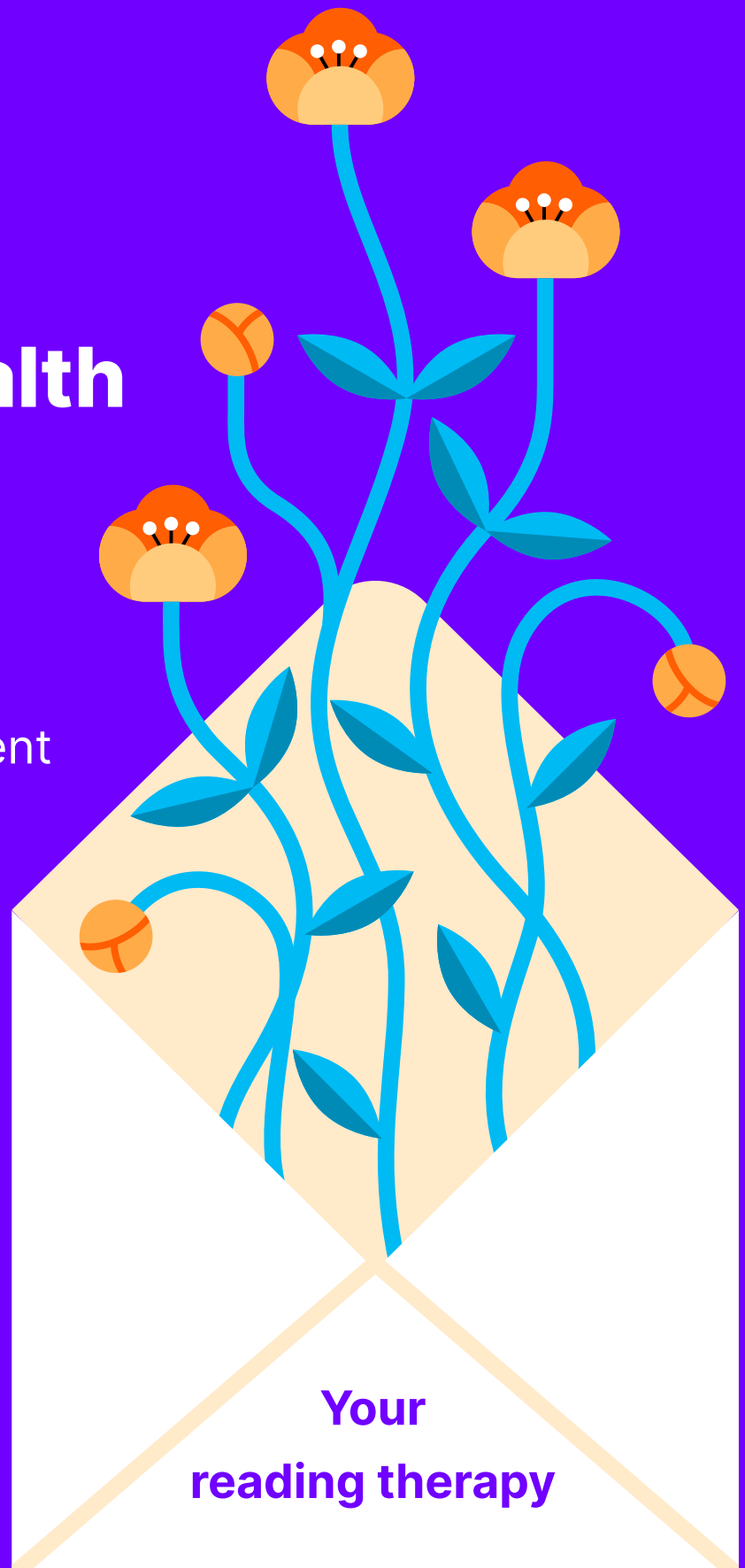


24

Self-Help Books for Mental Health

Read to boost:

- Self-Awareness
- Stress Management
- Relationships
- Fulfillment
- Self-Care
- Mindfulness



