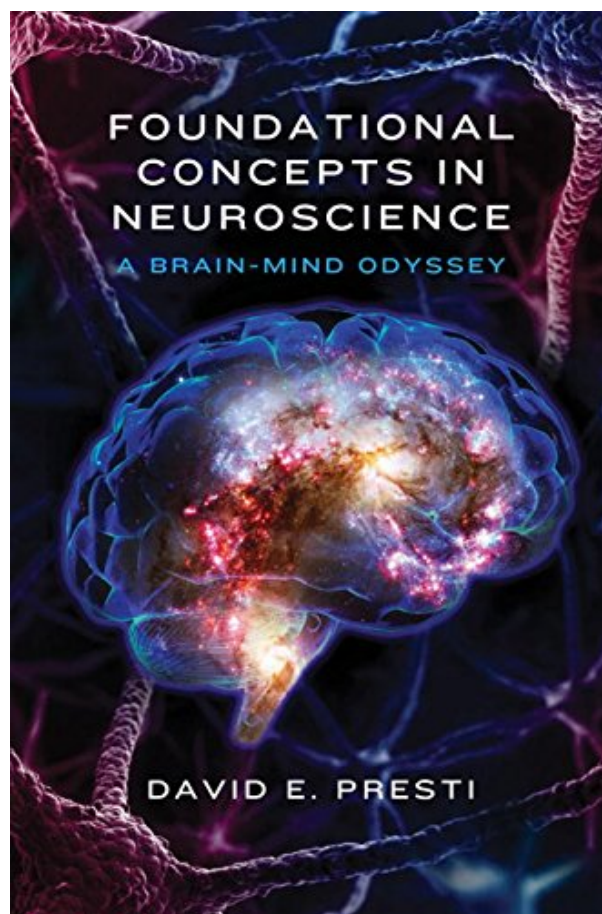
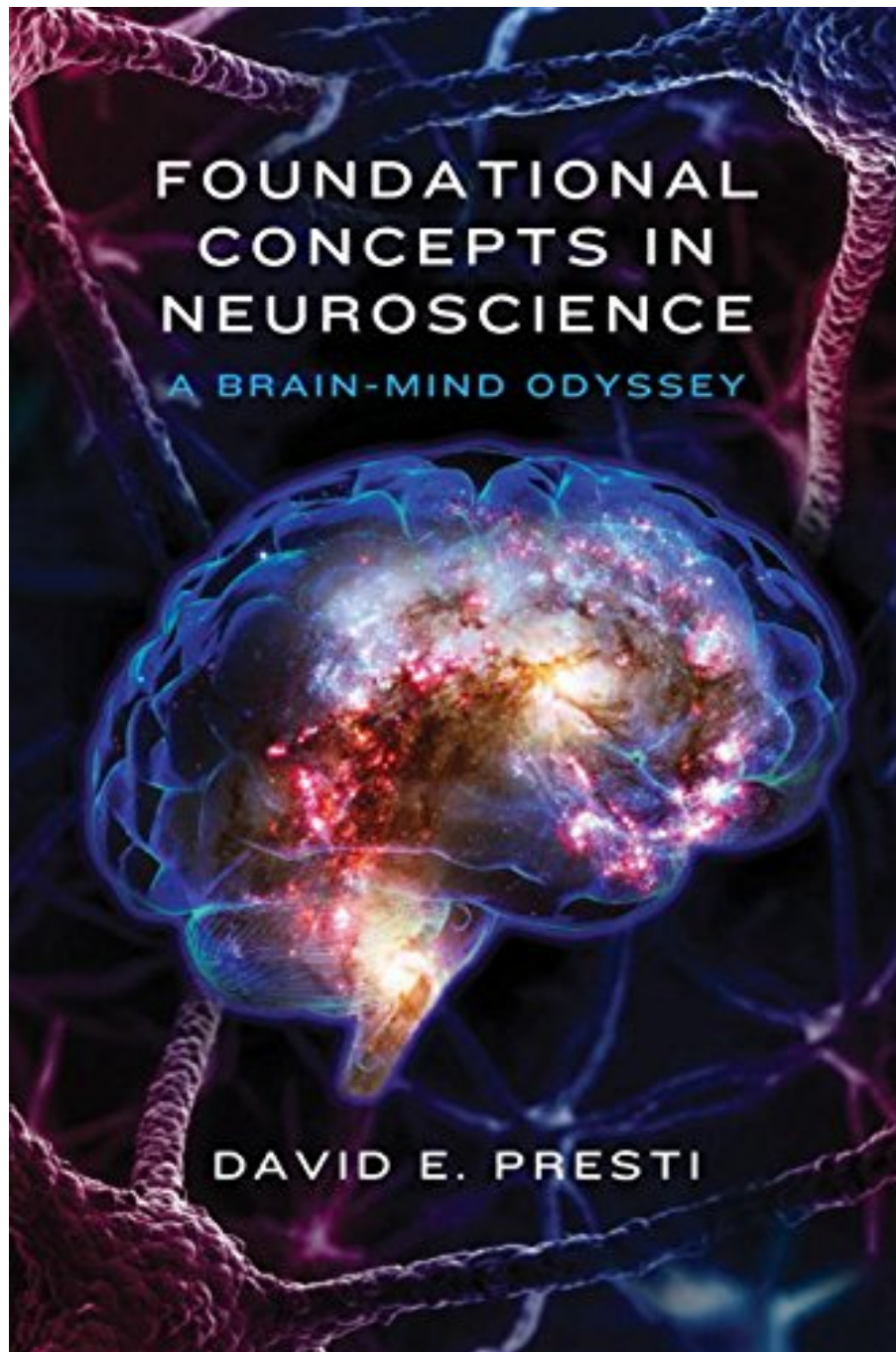


