

# Design for a Life: How Behavior and Personality Develop

[\*Patrick Bateson\*](#)

How is it possible for each of 6 billion human beings to be unique? How does each of us grow up to be the person we are? How do behavior and personality develop? In this wonderfully readable book, two distinguished scientists explain how biology and psychology join to shape the behavior of individual human beings. They counter the mistaken notion that science has discovered individual genes that determine certain personality traits; instead, they explain what role genes actually play in the formation of personality. The authors show how change is a vital component of human behavior, restoring the concept of free will to its central place in human psychology. In tracing human development from a fertilized egg to an adult, they explain the important roles that nature and nurture play. *Design for a Life* is an eloquent, lucid description of behavioral development, the science that explains how personality emerges. In place of the conventional opposition of nature (genes) and nurture (environment), Bateson and Martin offer a fresh synthesis. *Design for a Life* brings biology and psychology together by using the metaphor of cooking to show how both the raw ingredients and the cooking process must be successfully combined to produce a meal. Written in a clear and enjoyable style, *Design for a Life* helps us to understand the science behind some of today's controversies in fields as diverse as parenting, education, sexuality, social policy, and medicine. The authors brilliantly blend scientific examples and literary anecdotes to illustrate the concepts they describe. Anyone interested in behavioral development and the emergence of personality will find this book indispensable, both entertaining and profound.



## DESIGN FOR A LIFE

How Behaviour Develops

Patrick Bateson  
& Paul Martin