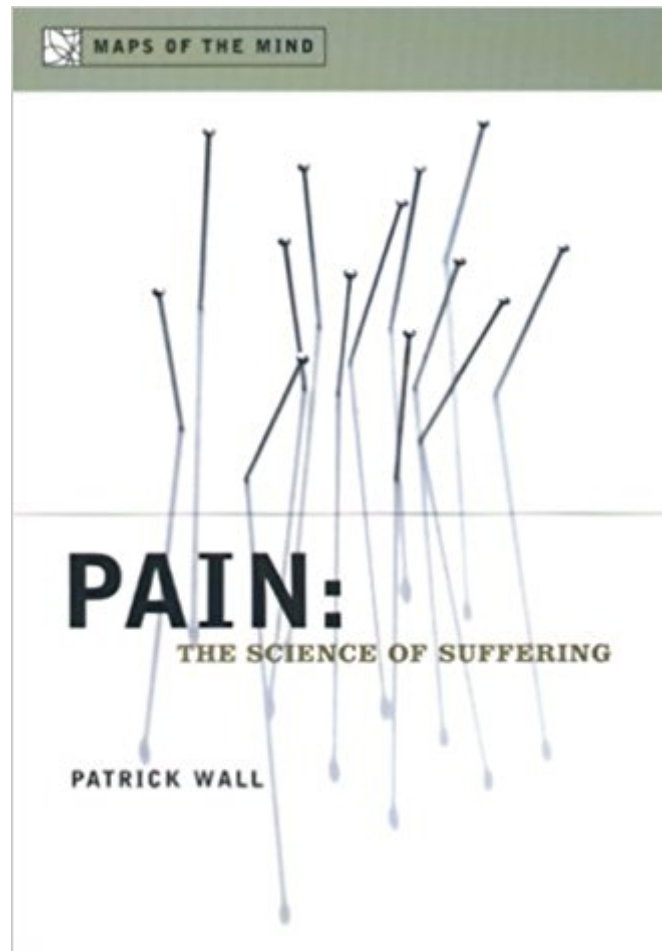


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# Pain: The Science Of Suffering (Maps Of The Mind)



## Synopsis

Pain is one of medicine's greatest mysteries. When farmer John Mitson caught his hand in a baler, he cut off his trapped hand and carried it to a neighbor. "Sheer survival and logic" was how he described it. "And strangely, I didn't feel any pain." How can this be? We're taught that pain is a warning message to be heeded at all costs, yet it can switch off in the most agonizing circumstances or switch on for no apparent reason. Many scientists, philosophers, and laypeople imagine pain to operate like a rigid, simple signaling system, as if a particular injury generates a fixed amount of pain that simply gets transmitted to the brain; yet this mechanistic model is woefully lacking in the face of the surprising facts about what people and animals do and experience when their bodies are damaged. Patrick Wall looks at these questions and sets his scientific account in a broad context, interweaving it with a wealth of fascinating and sometimes disturbing historical detail, such as famous characters who derived pleasure from pain, the unexpected reactions of injured people, the role of endorphins, and the power of placebo. He covers cures of pain, ranging from drugs and surgery, through relaxation techniques and exercise, to acupuncture, electrical nerve stimulation, and herbalism. Pain involves our state of mind, our social mores and beliefs, and our personal experiences and expectations. Stepping beyond the famous neurologic gate-control theory for which he is known, Wall shows that pain is a matter of behavior and its manifestation differs among individuals, situations, and cultures. "The way we deal with pain is an expression of individuality."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Wall (The Challenge of Pain), a professor of physiology at St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School (London), presents an alternative to the traditional theory of pain. Earlier theorists attributed painful sensations to nerve endings that transmitted a message from the spinal column to the brain.

