

Beyond Normal: How the New Science of Enhanced Medicine Elevates Peak Performance and Repairs Brain Injuries

Shai Efrati

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*Taking a transformative approach to health care based on evolving understandings of brain science, the provocative health treatise **Beyond Normal** places prevention before treatment.*

Physician Shai Efrati's testimonial health book *Beyond Normal* explores how advances in science might be used to elevate people's athletic and mental performances.

While understandings of aging have evolved, and while health-care professionals' approaches to health have changed with them, the book troubles through the fact that people's life expectancies are falling even as health-care costs rise. It is forward-thinking in approaching this issue, making recommendations for nurturing healthier societies that are designed to help people become their best selves at any stage. And it argues that enhanced medicine, including fresh approaches to proper nutrition, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, and the idea of resilience, can maximize people's mental and physical performances.

The book encourages accelerating scientific advancements to improve people's general health and performance. It is energetic as it touts examples of race-car drivers, triathletes, and outdoorspeople in support of its model. Complicated concepts including hormesis, the hypoxia-inducible factor, and the hyperoxic-hypoxic paradox are covered with clarity throughout in connection to peak performance, treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, and approaches to retirement. Some of the book's recommendations are piquing, as when it says that society should "raise the retirement age. Change the definition of 'old.' ... [B]eing old? This is a choice we can make for ourselves." Still, though it aims to cover the spectrum of biological and mental performance challenges across the lifespan, its middle section drags through a list of conditions that enhanced medicine might address. More usefully, its chapters end with clear summations of their key takeaways, complementing the book's didactic tone.

Credible scientific citations are used to support the book's arguments, which elucidate complex topics well, as with the psychological underpinnings of a veteran's response to fireworks, which affects the hippocampus, amygdala, and limbic system: "The core problem is a biologically malfunctioning brain tissue—it is a wound in the brain. As with other brain injuries, that wound needs to be healed; its healthy functioning needs to be restored." The text also introduces pioneers in the field of enhanced medicine, telling their stories and describing their cutting-edge research in an engaging manner. Its examples and inquiries are appealing, as where it relates Frida Kahlo's story to a consideration of the symptoms of fibromyalgia. And its figures of brain scans, cellular responses, and oxygen levels in the bloodstream are effective illustrations of its ideas. However, the book's overview of Efrati's personal fitness, nutrition, and diet regimen is a too-personalized case for taking its transformative approach to health care, even if it is ably used to emphasize regeneration over degeneration.

A passionate health treatise, *Beyond Normal* touts enhanced medicine methods for their performance-lifting potential.

JOSEPH S. PETE (July 31, 2024)

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