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Review

“[Presti] has achieved success with this book. While it can be read for pleasure, it is also designed to be a textbook for college-level students. So, if you want to be challenged a bit in learning how we function, this could be a good book for you. . . . [A]n interesting and informative book.” (PsychCentral)

“[T]he historical material interwoven in the text is interesting, and Presti includes beautiful reproductions of drawings by Camillo Golgi, Santiago Ramon y Cajal, Andreas Vesalius, and Charles Darwin. . . . Recommended.” (CHOICE)

“This book is a gem. It is a lucid survey of the whole majestic sweep of contemporary neuroscience, written for the non-medical reader. At the same time, it is sprinkled liberally with original insights that will provide much food for thought even for specialists. It will also make an excellent textbook for any introductory course in neuroscience.” (V. S. Ramachandran, author of *The Tell-Tale Brain*)

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About the Author

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Key concepts in neuroscience presented for the non-medical reader.

A fresh take on contemporary brain science, this book presents neuroscience—the scientific study of brain, mind, and behavior—in easy-to-understand ways with a focus on concepts of interest to all science readers. Rigorous and detailed enough to use as a textbook in a university or community college class, it is at the same time meant for any and all readers, clinicians and non-clinicians alike, interested in learning about the foundations of contemporary brain science. From molecules and cells to mind and consciousness, the known and the mysterious are presented in the context of the history of modern biology and with an eye toward better appreciating the beauty and growing public presence of brain science. 100 illustrations

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

For an Excellent Understanding of How the Nervous System Relates to the Mind

By Roger Chapin

I knew I had selected the right book when I dipped in, at random, and found the author's explanation of the classic elementary school question, "If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one around to hear it, is there a sound?" If you thought your teacher's answer unsatisfying, as I did back in school, you'll love Presti's lucid explanation. I felt an immediate connection with his style of writing.

As a layman in search of a better understanding of the challenging, technical subject of neuroscience, I found half of the battle to be locating a book that didn't talk up or talk down to me.

This is it. Diagrams, photos, and art work illustrate every concept. When the author uses a term, diffusion of particles in a liquid, for example, he follows it with an illustration easily envisioned: "putting a spoonful of milk in a cup of tea."

In more complex concepts, such as the energy requirements of an ion-transporter protein, Presti helps the reader visualize that an ion needs to be "pushed" up its concentration gradient: "It's like carrying water up hill," he explains. "The water tends to flow down, and energy is required to carry it up."

In a chapter on the nose and smell, Presti describes olfactory sensory perception. I was fascinated to learn a mouse has four times the number of olfactory receptor proteins as a human. Our distant ancestors, he discloses, possessed much better smell, but as we became upright creatures, vision became more important and our olfactory receptors were lost through mutation.

The author walks the reader through the process of how an aroma, like cinnamon, made up of many different molecules, activates various receptor proteins when we inhale them. From there, he explains how our system constructs the mental experience we know as the aroma we love in our coffee cake.

In the chapter, "Mind, Consciousness, and Reality," Presti speculates about the future:

- The question of whether mathematics is solely a product of human cognition or points to truth about the foundations of reality.
- The question of the relationship between reality and our perception.
- The possibility of building integrated circuits which will duplicate the neural connectivity of the brain.
- The suggestion that the next truly big scientific revolution may involve a connection between physics and consciousness.
- Projects which investigate near-death experiences and reincarnation.

His vision made me yearn for more.

In summary, I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants a better understanding of how the human nervous system relates to the mind.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

It reads like a yarn well-told around a campfire

By Mark C. Kaspro

This book is sneaky. It reads like a yarn well-told around a campfire. The bits of scientific history, anthropology, research data and philosophical pondering serve as a kind of entertaining carrier signal, and all of a sudden, you realize you've learned a lot of neuroscience! The best teachers teach without students realizing they're learning, and Dr. Presti is clearly one of the best. This book gives any interested reader a good foundation in contemporary neuroscience. One need not have special preparation to enjoy and understand it, yet as a physician I found that it provided a meaningful update to my understanding. Its gift is not so much in providing a plethora of data as in providing a way of thinking about brain, mind and body that is grounded in current scientific understanding yet remains open to the wondrous mysteries yet to be explained.

1 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Perfect book for my old, nerdy husband!

By MMK

Bought this book for my husband based on Michael Pollan's recommendation. My husband LOVES this book! I don't know that much about it but I do know it's his "go to" book. He enjoys the ease of which it reads and it brings up subjects he learned long ago but has forgotten the fundamentals behind. Really nice to finally give him a gift he didn't want to return!

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