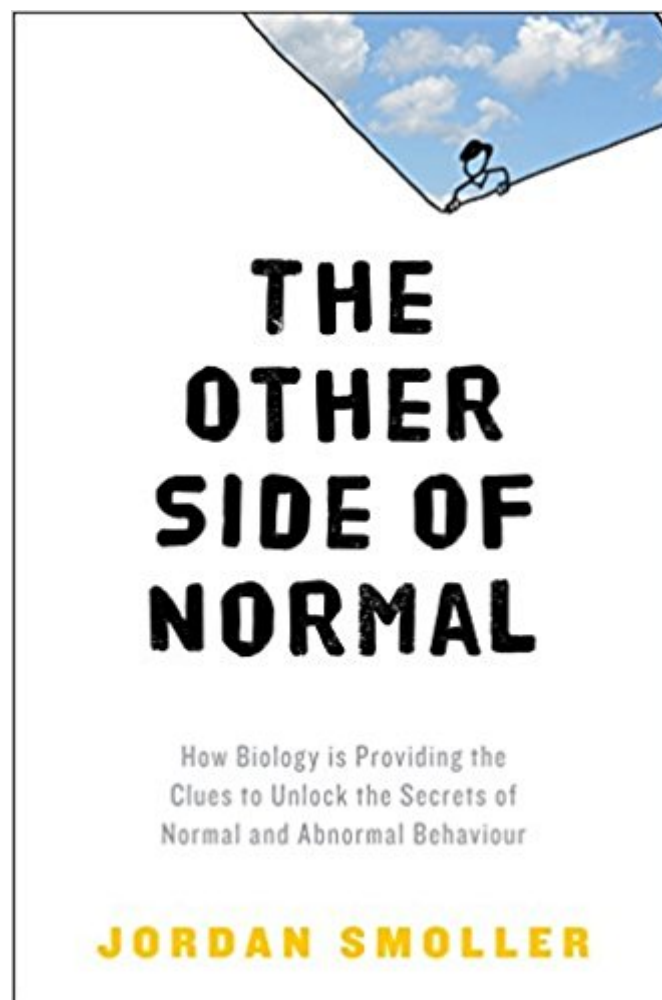




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# The Other Side Of Normal: How Biology Is Providing The Clues To Unlock The Secrets Of Normal And Abnormal Behavior



## Synopsis

In this enthralling work of popular science, respected Harvard psychiatrist Jordan Smoller addresses one of humankind's most enduring and perplexing questions: What does it mean to be "normal"? In *The Other Side of Normal*, Smoller explores the biological component of normalcy, revealing the hidden side of our everyday behaviors—why we love what we love and fear what we fear. Other bestselling works of neurobiology and the mind have focused on mental illness and abnormal behaviors—like the Oliver Sacks classic, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*—but *The Other Side of Normal* is an eye-opening, thought-provoking, utterly fascinating and totally accessible exploration of the universals of human experience. It will change forever our understanding of who we are and what makes us that way.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Contrary to a review recently posted by GregJS, the "self-proclaimed central issue" of this book was not, to my read, a commentary on the socio-cultural aspects of defining normal. That sort of debate often centers on the idea that "normal" is a social construction; for instance, if we were all to decide tomorrow that walking on our hands was normal, then feet-walkers would suddenly be abnormal, and so normal is just what we decide it is. If you are looking for THAT commentary, GregJS is right, you'll be disappointed. This book, instead, takes a good, hard look at "abnormal," as defined by psychology and psychiatry (think back to your "Abnormal Psychology" class in college), and makes the reader think hard about what abnormal actually is (and isn't). Jordan Smoller, the author of *The*

Other Side of Normal\_ is a psychiatrist and epidemiologist, he is on the faculty at Harvard Medical School, and he's published a lot of research on the genetics of psychiatric disorders. And the book is very much written from that perspective (except maybe it's written much more clearly, and speaks to the layperson a lot more easily than you might expect from a Harvard professor). It includes a very very broad review of what we know about how biology contributes to human behavior. And the author suggests that in understanding how the brain is wired to do "normal" things (e.g., like respond to a dangerous encounter in a dark alley with a fight or flight instinct), we can better understand what psychology/psychiatry identify as "abnormal" (e.g., like anxiety disorders whereby people have that 'fight or flight' feeling, even when they're not in a dark alley and there's no one dangerous around).

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