

The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health, and Disease

By Daniel Lieberman

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In this landmark book of popular science, Daniel E. Lieberman—chair of the department of human evolutionary biology at Harvard University and a leader in the field—gives us a lucid and engaging account of how the human body evolved over millions of years, even as it shows how the increasing disparity between the jumble of adaptations in our Stone Age bodies and advancements in the modern world is occasioning this paradox: greater longevity but increased chronic disease.

The Story of the Human Body brilliantly illuminates as never before the major transformations that contributed key adaptations to the body: the rise of bipedalism; the shift to a non-fruit-based diet; the advent of hunting and gathering, leading to our superlative endurance athleticism; the development of a very large brain; and the incipience of cultural proficiencies. Lieberman also elucidates how cultural evolution differs from biological evolution, and how our bodies were further transformed during the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions.

While these ongoing changes have brought about many benefits, they have also created conditions to which our bodies are not entirely adapted, Lieberman argues, resulting in the growing incidence of obesity and new but avoidable diseases, such as type 2 diabetes. Lieberman proposes that many of these chronic illnesses persist and in some cases are intensifying because of “dysevolution,” a pernicious dynamic whereby only the symptoms rather than the causes of these maladies are treated. And finally—provocatively—he advocates the use of evolutionary information to help nudge, push, and sometimes even compel us to create a more salubrious environment.

(With charts and line drawings throughout.)

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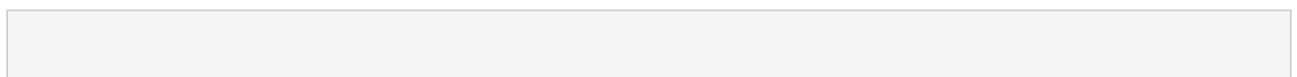
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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. In thoroughly enjoyable and edifying prose, Lieberman, professor of human evolution at Harvard, leads a fascinating journey through human evolution. He comprehensively explains how evolutionary forces have shaped the human species as we know it, from the move to bipedalism, and the changes in body parts—from hands to feet and spine—that such a change entailed, to the creation of agrarian societies, and much more. He balances a historical perspective with a contemporary one—examining traits of our ancestors as carefully as he looks to the future—while asking how we might control the destiny of our species. He argues persuasively that cultural evolution is now the dominant force of evolutionary change acting on the human body, and focuses on what he calls mismatch diseases that are caused by lack of congruence between genes and environment. Since the pace of cultural evolution has outstripped that of biological evolution, mismatch diseases have increased to the point where most of us are likely to die of such causes. Lieberman's discussion of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and breast cancer are as clear as any yet published, and he offers a well-articulated case for why an evolutionary perspective can greatly enrich the practice of medicine. Agent: Max Brockman, Brockman Inc. (Oct.)

From [Booklist](#)

Like it or not, we are slightly fat, furless, bipedal primates who crave sugar, salt, fat, and starch. Harvard professor Lieberman holds nothing back in his plea that people listen to the story of human evolution consisting of five biological transformations (walking upright, eating a variety of different foods, accumulating physical traits aligned to hunting and gathering, gaining bigger brains with larger bodies, and developing unique capacities for cooperation and language) and two cultural ones (farming and reliance on machines). Unfortunately, human beings now create environments and presently practice lifestyles that are clearly out of sync with the bodies they've inherited. This mismatch results in myriad problems, including Type 2 diabetes, myopia, flat feet, and cavities. Lieberman cleverly and comprehensively points out the perils of possessing Paleolithic anatomy and physiology in a modern world and bemoans just how out of touch we have become with our bodies. Natural selection nudges all life-forms toward optimality rather than a state of perfection. If we want to continue our phenomenal run as a species, it is essential to understand (and embrace) our evolutionary legacy. --Tony Miksanek

Review

"No one understands the human body like Daniel Lieberman or tells its story more eloquently. He's found a tale inside our skin that's riveting, enlightening, and more than a little frightening."

—Christopher McDougall, author of *Born to Run*

"Monumental: *The Story of the Human Body*, by one of our leading experts, takes us on an epic voyage that reveals how the past six million years shaped every part of us—our heads, limbs, and even our metabolism. Through Lieberman's eyes, evolutionary history not only comes alive, it becomes the means to understand, and ultimately influence, our body's future."

—Neil Shubin, author of *Your Inner Fish*

"These are not debates to gloss over or reduce to simple statements of cause and effect — they are stories with scientific complexity and tremendous, sometimes contradictory accumulations of evidence and detail. *The Story of the Human Body* does full justice to those stories, to that evidence and to that detail, and brings them to bear on daily health and well-being, individual and collective.

—*Washington Post*

“[Lieberman] is a true expert in a system where architecture and history intersect: the human foot. He ably describes how behavior and anatomy can lead to foot injuries in long-distance runners.”

—*Wall Street Journal*

“In thoughtful, lucid prose backed up by a hard-to-fathom amount of research, Lieberman gives us the language to understand the history of our ancestors—the history that lives on in our minds and in our bodies . . . *The Story of the Human Body*, expertly researched and told in an original voice, will make you look at your own body more critically—and perhaps treat it with a little more respect. After all, we sit at the edge of millions of years of small refinements that stretched this part and shortened that piece. Lieberman shows how it all fits together and that it was no accident.”

—*Everyday eBook*

“Eloquent and precise . . . Lieberman is the first to point out that modern living and technology have made our lives better in many ways. Still, a look back at where we came from can tell us a lot about where we’re headed, he says—and how we might alter that course for the better.”

—*Grist*

“In thoroughly enjoyable and edifying prose, Lieberman . . . leads a fascinating journey through human evolution. He comprehensively explains how evolutionary forces have shaped the human species as we know it . . . He balances a historical perspective with a contemporary one . . . while asking how we might control the destiny of our species. He argues persuasively that ‘cultural evolution is now the dominant force of evolutionary change acting on the human body.’”

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“Lieberman holds nothing back . . . He cleverly and comprehensively points out the perils of possessing Paleolithic anatomy and physiology in a modern world and bemoans ‘just how out of touch we have become with our bodies’ . . . If we want to continue our phenomenal run as a species, it is essential to understand (and embrace) our evolutionary legacy.”

—*Booklist*

“A massive review of where we came from and what ails us now . . . Would that industry and governments take heed.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Gale:

Book is to be different for every grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for people. The book *The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health, and Disease* has been making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The e-book *The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health, and Disease* is not only giving you more new information but also to get your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your guide. Try to make relationship with the book *The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health, and Disease*. You never sense lose out for everything if you read some books.

Edward Upton:

Precisely why? Because this The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health, and Disease is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will distress you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who also write the book in such wonderful way makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any longer or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have got such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hesitate having that book? If I were you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Larry Mason:

As we know that book is significant thing to add our know-how for everything. By a book we can know everything we want. A book is a group of written, printed, illustrated as well as blank sheet. Every year seemed to be exactly added. This publication The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health, and Disease was filled regarding science. Spend your time to add your knowledge about your scientific research competence. Some people has diverse feel when they reading any book. If you know how big benefit from a book, you can feel enjoy to read a e-book. In the modern era like today, many ways to get book which you wanted.

Carey Gilliam:

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