Drawing on the latest neurological research, Wall hypothesizes instead that when nerve endings are stimulated by painful sensations, the message is transmitted, but then, the brain analyzes this data to determine the appropriate motor response. One's response to the stimulus is, in part, based on personal history and expectations. According to Wall, this interconnectedness explains why people experience pain differently, and it also accounts for why a strong belief in the efficacy of a placebo may actually reduce an individual's pain. Although he doesn't examine specific conditions like cancer and migraines as much depth as Frank Vertosick does in *Why We Hurt: The National History of Pain* (Forecasts, May 29), Wall is a sympathetic and thorough writer: he describes the physiology of the nervous system; he explores, philosophically and scientifically, the history of pain and its treatment; and he suggests some improvements to popular medical approaches to pain management, explaining (in detail) the different ways in which pain can be eased. Postoperative patients, for example, deal with their pain better when they are able to regulate their analgesic medication (because control helps them overcome their feelings of physical helplessness). In this generally thoughtful text, Wall offers his belief in the benefit of narcotic medications for cancer patients in pain. B&w illus. (Aug.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A British neuroscientist and physiologist who has written several books on pain, Wall provides a broad scientific account of the enigma of the brain and specifically its interpretation and use of pain. His book varies from Frank Vertosick's *Why We Hurt* (LJ 3/15/00) in that Wall fits facts, relevant data, and bizarre pain cases (abrupt injuries, torture, masochism) into an overall body-brain pain theory. Vertosick is a great storyteller who gives his text a more anthropological context. Divided into 11 sections, Wall's text investigates the philosophy of pain, whole body theories, obvious and mysterious causes of pain, and the placebo response to pain. He also provides practical if obvious advice on personal pain and its treatment. Wall is a sage neuroscientist who challenges younger pain researchers and the "new breed of clinicians" to create a contemporary picture of a "subtle multiplexed reactive system" we call the neurological response to pain. Recommended for academic libraries. DRebecca Cress-Ingebo, Fordham Health Sciences Lib., Wright State Univ., Dayton, OH Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I downloaded this for a reference on a research paper and ended up reading it for enjoyment. Very good book.

Having my back crushed, head smacked to the point of significant subdural hematoma, ribs broken crushing one lung and vertebrae in my spine. I survived. It's been twelve years since that day. That day was followed by months of hospital and in patient rehab at which point I was scurried home to lick my wounds and later return to work with half my back fused and now three inches shorter than the man that previously stood unstoppable looking in the mirror. Nobody forced me to go back to work. It was in my DNA, or at least I thought it to be. Dr. Wall sheds light on so many personal, societal and inherent physiological issues that plague so many people touched by severe chronic pain. This book covers everything so pointedly, I cannot point to a single one at the risk of demoting others. I have read and re-read this book about five times. It both reduces me to tears and empowers me to believe in myself...it has become my bible to my new life fraught with daunting struggles that each day brings. While I might find myself each day at the bottom of Sisyphus's hill, I also know that each day brings new hope. I must live each day as it may be my last...we all must realize our own immortality. How rare is a book that makes you feel like each page, each sentence are direct answers to the questions you need answered for your own survival!

Puts all other books on chronic pain to shame! I have had 24/7 head pain for 30+ years. I have been on every single treatment for headaches known. I'm opiate free now thank god! Not that the book advocates that though. Opiates just have too many side effects for me. I live in FL and now I will hopefully be able to use med marijuana. At least I know that works with a good side effect profile and minimal withdrawal.

I was attracted to this book because earlier in my life I had experienced chronic pain for 8 years. The search for relief was ultimately successful, but the path to finding that relief was long and arduous. What I learned in the process didn't help me very much for being able to advise others, so I hoped this book would help. I was pleasantly surprised to find that Pain contains more information about pain than all that I learned in my personal journey. "Any knowledge that brings patients into a clearer appreciation of their condition decreases their anxiety," says the author, Patrick Wall who is a pain researcher and was suffering from pain related to cancer while authoring the book. Wall's basic point is that pain is related to many different parts of the brain and body, and is affected by our psychology. Little is known about many aspects of pain, and there is little focus on pain relief in

medical training or medical research. Wall knows that the fear of pain is often worse than the pain, so he makes the subject amazingly pleasant. I expected to be depressed by reading the book, and felt elated instead as I learned more about the causes of pain. The book starts up with case histories where people with severe injuries report no initial pain. The reason seems to be that they were still in a survival mode, and surviving concentrated their attention away from the wound and potential pain. Many frequent "mysteries" of pain are also explored like people who have lost limbs and feel pain in the lost part of the limb. You will also learn about fascinating experiments to identify causes of pain and their relief. The book goes on to discuss the sources of pain, how treatments interact with those sources, and how placebo effects can reduce pain. For example, did you know that pessimistic people report more pain than others? As a result, I learned that it is normal to have some residual pain from my earlier experiences. I need not be concerned that full pain will return. That was a nice relief. I suspect that you, too, will lose some of the unnecessary sources of your concerns about pain. And that will probably, in turn, reduce the pain you will experience in your future. While that is happening, you should examine other areas of your life where you fear the worst. That could be a harmful misconception. Why not begin to expect the best instead? Think about it. There may be another placebo effect to help you there also.

Good writing. Excellent info.

This book has definitely answered a lot of questions regarding Chronic Pain and has opened up a whole new understanding of the condition. The section on the placebo effect was of particular interest as it showed the mental side of dealing with pain and how we can possibly use our minds as part of a combined strategy in dealing with pain. The mind and the way we think is a whole lot more powerful than I had first imagined and it can work for and against us with equal benefit and detriment. Patrick Wall covers this subject from all angles and this book is well worth reading for someone who suffers from this evil.

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