24

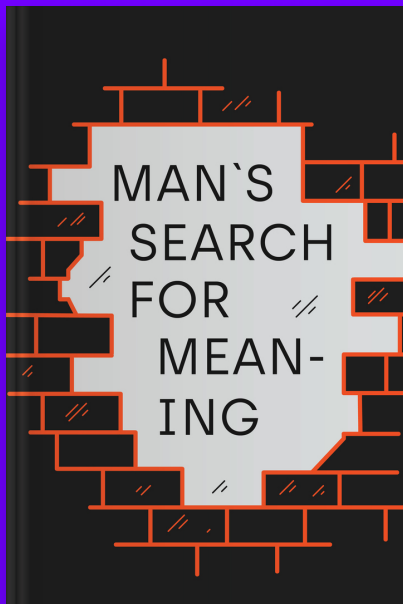
Self-Help Books for Mental Health

- ✓ 15-min reads of 24 books must-reads
- ✓ Ideas from the world's acknowledged leaders
- ✓ Hundreds of valuable self-help insights
- ✓ Most actionable tips and techniques for mental health
- ✓ More knowledge in less time



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Man's Search for Meaning

Viktor E. Frankl

Read to boost:

- Mindset
- Fortitude
- Self-esteem
- Fulfillment

What's in there for me?

Viktor E. Frankl was an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist, and Holocaust survivor. He was the founder of logotherapy, which healed people through the search for meaning. This summary seeks to investigate prisoners' mental state and uses logotherapy to unravel the mysteries that abound in the human mind. Through the tales and lessons in this summary, anyone can learn to cope with intense suffering without breaking their spirit.



Love encourages full disclosure. If you wish to find meaning in your life, love yourself first.



“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Our search for meaning in suffering can result in a stronger mind

The first stage of imprisonment manifests itself as “shock.” Upon incarceration, many inmates faced the frightening feeling of a new, cruel reality. As was common with inmates at concentration camps, the newbies were forced to cope with being snatched from normalcy and cast into a hell-like existence.

The first few weeks of being an inmate are terrific because you're still struggling to reconcile your past and present realities.

Shock gave way to apathy — a total disregard for any kind of emotion. Since the paramount desire of the prisoner was to protect their inner self, apathy was essential to prevent them from bothering about anyone but themselves. The author suggests that as the exterior hardens and dulls, we can feel more strong on the inside.

While the inmates' bodies deteriorate, their minds and souls become stronger. A connection to the powers beyond the physical world gets heightened in this condition.

The prisoners coped with misfortunes by developing vivid dreams of the future. They at least visualized a cessation of their suffering.

There was no need for trivial desires like sex or anything that didn't ensure the prisoners' survival. As such, there was a drastic dip in libido among the inmates. They didn't care for much, except politics and religion. However, religion was in the first place. As it would seem, our spirit grows stronger as we search for meaning during hard times. Those with a strong spirit were able to withstand even the worst physical torture.

Viktor Frankl also claimed that love was a key component in the will to survive. Suffering may be deathly, but love is as strong as death. In a rough situation, simply knowing that you had someone you'd live for made it easier to survive.

In the face of trials and death, love keeps the mind alive. The memory about a loved one is enough to keep it together.

It was also helping to have memories of the easier times. An incarcerated person's mind replays fond memories and keeps him in a state of blissful reminiscence as a form of relief. It can also become more attuned to art, beauty, and nature or even heighten the prisoner's sense of humor.

Man's search for meaning chronicles author Viktor Frankl's experiences as a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps during the second world war. Frankl learned a lot about survival through his experiences and those of the inmates he observed keenly.

He took notes of the traits and beliefs that made some inmates survive the harsh conditions that others couldn't withstand, and after leaving the camp, he taught others these principles. Now it's your turn to learn them. You may not be in a concentration camp or ever have a need to, but suffering is an unavoidable part of life. This summary will show you what to do in the face of an emotional crisis and how to find meaning even in pain.

2. There is no amount of suffering that we cannot overcome

The theory that man can survive anything was tested and proven in Nazi concentration camps, where people had to endure what can only be described as Hell on Earth. Some survived to tell the story, regardless of the fact that all went through the same ordeal.

One is able to survive anything by putting their mind to it, even a concentration camp.

