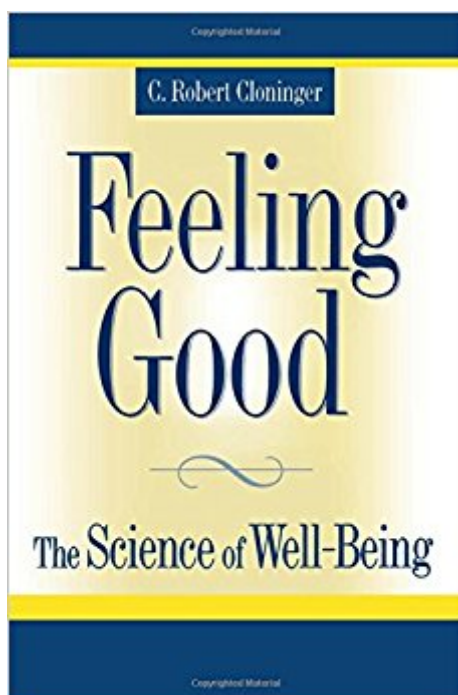


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# Feeling Good: The Science Of Well-Being



## Synopsis

All human beings have spontaneous needs for happiness, self-understanding, and love. In *Feeling Good: The Science of Well Being*, psychiatrist Robert Cloninger describes a way to coherent living that satisfies these strong basic needs through growth in the uniquely human gift of self-awareness. The scientific findings that led Dr. Cloninger to expand his own views in a stepwise manner during 30 years of research and clinical experience are clearly presented so that readers can consider the validity of his viewpoint for themselves. The principles of well-being are based on a non-reductive scientific paradigm that integrates findings from all the biomedical and psychosocial sciences. Reliable methods are described for measuring human thought and social relationships at each step along the path of self-aware consciousness. Practical mental exercises for stimulating the growth of self-awareness are also provided. The methods are supported by data from brain imaging, genetics of personality, and longitudinal biopsychosocial studies. *Feeling Good: The Science of Well-Being* will be of value to anyone involved in the sciences of the mind or the treatment of mental disorders. It will also interest theologians, philosophers, social scientists, and lay readers because it provides contemporary scientific concepts and language for addressing the perennial human questions about being, knowledge, and conduct.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A remarkably ambitious and scholarly masterpiece from a gifted psychiatrist with a deep understanding of human nature. By weaving a fascinating tapestry of philosophy, psychology,

mystical experience, the latest neurobiology and genetics, Cloninger has produced fresh and practical insights into the human mind."--Frederick K. Goodwin, M.D., Former Director, National Institute of Mental Health, Host of public radio's The Infinite Mind "In this audacious new book, Robert Cloninger provides a rare synthesis of the biological, the psychosocial, and the spiritual. The author manages to be comprehensive in scope, scholarly in method, yet accessible in his prose style. He forges a new integrative understanding of what it means to be human in a provocative and imaginative tour de force."--Glen O. Gabbard, M.D., Brown Foundation Chair of Psychoanalysis and Professor of Psychiatry, Baylor College of Medicine "...a book that demands slow reading, over time, careful chewing and repeated reference."--Nassir Ghaemi, M.D., M.A., M.P.H., Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences; Director, Bipolar Disorders Program, Emory School of Medicine

C. Robert Cloninger is at Washington University School of Medicine.

I found the content in this book interesting and valuable. But it is no self-help book. It is closer to a textbook. It's major premise: character, temperament, and personality are measurable quantitatively and are as much a matter of our genetics as our environment (if not perhaps more) is extremely well researched and reasoned. With an understanding of these baseline characteristics about ourselves, we can purposefully strive to be happy and healthy. These states don't just happen to us: We can will them, Dr. Cloninger infers. However, his writing style is scholarly. Dr. Cloninger, I presume, is writing to his research, academic, and psycho-biological colleagues. With a ghost writer knowledgeable in the sciences of which Dr. Cloninger writes and with a style more in the line of Emerson and Thoreau, whom Dr. Cloninger quotes often, this could be a more mainstream publication and thus more accessible to the people his findings could benefit the most.

