



Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart

By James Doty MD

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The award-winning *New York Times* bestseller about the extraordinary things that can happen when we harness the power of both the brain and the heart

Growing up in the high desert of California, Jim Doty was poor, with an alcoholic father and a mother chronically depressed and paralyzed by a stroke. Today he is the director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at Stanford University, of which the Dalai Lama is a founding benefactor. But back then his life was at a dead end until at twelve he wandered into a magic shop looking for a plastic thumb. Instead he met Ruth, a woman who taught him a series of exercises to ease his own suffering and manifest his greatest desires. Her final mandate was that he keep his heart open and teach these techniques to others. She gave him his first glimpse of the unique relationship between the brain and the heart.

Doty would go on to put Ruth's practices to work with extraordinary results—power and wealth that he could only imagine as a twelve-year-old, riding his orange Sting-Ray bike. But he neglects Ruth's most important lesson, to keep his heart open, with disastrous results—until he has the opportunity to make a spectacular charitable contribution that will virtually ruin him. Part memoir, part science, part inspiration, and part practical instruction, *Into the Magic Shop* shows us how we can fundamentally change our lives by first changing our brains and our hearts.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Into the Magic Shop* is pure magic! That a child from humble beginnings could become a professor of neurosurgery and the founder of a center that studies compassion and altruism at a major university, as well as an entrepreneur and philanthropist is extraordinary enough. But it is Doty's ability to describe his journey so lyrically, and then his willingness to share his methods that make this book a gem."

—**Abraham Verghese, MD, Author of *Cutting for Stone***

"This book tells the remarkable story of a neurosurgeon's quest to unravel the mystery of the link between our brains and our hearts. From the moment in his childhood when a simple act of kindness changed the course of his own life to his founding a center to study compassion at Stanford University. Jim Doty's life illustrates how each of us can make a difference. We can make the world a more compassionate place. I'm sure many readers will be moved by this inspiring story to open their hearts and see what they too can do for others."

—**His Holiness the Dalai Lama**

"*Into the Magic Shop* offers a gripping, well-told journey into the mysteries of the human mind and brain. Neurosurgeon James Doty has written a heartwarming tale of courage and compassion."

—**Daniel Goleman, Ph.D., author of *Emotional Intelligence***

"*Into the Magic Shop* is a captivating journey of discovery. Neurosurgeon Jim Doty's well-told personal story illuminates for us all the power of insight and empathy to transform our lives and enhance our world. Read it and you too may find magic in the mystery and majesty of the mind to bring health and healing to our individual and collective lives.

—**Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., Author of *Mindsight***

"Part memoir, part scientific exploration, *Into the Magic Shop* is a powerful work of emotion and discovery, showing that we all have within us our own small magic shop, a place of calm and beauty we can return to whenever we need it. As James Doty compellingly shows, we simply have to open the door, and let ourselves in."

—**Arianna Huffington, author of *Thrive***

"A moving memoir on the power of compassion and kindness. Neurosurgeon James Doty shares his inspiring story of growing up with seemingly insurmountable challenges, receiving a gift that changed his life, achieving remarkable success but then losing it all, and discovering that the mind is shaped as much by the heart as the brain."

—**Adam Grant, PhD, author of *Give and Take***

"A powerful, eloquent, deeply spiritual and exquisitely beautiful book. Real magic!"

—**Dean Ornish, M.D., author of *The Spectrum***

"This is one of the most compelling and inspiring books I have ever read. We're with Jim at each step, as he struggles with poverty and trauma, becomes a world-class brain surgeon, gains and loses a fortune, and learns deep lessons about the magic in each person's heart. Gripping, profound, extraordinary."

—**Rick Hanson, Ph.D., author of *Hardwiring Happiness***

"Dr. Doty's powerful book, *Into the Magic Shop*, is a testament to how faith and compassion extend beyond religion, race and nationality and can help an individual overcome adversity and personal limitations. It is an inspiration."

—**Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, spiritual leader and founder of the Art of Living Foundation**

"*Into the Magic Shop* will literally rewire your brain. A candid and personal story about a life transformed by a chance encounter in a magic shop. It is a truly optimistic and inspirational testament to the power of compassion and the ability to overcome adversity and discover your true potential."

—**Glenn Beck, nationally syndicated radio host and founder of The Blaze**

"An optimistic and engagingly well-told life story that incorporates scientific investigation into its altruistic message."

—**Kirkus Reviews**

From the Hardcover edition.

About the Author

James R. Doty, MD, is a professor in the Department of Neurosurgery at Stanford University and the director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education. He is also a philanthropist funding health clinics throughout the world and has endowed scholarships and chairs at multiple universities.

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The day I noticed my thumb was missing began like any other day the summer before I started eighth grade. I spent my days riding my bicycle around town, even though sometimes it was so hot the metal on my handlebars felt like a stove top. I could always taste the dust in my mouth—gritty and weedy like the rabbit brush and cacti that battled the desert sun and heat to survive. My family had little money, and I was often hungry. I didn't like being hungry. I didn't like being poor.

Lancaster's greatest claim to fame was Chuck Yeager breaking the sound barrier at nearby Edwards Air Force Base some twenty years earlier. All day long planes would fly overhead, training pilots and testing aircraft. I wondered what it would be like to be Chuck Yeager flying the Bell X-1 at Mach 1, accomplishing what no human had ever done before. How small and desolate Lancaster must have looked to him from forty five thousand feet up going faster than anyone ever thought possible. It seemed small and desolate to me, and my feet were only a foot above the ground as I pedaled around on my bike.

I had noticed my thumb missing that morning. I kept a wooden box under my bed that had all my most prized possessions. A small notebook that held my doodles, some secret poetry, and random crazy facts I had learned—like twenty banks are robbed every day in the world, snails can sleep for three years, and it's illegal to give a monkey a cigarette in Indiana. The box also held a worn copy of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, dog-eared on the pages that listed the six ways to get people to like you. I could recite the six things from memory.

1. Become genuinely interested in other people.
2. Smile.
3. Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
4. Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.
5. Talk in terms of the other person's interest.
6. Make the other person feel important—and do it sincerely.

I tried to do all of these things when I talked to anyone, but I always smiled with my mouth closed because when I was younger I had fallen and hit my upper lip on our coffee table, knocking out my front baby tooth. Because of that fall my front tooth grew in crooked and was discolored a dark brown. My parents didn't have the money to get it fixed. I was embarrassed to smile and show my discolored crooked tooth, so I tried to keep my mouth closed at all times.

Besides the book, my wooden box also had all my magic tricks—a pack of marked cards, some gimmicked coins that I could change from nickels into dimes, and my most prized possession: a plastic thumb tip that could hide a silk scarf or a cigarette. That book and my magic tricks were very important to me—gifts from my father. I had spent hours and hours practicing with that thumb tip. Learning how to hold my hands so it wouldn't be obvious and how to smoothly stuff the scarf or a cigarette inside it so that it would appear to magically disappear. I was able to fool my friends and our neighbors in the apartment complex. But today the thumb was missing.

Gone. Vanished. And I wasn't too happy about it.

My brother, as usual, wasn't home, but I figured maybe he had taken it or at least might know where it was. I didn't know where he went every day, but I decided to get on my bike and go looking for him. That thumb tip was my most prized possession. Without it I was nothing. I needed my thumb back.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Raymond Harris:

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Amy Smith:

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