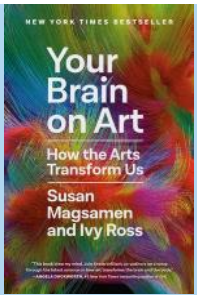
Discussion Guide



Your Brain on Art
Susan Magsamen and Ivy Ross

Random House
2023
304 pages
ISBN: 978-0593449240

Complementary and Integrative Medicine

Summary

We're on the verge of a cultural shift in which the arts can deliver potent, accessible, and proven solutions for the well-being of everyone. Magsamen and Ross offer compelling research that shows how engaging in an art project for as little as forty-five minutes reduces the stress hormone cortisol, no matter your skill level, and just one art experience per month can extend your life by ten years.

Questions

1. What was your reaction to the idea that science shows that the arts are not just entertainment or luxury, but they have proven positive impacts on physical and mental health, pain management, and longevity?
2. What is the difference between beauty and aesthetic?
3. The book states that, "Those who have an aesthetic mindset share four key attributes: (1) a high level of curiosity, (2) a love of playful, open-ended exploration, (3) keen sensory awareness, and (4) A drive to engage in creative activities as a maker and/or beholder." What are some situations in your life when you feel these ways? Are there activities or environments you could cultivate to try to incorporate these feelings more into your life?
4. What are some ways libraries can support this work for people of all ages?
5. How do you think technology plays into the experience of art in current times?
6. After reading this book, are there ways you are more aware of art in daily life? Please describe. Have you made a conscious effort to cultivate an "art habit?" Why or why not?
7. Do you feel like the arts are given the funding and societal respect that corresponds to the idea that they are essential?
8. There are many positive, hopeful moments in this book. What are some of your favorite takeaways?

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