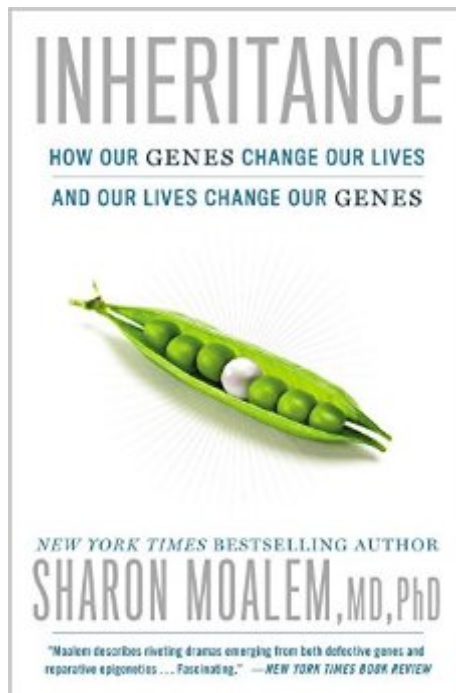


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# Inheritance: How Our Genes Change Our Lives--and Our Lives Change Our Genes



## Synopsis

Award-winning physician and New York Times bestselling author Sharon Moalem, MD, PhD, reveals how genetic breakthroughs are completely transforming our understanding of both the world and our lives. **INHERITANCE** Conventional wisdom dictates that our genetic destiny is fixed at conception. But Dr. Moalem's groundbreaking book shows us that the human genome is far more fluid and fascinating than your ninth grade biology teacher ever imagined. By bringing us to the bedside of his unique and complex patients, he masterfully demonstrates what rare genetic conditions can teach us all about our own health and well-being. In the brave new world we're rapidly rocketing into, genetic knowledge has become absolutely crucial. **INHERITANCE** provides an indispensable roadmap for this journey by teaching you: -Why you may have recovered from the psychological trauma caused by childhood bullying-but your genes may remain scarred for life. -How fructose is the sugar that makes fruits sweet-but if you have certain genes, consuming it can buy you a one-way trip to the coroner's office. -Why ingesting common painkillers is like dosing yourself repeatedly with morphine-if you have a certain set of genes. -How insurance companies legally use your genetic data to predict the risk of disability for you and your children-and how that impacts the coverage decisions they make for your family. -How to have the single most important conversation with your doctor-one that can save your life. And finally: -Why people with rare genetic conditions hold the keys to medical problems affecting millions. In this trailblazing book, Dr. Moalem employs his wide-ranging and entertaining interdisciplinary approach to science and medicine-- explaining how art, history, superheroes, sex workers, and sports stars all help us understand the impact of our lives on our genes, and our genes on our lives. **INHERITANCE** will profoundly alter how you view your genes, your health--and your life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Inheritance" is compelling reading; a real page turner! As an adult patient with the rare genetic disease CADASIL (Cerebral Autosomal Dominant Arteriopathy with Subcortical Infarcts and Leukoencephalopathy), from a mutation on the NOTCH3 gene, I found this book to be enlightening in many ways, especially how all of us, rare patients or not, are at this very moment changing our destiny by our genetic expression. I am inspired to have my full DNA sequenced now, so I can better learn what foods, vitamins, medications, environmental factors, etc. are helping me or hurting me. I am so grateful to Dr. Moalem for this book and its contents, for his dedicated work with rare patients, and for his discovery of a new antibiotic called Siderocillin to combat superbug infections. I highly recommend this book for anyone with DNA.

I received an advanced reading copy of this from the publisher via Goodread's First-reads Giveaway program. This popular science book is a broad overview of genetic and epigenetic inheritance, basically exactly what the subtitle says. The introduction oversells the the epigenetic focus (how life experience or environment can lead the changes in DNA that are not strictly sequence-based) because the majority of the book does stay within the realms of traditional sequence-based inherited genetic variation. Moreover, given Moalem's specialty, the focus is not so much on inheritance itself, nor even the specific mechanisms of inheritance. Instead this book really comes down to these ideas: 1) There are a lot of genetic disorders. 2) Individually these disorders are often rare. 3) It is fairly likely that an given individual though will have some kind of disorder. In other words, everyone is unique; most all of us have unique rare disorders of some severity or another. The truth of this may surprise some, as may the implications: namely that any health advisories are tailored for the 'average population'. But no one is average. So not everyone can take the same amounts of medication. Eating high amounts of fat may be great for some people. Eating any fruits may be really bad for someone else. Running is good exercise for your spouse, it might give you a heart-attack, etc. "Inheritance" thereby sweeps across a wide realm of human genetic variation, threading topics together under common themes. Moalem avoids getting bogged down into a lot of detail, making this book of greatest interest to the general public with medical interests, or those in particular who find medical anomalies interesting. For those that are really ignorant just how much variation there is to life, and how easily life can go wrong, this book is an excellent

primer, and even for those with a background in medicine or biology, many of the specific rare disorders in the book that Moalem discusses may be new to them. Personally I wish that given the title he had delved a little more in depth, particularly into the mechanisms of inheritance, and variations across life. The book is squarely human- (or at least mammalian-) centric. Moalem's style is very light-hearted, at times veering into stories whose connections to the actual topic at hand aren't apparent, but for its intended audience, I find the style appropriate. Finally, I appreciated him bringing up discussion on how studies of genetic disorders allow us to have a firmer grasp of how 'normal' biology occurs. An episode of the X-Files I adore, "Humbug" addresses several of the issues covered in "Inheritance", including the speculative ones regarding the increasing genetic technologies available to our society. At what point will we be able to eradicate all genetic disorders? What understanding will we lose in the process? How do we decide what is a serious enough disorder? Though briefly touched upon, the book could have spent more space covering the implications of our increasing knowledge and technological powers.

An amazing read! I was reminded of an old film, vintage 1966, *Fantastic Voyage*. Long ago, this film captured me, held me hostage to the wonders of the human body. While there were a lot of issues surrounding the cold war and miniaturizing matter, it was focused on trying to save a life. Following an attempted assassination, a scientist was alive but comatose. Using miniaturization technology, a small group of scientists get onboard a submarine (proteus), traveling through the body in order to remove a clot lodged in the scientist's brain. I recall sitting in the theater amazed and mesmerized, by the *view*. *INHERITANCE* expands our *Fantastic Voyage*, this time shedding light on the uncertainties and unknowns of those early years, laying out our genetic map, the small changes in our genes that make us unique, wonderful creatures; the genes that are disease causing and those that are protective as well as the environmental influences that will change who we become. Dr. Moalem's book is friendly, an easy read and an adventure that is here today for all of us.

Fascinating science told through intriguing stories. It will break the rules you learned about the genetic code and give you new ones to ponder. Dr. Moalem makes the complex simple. This book will not only influence you as you think about your own genetic code but will influence health policy for years to come. *When it comes to genetics, the rare informs the common.* A must read! C. Dillon

Great for beginners. Are you trying to get your patients to understand their genetics and how important it is to know what hand you've been dealt? Give them this book. Genetics are your loaded gun, life style and diet are the things that pull the trigger. Don't worry if you've got some bad SNP's. Just take the supplements you need to fill the gaps and live a clean healthy life!

As a physician I was looking for a book to recommend for patients with questions regarding genetics and genomics. This is a collection of cases and how genetic knowledge aided in diagnosis and treatment. While interesting, it really does not educate about genetics or genomics. It gave only a brief mention of epigenetics. I will have to look elsewhere.

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