But in the midst of this dire reality, you start to notice that there is clarity of mind, and the littlest things can bring you profound joy. Merely knowing that you might get two slices of bread instead of one made a world of difference to the inmates at Poland's "Death Camps." These seemingly simple things made it easier for the mind to process relief.

Finding little joy in the midst of suffering is key to survival. It keeps us grateful.

Regardless of the situation, people can change or stay steadfast in their original design. Most prisoners resorted to despicable survival methods and blamed it on their surroundings, but a person's right to choose who they are and who they want to be in the face of trouble can't be taken from them.

As an imprisoned individual searches for meaning in their situation, they must see it as an opportunity to obtain fulfillment and find a purpose because without suffering life cannot be complete. In their desire to survive, they shouldn't lose humanity.

The tactics we employ to survive must not be at the cost of our true nature.

The most trying part of the imprisonment for Viktor Frankl was when he didn't know for how long he'd be locked up. This usually caused a lot of people in concentration camps to give up and simply waste away because they couldn't imagine a future beyond their lives behind barbed wire fences.

Suffering loses its effect once you understand it and can make sense of it; once you do, you free up space for faith in the future and strengthen your spiritual and mental truths.

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." ~ Viktor Frankl

3. We search for meaning all the time, longing for something other than the reality we were born into

Humans cannot live without meaning since it is a primary motivation, a form of instinctive longing for something beyond reality that controls everything. It is argued that “meaning” is an arbitrary concept conjured in the form of a defense mechanism. But it goes beyond rationale into a deeper conviction that one can live or die for their ideals, values, and “meaning.”

A person can face frustration trying to exercise their right to define their meaning. This conflict, “existential frustration,” occurs when one encounters great difficulty finding meaning for their existence and the will to define a purpose of their life.

This results in “noögenic neuroses” (noös is Greek for the mind), which refers to the mind’s great distress as it tries and fails to find meaning of existence. Sometimes, as we try to find a meaning for our lives, it can do more harm than good, causing inner tension. But this conflict is necessary for a person to survive.

The feeling of discontent with what one has accomplished and the desire to improve it can ameliorate mental health since that’s how “will to meaning” can be manifested. Accepting the tension that keeps one searching for a new meaning is called “noö-dynamics” and is applicable for neurotics and other people.

We will only agree to a mediocre life if we live it without any tension. The pressure of existential frustration acts as a catalyst for change.

However, people suffer from a constant feeling of meaninglessness termed “the existential vacuum.” This sense of isolation, inherent to the modern generation by the way, is caused by the emptiness of a meaningless existence

that leaves a deep feeling of boredom causing a lot of mental distress, including aggression, depression, and addiction, which often culminate in suicide.

This is when logotherapy, a psychoanalytic treatment that employs a search for “logos” or meaning, can help. It can fill the vacuum up with a concrete meaning and prevent a relapse into destructive habits.

Did you know? Jewish people were excluded from public life on September 15th, 1935, when the Nuremberg Laws were issued. These laws also stripped German Jews of their citizenship and their right to marry Germans.

4. Life’s meaning is different for each of us

Life means different things to different people. Thus, we can only define life’s meaning in a given time, situation, and for a given person. There is no definite or abstract meaning for life, only a relative ever-changing one. So don’t ask, “what is life?” but instead, “what is life for me?”

Logotherapy aims to define the individual’s essence of existence. It hands patients the awareness of their own role in defining their existence. A logotherapist must help the patient see their life more clearly.

A patient can find meaning in one of three ways:

- Performing an action that distracts them from the pain and makes them feel fulfilled.
- Experiencing something meaningful/interacting with someone whose company they enjoy.
- Developing a positive attitude toward unavoidable suffering.

While acting on something, experiencing something, like culture and nature, or interacting with someone by loving them, a patient can find meaning.

Love is really the ONE way to encounter another person's core and know their true being. Love makes it possible to see all a person's traits and the potential they have and help them unleash it. In logotherapy, love isn't merely sex but the primary instinct from which the desire to have sex is born, and, as such, sex is merely one of the many ways of expressing love.

Love encourages full disclosure. If you wish to find meaning in your life, love yourself first.