The chapter explaining the unique combination of brain waves that occurs during deep meditation was very interesting and helpful. Thank you!

This is an important book that outlines Dr. Cloninger's extensive research in the Science of Well-Being. In particular, my take away was his research which shows there are three major character components to a sense of well being: self-determination, cooperation, and self-transcendence. His work shows all three need to be present. A lack in any of the three diminishes the sense of well-being. This is but a small glimpse at what this important work has to

show. I encourage anyone to read Dr. Cloninger's book.

Dr. C. Robert Cloninger writes a magisterial book about how we become who we are in both mental health and illness, based on years of research and clinical practice. It gives an in depth, science-based analysis of the interplay of temperament and character in shaping our destiny, including an essential spiritual dimension. Reading it could change your life.

Most reviewers of this book have misunderstood its intent, which is clearly to provoke and stir discussion and controversy rather than to present a clear, logically powerful and empirically grounded argument for a new paradigm in psychiatry. Not that the book has no clearly argued and well documented sections. The author has a well argued case to make against the vaunted "five factor" model of personality which dominates academic psychology's view of that vexed topic. His account of personality as rooted in temperament, character, and levels of intuitive perceptions of salient episodes in one's personal history may not fare well when judged against the fetishes of factor analysis, but there is a massive amount of empirical evidence supporting the reliability and utility of the Temperament and Character Inventory based on his view. Each of his seven dimensions has a clear meaning rooted in solid biopsychosocial consensus about the basic processes of human learning and memory. This is truly an excellent foundation on which to build. But Cloninger's style of argument sometimes lapses into that 19th century genre an unnecessarily caustic critic of philosopher and historian of science William Whewell dismissed with the jibe, "I suppose he has read the prefaces of a great many books." Far too many laurel wreaths and dunce caps are awarded on the basis of much too little argument. My most serious reservation in matters essential to the book's basic argument is that its account of personality development, or as Cloninger has it, the "path of the psyche," falls short of the standard he sets for himself in his account of personality's functional architecture. Here Freud's "phylogenetic fantasy" rides again. "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny!" even though we are told in Table 3.2 that the temporal sequences (of the development) of the processes of human thought" exactly reverse those exhibited in the phylogeny of cognition. Even "exactly" is a stretch, given the paucity of real evidence in this section. The section on development is also limited by excessive reliance on Cloninger's own clinical experience and his analysis of the thought processes of American transcendentalists. As a result these arguments have no more than heuristic power. They might guide future investigation; they do not command assent. Finally, on the key point of personality development, there is no indication that Cloninger's clinical experience includes work with children,

and the book's otherwise luxurious bibliography gives scant attention to the best current literature on child development.

This book was exceedingly enjoyable to read. Right from the beginning, readers of *Feeling Good: The Science of Well-Being* are whisked away on an unprecedented philosophical and scientific odyssey. Beginning with a brief overview of philosophy, Dr. Cloninger shows how certain beliefs on the nature of being, knowledge, and conduct, which provide the basis for his science of well-being, are confirmed by current scientific thought. Examining the ideas of those that he calls "positive philosophers," Dr. Cloninger points to how modern science is beginning to validate the worldviews held by these thinkers, and suggests that what allowed them such wisdom and penetrating insight was not merely their intellectual ability, but rather their intuitive capacity. Dr. Cloninger takes us through his initial 2 theories of personality and shows how neither his biological model nor his cognitive model of personality (nor contemporary theories of personality for that matter) are comprehensive enough to explain many fundamental human experiences such as: creativity, self-awareness, free-will, and intuition. Inspired by these limitations he conceived his model of coherence which points to human self-awareness as the path towards well-being. He describes the importance of rational intuition vs. the inadequacy of reason and cognitive strategies for acquiring freedom and happiness; then he dares the reader to inquire into whether it is possible "to learn to share the intuitions of a wise person." Integrating recent scientific discoveries from biology, genetics, physics, and neurology with the philosophical and moral truths from the likes of Plato, St. Augustine, Spinoza, Hegel, and Gandhi, Dr. Cloninger's *Feeling Good* is a book that is certain to become landmark on the path of well-being.

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