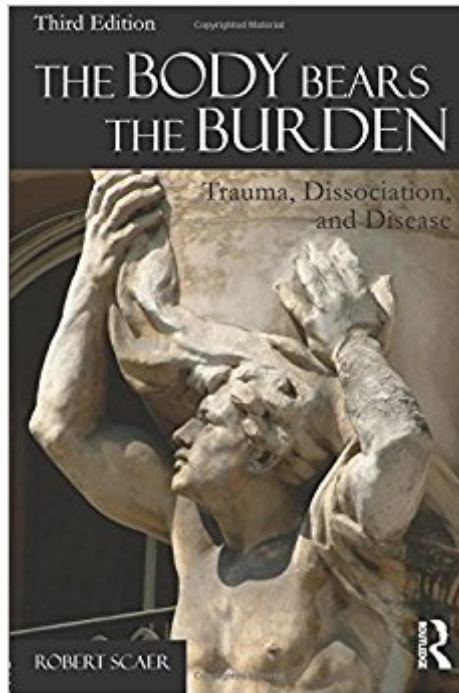




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# **The Body Bears The Burden: Trauma, Dissociation, And Disease**



## Synopsis

When *The Body Bears the Burden* made its debut in 2001, it changed the way people thought about trauma, PTSD, and the treatment of chronic stress disorders. Now in its third edition, this revered text offers a fully updated and revised analysis of the relationship between mind, body, and the processing of trauma. Here, clinicians will find detailed, thorough explorations of some of neurobiology's fundamental tenets, the connections between mind, brain, and body, and the many and varied ways that symptoms of traumatic stress become visible to those who know to look for them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In this groundbreaking integration of neurology, psychology, and evolutionary biology, Dr. Scaer sheds new light on the dynamics of psychological trauma and provides a way to understand and effectively treat its often misunderstood, intractable effects on the mind and body. This book is a must read for medical and mental-health professionals working with patients struggling with everything from anxiety and PTSD to chronic pain, gastrointestinal distress, and a host of other difficult-to-treat medical disorders." — Ronald D. Siegel, PsyD, assistant clinical professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School and author of *The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems* "In *The Body Bears the Burden*, Dr. Scaer boldly demystifies the profoundly debilitating impact of trauma by forcing new conceptualizations that move treatment toward an integrated biobehavioral approach, emphasizing the adaptive functions of our nervous system as it

communicates, often outside awareness, between brain and body." — Stephen W. Porges, PhD, professor of psychiatry at the University of North Carolina and author of *The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, and Self-regulation*

Robert Scaer, MD, has practiced neurology and rehabilitation for 36 years. His three books, *The Body Bears the Burden*, *The Trauma Spectrum*, and *8 Keys to Brain-Body Balance*, address the intimate relationship between life trauma and chronic disease, the ubiquitous association of modern society with intrinsic sources of trauma, and the role of somatic techniques for healing trauma.

This book is a must read for PTSD survivors and their loved ones. While it can be very technical, you will gain an understanding of what is going on in your body. Mainly, if you have ever suffered trauma, it is literally living in your body and manifesting as pain. Massage therapists have long known that some clients cry when a certain body part is massaged. This book explains cellular memory and demystifies PTSD survivors' longing for solitude and inexplicable behavior. It offers some hope with new therapies that it turns out are not quackery, discusses pharmaceuticals and psychiatry. I see it is selling out. I know many therapists have it on their shelves but we as lay people need to know what's happening to us, too. It's worth the \$30 and much better and an easier read than the first one.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It is a great reference on the topic and I particularly liked that it had references at the end of every chapter to back up his claims. It is a theory grounded in neurobiology, animal studies, and physiology. The only complaint I have is that the book is a 2014 updated version, yet I have not found works cited after the year 1999. It doesn't actually seem to be updated with current research in my opinion, and I will be getting another book in addition to this one so I have more recent information. This book was exactly what I was looking for at the time.