The third way of finding meaning is to suffer. Suffering in itself is a form of life and, as such, has its meaning. One can seek meaning from this state, but suffering IS NOT necessary for meaning.

Is there an ultimate meaning then? Yes, logotherapy seeks to identify this one "super-meaning," regardless of the person's religious standpoint. This can be done not simply by trying to draw it from the patient's belief system but rather by giving them meaning within their belief system that ultimately explains their lives.

5. Logotherapy is a technique in psychotherapy that combats everyday difficulties

We've had brief mentions of logotherapy in contrast to psychotherapy, but here we'll go a little deeper into the details of the technique and what it aims to achieve.

In helping individuals face everyday difficulties like fear, logotherapy has developed a special technique. It finds a starting point common in neurotic patients — anticipatory anxiety, which makes the sufferer fear something that may happen in the future. This is termed hyper-intention and has a similar condition known as hyper-attention, which can lead to sickness because a

patient pays undue attention to a condition and its symptoms ending up getting inflicted by it.

The fear that something might happen can, in fact, cause it to happen.

A technique known as “paradoxical intention” helps to fix such a condition since it aims to rid one of the anticipatory fears by engaging a patient in thoughts that can cause the intended effects. Like if you were scared of sweating in public, you should think, “I should sweat even more this time.” The logic is that you reverse your attitude toward the problem perceiving it as a challenge.

Reverse psychology can force the body to negate the anxiety prompts in your head.

As logotherapy seeks to combat neurosis, it first approaches it in relation to the age of the sufferers. For most, neurosis is a form of nihilism — the belief that man is “nothing” but the result of biological, psychological, and sociological conditions or the product of heredity and environment. This feeling of nothingness isn’t any different from the existential vacuum from earlier. Logotherapy states with certainty that man indeed is nothing but a finite being that isn’t just a product of an environment but the one in charge of what the environment makes of him.

6. Optimism helps us make sense out of the senseless sufferings

Man can always determine his nature in the face of any situation because there exists no condition that can completely rid him of “freedom.” Thus, even in a neurotic state, the patient has a residue of freedom to decide to be cured or stay in this condition.

We are greatly influenced by our thoughts that can be reflected in our bodily reactions.

We all have the power to choose our response even in the face of extreme difficulties. A person can seek refuge in love or in a higher appreciation for the life he once had before the suffering. The author believes that one possesses pan-determinism — no matter what, one can rise to challenge the situation and not be trodden down by it.

This approach to life is known as “tragic optimism” — believing that there is some good in seemingly hopeless situations.

Tragic optimism, in logotherapy, seeks to:

- turn suffering into a human achievement
- use guilt to better oneself
- draw incentive from life’s transitory nature

This state can’t be forced (hyper intention) since we need a reason to feel emotions.

Tragic optimism” can lead to a positive outcome and create a deeper meaning.

One can learn to be tragically optimistic if one can tell oneself to find the greater meaning in one's suffering, to not give up or turn to immediate pleasure — drugs, sex, and even crime. The logotherapist must help a patient find their remaining part and reinvigorate it for a long time, replacing the void that eats away the soul.

Conclusion

We are confronted with unpleasant moments in our lives daily, or, for some like the prisoners of Auschwitz, we live a life of suffering. How we react to these situations is entirely up to us. No matter how dire, a situation cannot change who you are and will be, so you have to seek the meaning of this life yourself

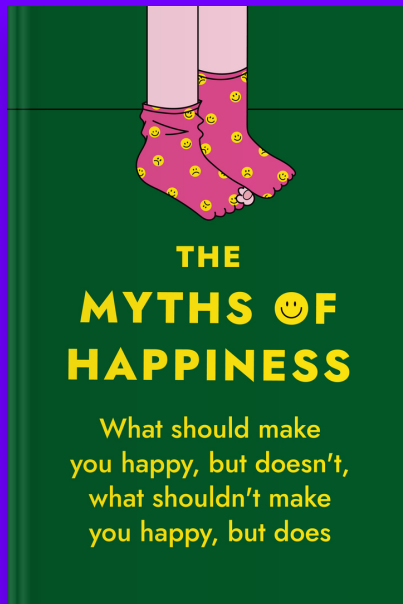
and make peace with it now. Envision a future for yourself beyond suffering. A life devoid of meaning or desire for a future will make you burn out soon.

