



Touch (MIT Press)

Tiffany Field

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Although the therapeutic benefits of touch have become increasingly clear, American society, claims Tiffany Field, is dangerously touch-deprived. Many schools have "no touch" policies; the isolating effects of Internet-driven work and life can leave us hungry for tactile experience. In this book Field explains why we may need a daily dose of touch. The first sensory input in life comes from the sense of touch while a baby is still in the womb, and touch continues to be the primary means of learning about the world throughout infancy and well into childhood. Touch is critical, too, for adults' physical and mental health. Field describes studies showing that touch therapy can benefit everyone, from premature infants to children with asthma to patients with conditions that range from cancer to eating disorders.

This second edition of *Touch*, revised and updated with the latest research, reports on new studies that show the role of touch in early development, in communication (including the reading of others' emotions), in personal relationships, and even in sports. It describes the physiological and biological effects of touch, including areas of the brain affected by touch, and the effects of massage therapy on prematurity, attentiveness, depression, pain, and immune functions. Touch has been shown to have positive effects on growth, brain waves, breathing, and heart rate, and to decrease stress and anxiety. As Field makes clear, we enforce our society's touch taboo at our peril.

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