By way of full disclosure, I am a plastic surgeon with an interest in patients troubled by disturbed body image and an addiction to cosmetic surgery. When I first wrote about that topic in my 2009 surgery textbook, I made the case from a few of my own patient studies that childhood trauma was one of the causes of an obsession for plastic surgery and postoperative dissatisfaction, but it was Dr. Scaer's work and that of others in the trauma field (Peter Levine, Bessel van der Kolk, Pia Mellody, Pat Ogden, Bernice Andrews, and others) that has subsequently helped me piece together

a stronger theory and then provide evidence for it, some of which will be published in the journal Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery in October. Dr. Scaer and I have subsequently traded a few emails and he has encouraged my further research. Dr. Scaer is a physician but not a psychiatrist, which gives him the distinct advantage of being able to review the relevant mental health literature from the standpoint of another specialty. A neurologist with an obvious command of neuroanatomy and physiology and all of the abnormalities that developmental and accidental trauma produce, he can write compellingly to make the case, which I believe most physicians do not appreciate, that trauma is not universally perceived. The response to trauma depends upon its meaning to the victim and his or her sense of helplessness in a perceived life-threatening situation. It's like the lion chasing the antelope--the same physiological reactions are occurring--the pupils are dilated, the muscles are pumping, the adrenaline and cortisol are high--but the meaning to the lion is lunch and to the antelope it is survival. Dr. Scaer has drawn the same link to whiplash and other disease of traumatic stress, and leads the reader through the relevant physiology, trauma and attunement theory, and the way traumatic reactions manifest themselves in a variety of common diseases. As a hand surgeon for many years, I saw the effects of trauma--dissociation, re-experiencing, and avoidance--displayed in many injured, depressed, and angry patients suffering from what is now called "complex regional pain syndrome" and struggled to treat it. All hand surgeons knew that these patients were "difficult", but even now more of them should read Dr. Scaer's work. "Tormented" would be a more accurate term. The third edition is significantly improved and elaborated over the second, which itself was exceptional. I have read every word of both. There are new chapters on bonding and attunement. The whole text is more "dense", literature references updated and exhaustive. Yet somehow it is still smooth reading for a relative novice to the field. That is the author's skill. Dr. Scaer seems aware that not all allopathic physicians will subscribe to his ideas, but in my opinion they should. These patients have lifelong afflictions that they did not cause, and until some compassionate physician recognizes it, too many will be discounted as "crazy." They deserve better, and it is pioneers like Dr. Scaer who will educate all of us.

Scaer is an honest and courageous clinician: when his patients' course of healing did not add up he resisted dismissing them as most doctors had been doing and continue to do. His basic thesis, that emotional suffering is tied up with the autonomic nervous system, gives support to body-based versus cognitive therapies in general. That said, Scaer is oriented very much above the neck, in the brain. The title states 'the body bears the burden' but he himself sees the body as an implement of the mind, a pack-animal if you will, rather than a seat of the person. Also despite emphasizing that

trauma is so widespread as almost to be universal, he still seems to consider it an accident or bad luck. That is, he does not deal with social and family dynamics that are systematically traumatizing people in the physiological sense that he describes. EDIT October 2012: I have just read the authors other book – The Trauma Spectrum: Hidden Wounds and Human Resiliency – and I saw that he does there get into the 'little traumas' of parenting and social interaction. Because the second edition of this book bears a later copyright than Trauma Spectrum I had assumed there would be nothing in Spectrum that was not here also. I was wrong, read both books.

The best, most comprehensive book about the long-term effects of childhood, life, and medical trauma. Scaer incorporates the groundbreaking work of Vincent Felitti, M.D. (the Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACE study), Peter A. Levine, Ph.D. (Waking the Tiger; In an Unspoken Voice; Trauma Through a Child's Eyes; Healing Trauma; Sexual Healing), Allan Schore, Ph.D., and others. The neurophysiological basis for the development of post-traumatic symptoms are explained. If you know something went wrong in your life and you see physical manifestations that you are struggling to resolve (addiction, auto-immune disease, scoliosis, or other evidence of physical "bracing"), read the book. Scaer includes a chapter about therapies that are proving most useful to offer relief (EMDR, Somatic Experiencing).

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