The inmates of concentration camps were subjected to the worst conditions possible. Some made it out with their souls and minds intact. They remained good people because instead of letting the situation define their lives, they sought meaning and answers to the questions life gave them. It's clear that we cannot exist without meaning, and we'll spend our lives searching for it. It is important that we don't get trapped in the cycle of distress that is associated with the existential crisis we find ourselves facing. The trick is to realize that there is no fixed meaning to life. You should create this meaning for yourself; you are the captain of your ship.

Don't perceive suffering as an unnecessary part of life because pain helps us grow. However, aggravating events test our personalities since we face the choice — to stay kind or do bad things to avenge the circumstances. Remember that we always have the freedom to choose how to behave.

Try this:

Practice tragic optimism when faced with challenging and painful life situations. Tragedy is a normal part of life, we will all have our fair share of it, but we can learn to respond in positive ways. Tragic optimism is all about finding hope and meaning in difficult situations. Another related strategy for surviving pain is holding on to your closest and most meaningful relationships.



The Myths of Happiness:

What Should Make You Happy, but Doesn't, What Shouldn't Make You Happy, but Does

Sonja Lyubomirsky

Read to boost:

- Happiness
- Self-growth
- Success
- Positive thinking

What's in there for me?

The world has defined success, and not reaching this standard is a recipe for failure to many. Author Sonja Lyubomirsky is an expert on happiness, and she lucidly explains how the definition of success, which assumedly leads to happiness, can threaten the life of the average adult. She explicitly portrays how one can live a fulfilling life. It is a timely book that reveals how anyone can attain real success.



We can train our brains to perceive things differently, both positively and negatively.



"If we understand how the myths of happiness drive our responses, we are more likely to respond wisely."

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. A lie about a fulfilled life is that downfalls or goal attainment determine how happy we will be

For most of us, happiness is predetermined by how society sees it. An average person is supposed to want riches, a great spouse and kids, authority, a life free of challenges, as this should imply fulfillment and ultimately lead to excitement. When we fail to obtain these things, we might experience failure, regret, and worthlessness. There are even specific authors that promote this kind of view: “Achieve! Otherwise, you are nothing.”

“If we understand how the myths of happiness drive our responses, we are more likely to respond wisely.” ~ Sonja Lyubomirsky

Most people follow this happiness logic, hoping to have well-rounded lives, but it isn't enough. For instance, if two people get married, others might judge them for not having kids right away. When they eventually have their firstborn, sympathetic strangers enquire whether another baby is underway. Now the happy couple has two kids. But curious people begin to wonder if they have a car. As long as we keep following someone else's idea of happiness, these questions will be hurting us. The irony is that by achieving, we will not get fulfillment as expected for long. Those that have attained such a feat are left in uncertainty.

People who managed to cope with adversity and live on are much happier than people who have never had such an experience.

It has been proven over time that those who face challenges in life are more fulfilled than those who never did. Many assume that when challenges and unwanted circumstances befall them, it means their world has collapsed. Partnership, riches, painful past, and getting old can all be blessings or painful circumstances we have to endure. However, problems and hardships are in the natural course of things. It is our attitude to them that matters.

Did you know? The times of crisis can be an avenue for change, growth and renewal.

2. Lie 1: The right spouse will make me happy

Many people in a relationship or marriage have situations they don't want to share even with their closest friend. Keeping a secret might seem the right thing to do. However, in time, it will start eating up the energy of its keeper. Eventually, family and friends may start complaining about the lack of trust in the relationship, and situations like these ultimately lead to a sad breakup. These hidden feelings begin to surface, and because they are toxic, they stifle the relationship/marriage to death.

When we achieve a new feat that we longed for, we are immersed in a sea of excitement. Everything becomes blissful, but we soon realize that this colossal emotion dwindles and becomes regular with us. Like every other achievement, settling with a spouse brings enormous joy, which decreases with time. The rate of decrease is higher in cases of infatuation and lust. However, some people graduate from just wanting to be with the spouses to have an enormous love.

