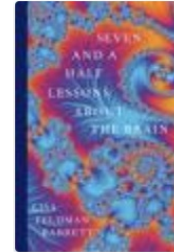




"Seven and a Half Lessons About the Brain"

The above is the title of [Lisa Feldman Barrett's latest book](#). Barrett, a revolutionary neuroscientist, is among the most cited scientists in the world. She specializes in the science of mood, and her work debunks many previously-held theories. For example, according to Dr. Barrett, separation of the rational and the emotional brain is a fictional theory, originating with Plato. A fascinating read that demystifies that big gray blob between our ears.



How Emotions Are Made

In the [June 2020 Gazette](#) we reviewed her book [How Emotions are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain](#). Barrett argues that emotions are "constructed" based on our individual experiences. There are no universal body changes consistent with the experience of an emotional state. Studies demonstrate that none of the three commonly believed predictors of emotion – facial expression, physical change (such as heart rate and blood pressure), and brain circuitry – can be "read" with greater than 35% accuracy.

For example, smiles and scowls are both "meaningless" communicators of mood. When test subjects are asked to assess a facial expression, the ecstatic eye squint of eating chocolate is often read as anger. Smiles can as easily be symptoms of social anxiety as positive mood.

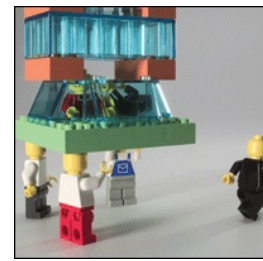
Investing in Body Budgets

Dr. Barrett introduces the concept of "**body budget**", the resources needed to meet the body's needs. **Our emotions and behaviors can contribute to, or deplete, our "body budgets"**. Because we are a social species, humans have the power to regulate one another's body budgets by making "deposits" and "withdrawals". When relationships are harmonious, trust is established that has numerous positive effects on our body budgets including living longer, being less likely to get sick, and being more likely to get better when we are sick. Trustful interactions with co-workers have less burden on body budgets, saving resources that can be invested in new ideas.

Humans are unique in the animal kingdom in the importance of **words and language in regulating our body budgets**. Kind words can calm you. A hateful word from a bully may cause your brain to predict threat and flood your bloodstream with hormones, squandering precious resources from your body budget. Barrett describes a dramatic example of the power of words. Sending a text saying "I love you" can sooth, comfort and replenish the body budget of her friend in Belgium.

Building Emotional Granularity

One of the many benefits of the **LEGO SERIOUS PLAY process** is that it helps workshop participants put their emotions into words by creating new visual stimuli and new metaphors. For example, through the language of the LEGO brick, you might see and describe yourself as a creating an emotional home for colleagues or build and see your work as a garden of resources. Describing ourselves and our work in new ways reframes the future, both for ourselves and for others.



Sincerely,

R. Rasmussen

Rasmussen Consulting specializes in using LEGO SERIOUS PLAY to effectively harvest organization's collective intelligence to enhance strategic behavior for better and faster decision-making. We are based in Denmark with offices in US, Japan and Singapore. www.rasmussenconsulting.dk.