven to Distraction, explains in
lucid detail and with perfect clarity the basic structure and chemistry of the brain: how
its systems shape our perceptions, emotions, actions, and reactions; how possession of this knowledge can
enable us to more fully understand and improve our lives; and how the brain
responds to the guidance of its user. He draws on examples from his own practice, from research, and from
everyday life to
illuminate aspects of the brain's functioning, among them
prenatal and early childhood development; the perceptual
systems; the processes of consciousness, memory, emotion, and language; and the social brain.
As the best means for explaining the dynamic interactions of the brain, Ratey offers as a metaphor the four
"theaters" of exploration: 1) the act of perception; 2) the filters of attention, consciousness, and cognition; 3)
the array of options employed by the brain--memory, emotion, language, movement--to transform
information into function; and 4) behavior and identity. Ratey
succeeds not only in giving us a compelling portrait of the brain's infinite flexibility and unpredictability but
also in demonstrating how our very understanding of the brain affects who we are.

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