Human beings can become used to most life changes. In other words, we can even bear the unbearable.

The first stage of a love relationship, which usually has hormonal actions, lasts for a while. The persons involved seem to give little or no particular attention to other aspects of their lives. That is quite unhealthy.

It is evident now there are two types of love: the first brings more excitement, and at this healthy attraction level, love brings couples close. The second type is not very exciting, but it produces a result such as birthing kids and having a long and enduring relationship, which is of more essence.

“When we first fall in love, if we are lucky, we experience what researchers call passionate love, but over the years, this type of love usually turns into companionate love.” ~ Sonja Lyubomirsky

Even though marital life brought fulfillment to their desires, many couples are still disappointed with how. At this stage, they should look deep into their relationship to understand that they can work on it and realize these desires the way they want to. Even as their relationship/marriage age.

3. Lie 2: An unhappy marriage ends your life

Most people experience difficulties in the relationship with spouses — these range from decisions on making babies to the location to settle. When two people cannot agree on things underlying their partnership, they may want to opt-out. However, this may lead one to concur that there can be no joy when the partnership fails. It should be preserved at any cost. A good partnership with your spouse will unleash the better part of you, and on the other hand, a stormy partnership will release the ugliest one.

A troubled marriage is not a verdict for happiness.

Research has proven that the best approach to fulfillment in the face of challenges is not a direct hit to correct the situation. You should look at it from a different angle. It usually involves effectively using a greater level of good feelings to drown the negative vibes.

The brain works in a peculiar way by linking up related thoughts and actions. When you recall a sad event concerning your spouse, you drive down the hill of other related tragic events. The best way to approach this is by breaking this connection. You now understand why irrelevant issues will always lead to massive trouble in a failing partnership. A stormy relationship is not an indicator that you cannot experience real joy. According to an expert on positive

emotions, Barbara Fredrickson, the best way to express enormous positive vibes is to drown the contrary vibes.

“In short, those of us in very unhappy marriages should still strive to increase our positive emotions and positive interactions, but not at the cost of blinding ourselves to our problems.” ~ Sonja Lyubomirsky

Did you know? In happily married couples, ratios of positive and negative emotions regarding their emotional and verbal interaction is approximately 5:1, while love-crossed couples' ratio is smaller than 1:1.

4. Lie 3: Having lots of money makes you happy

As we live, traumatic and challenging times arise. We may lose our jobs and our business or retirement plans might fail. Moreover, we could be left without a home or other significant material possessions. It seems as though the world is crashing, as all of these unfortunate events imply stability loss. Metaphorically speaking, we get out of our depths.

“Income and happiness are indeed significantly correlated, although the relationship isn't superstrong.” ~ Sonja Lyubomirsky

A lot has been said regarding the relationship between an exciting life and riches. It is believed that one tends to experience a good life as one amasses wealth. The society also makes this possible as the rich is revered, and it seems they have control over others as they can afford most of what they want, unlike the average person.

A wealthy person can afford a house of choice, desired meals, a partner in several businesses, and cater to all those related/dependent on them. Psychologists, however, discovered that riches provide a particular type of happiness. The rich mainly report they are happy in general. Nevertheless,

when asked about moment to moment feelings of joy, sadness, hatred, they will hardly agree that they were satisfied. The cause is not far-fetched – riches.

Money makes us happier if it keeps us from being poor.

Experts in diverse areas have discussed the connection between affluence and joy. They concluded that it's like two-way traffic where fun can bring fortunes and vice-versa. Those with enormous pleasure are more likely to make more riches. The insufficient basic life needs, such as adequate shelter, meals, and clothing, make us appreciate wealth better than when we have these in abundance. It then follows that an increase in wealth makes the penury experience great joy, which wealthy people are not capable of.

As wealth increases, the pleasure it brings, such as a good living, several businesses, choice-life, wither. The harmful effects of the distress later displace the right things. We find ourselves fighting to maintain the income, experiencing the tension of the investment risk, and jumping into the struggle to attain a higher position or social status. More often than not, the wealthy do not appreciate the good feelings that come with certain minimal excitement, the little things of life.

More so, this is why rich folks get lost in the tension and pressure of maintaining wealth and will not enjoy the good they have accumulated, unlike the average person whose pay rise calls for celebration no matter how small the growth is.

5. Lie 4: I will be happy when I achieve big goals

We can make all the plans in the world and try to build our lives around them. However, making a plan does not mean successfully implementing it. Many of us think that the joy of achieving certain feats such as becoming a millionaire or billionaire, acquiring the house of our dreams, going on exotic vacations will be tremendous. When we succeed in achieving all these, we feel happy. Yet,

this happiness does not last forever. Human nature always has us craving for more. Thus, the effect of attaining the desired things wanes. What if there is nothing left to wish for?

“If money isn’t making us happy, it’s likely because we are spending it to keep up with the neighbors, validate our wealth, or flaunt our looks, power, and status.” ~ Sonja Lyubomirsky

There are reasons for the above effect. Firstly, each singular achievement brings a unique joy that cannot be attained again, even when such an event reoccurs. The process of achieving more extraordinary feats, which could be a career, business, and the likes, usually is tiring and takes a toll on the person.

Nevertheless, the draining process is also filled with excitement as we get closer to the source of our desire. It seems strange how the excitement that comes with it does not last up to the same time it took to achieve such a huge feat. Neither does it last the way we would have thought.

When such an enormous height is attained, we feel the excitement of it for a while. When the feeling disappears, we begin to feel like a failure. Individuals are created this way, so they continuously want more. They never think they have enough. Hence, they are always discontented, not enjoying what they have at present.

An exciting event wanes to normal feelings rather quickly and, on the contrary, sad and unwanted events gravitate to the bottom of our aching hearts for a long time.

Another cause of these great feelings' fast waning is that such tremendous accomplishments bring with them specific changes to our lives. For example, these include moving to a different place, change in an individual's usual activities, or getting whole more responsibilities. The truth is that there will always be stress attached to the attainment of extraordinary feats, and it can

sometimes be severe as one may end up in therapy, experiencing a change in feelings.

Finally, wealth does bring incredible joy, as you might be able to afford yourself the life of your dreams. You enjoy this earned privilege, but with time, you get addicted to it. Wishing for more, you secretly want to feel the initial excitement. However, that is not possible. We need to make peace with that.

6. Lie 5: I can't be happy when my medical test result is positive

It is always distressing to receive a test result showing that you have contracted a disease or have a condition developing. Medical practitioners try their best to put forward such news so it does not leave the patient hopeless, knowing that such events can turn the lives of many around negatively.

Nevertheless, we are yet to understand that we still have control of our lives in such situations. We are the ones to determine what our lives will look like in the future and also what happens in the present no matter the situation. This simple knowledge can be life-transforming. When such news surfaces, we decide our fate. When one keeps a steady gaze on specific aspects of life, these aspects grow while the others that receive little or no attention fades away.

“How we respond to crisis moments — whether we keep our heads down when we should lift them up, or stay put when we should act — may have cascading effects across our lives.” ~ Sonja Lyubomirsky

When we receive the sad news of failing health, there are two options: to keep thinking about how our lives have fallen apart due to the illness. On the contrary, we can shift the focus to other parts of our lives, such as maintaining a great relationship with loved ones or developing one of our possible talents.

We can train our brains to perceive things differently, both positively and negatively.

The endpoint is when we pay no attention to an issue such as failing health in this case; it is as though with time, that area is not functional or not even in existence in our lives.

How we focus on life determines how life happens right before us. At times, time seems to be racing, and at other times, the globe remains still. The fact is we cannot keep a steady focus on different things at the same time, and this is nature's way of keeping us mentally stable. Our choice, consciously or unconsciously, is to pick what we want to dwell on. This choice later grows and becomes part of us, while other aspects fade away. It has been discovered that Schizophrenia occurs due to a person's lack of ability to select what reactions to concentrate on and the ones to discard.

Did you know? Peculiar to the condition of Schizophrenia is the brain's inability to separate relevant stimuli from irrelevant ones.

7. Lie 6: Getting older makes happiness impossible

We all value our younger years, and many of us tend to regret that they have passed and nothing spectacular awaits us in the future. Some say this weekly, some monthly, and some others, once in a while. The critical question is: can we ascertain the most significant stage of our life? Many try to do this by analyzing their lives from the first moment they can remember themselves to the point they are in now. They critically examine the events that occurred at different times of their lives, and from there, like in a graph in math, they fish out the most remarkable part of their lives. This approach is wrong because individuals are not objective when reviewing the past and making decisions based on history.

Replay happy moments, analyze unhappy ones, learn from them.

It has been discovered that we recall old days more exciting than they were. Many people have already mapped out how they want their lives to run. To achieve this, they eliminate other events that are not in tandem with their ideals though they took place in their lives. You can ascertain this yourself by looking back to the time you would say you had the most extraordinary experience ever. You would realize that there were unwanted events, sad and angry moments, but even within these moments, you should be able to see something beneficial.

What then is the way out? Lyubomirsky suggests two ways of thinking soberly about the past: through endowment effects and contrast effects. The first one helps us look at the past events through a positive lens of how they made our lives better and how we enjoyed them. The latter focuses on comparing these events to the present from the lens that we cannot experience joy again, which ultimately leaves us sad. We don't know the implications of what events will bring in the future. It may have been great in time past, but comparing it to the present state may leave us with loads of sadness and despair.

It would be best if you reflected on the great times of the past. It may leave you sad, considering you won't experience them again or that they differ from your present. You pull out of this by realizing that joy stems from deliberate steps and the work to make your dreams come true.

Conclusion

We tend to concentrate on things that others think would be beneficial for us. Thus, society commands us to wish for more money, better looks, eternal youth, and a perfect family life. Ironically, many people give in to the pressure and set goals they might not even want to have in the first place. Another crucial factor that commands our distorted view of happiness is fear. We are afraid of

getting older, our health gradually weakening, and contracting terminal illness we won't be able to cope with.

First of all, we should always choose what is best for us. Growing up, many of us learn what to want from our parents. They are usually also the ones planning our lives for us. Even if you managed to get into this comfy trap where everything is decided for you, doubt! Question the goals you attained "by default." Secondly, fear is not your enemy. It is a powerful mechanism that signals whatever is going wrong with your life. Use it, don't run away from it.

The different turn of life from what we expect leaves us miserable. Admitting the lies that many believe to be a source of joy is hugely destructive to our souls, leading to dread and uncertainty build-up. Ending life by oneself, which seems to be the height of misery, is possible when one does not understand how to cope with the ultimate despair or loss, leading to the disappearance of all hope in life.

Try this:

Think about whether you have any goals for the near future. It can be 1 or 5 years; the time span does not matter that much. Try to come up with at least one realistic goal you have. Now, let's analyze it. Ask yourself these questions:

- How long have I wanted to do/ get/ be this?
- Why do I want this?
- Was it me who thought it was a good idea to do/ get/ be this?
- How will I benefit from it?
- How likely is it to make me happy?

You can do the same with something you regret in the past.



Emotional First Aid:

Healing Rejection, Guilt, Failure,
and Other Everyday Hurts

Guy Winch, Ph.D.

Read to boost:

- Emotion management
- Self-esteem
- Emotional healing
- Resilience

What's in there for me?

You are familiar with injuries and how to fix them, but what do you do when the pain affects a part of the body you can't put a bandage on? When it's psychological, how do you fix the pain? Guy Winch, Ph.D., introduces readers to a nifty array of quick fixes, a sort of Emotional First Aid for your mental wounds. Emotional First Aid seeks to arm readers with the necessary tools to fix their problems themselves and, hopefully, others too.



Everyone makes mistakes. What differs is how and what we learn from these mistakes.



“We often neglect our psychological wounds until they become severe enough to impair our functioning.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Rejection is a familiar feeling for most, but it cuts deeper, both mentally and physically

Rejection is the feeling of being inadequate and unwanted. It is a frequently experienced feeling in our lives as we grow up. We encounter rejection with job interviews, play dates, puppy crushes, and not getting picked to play sports. And it gets worse as we grow older. We get to face a whole array of rejection as we interact with a much larger pool of people.

Seeing rejection as a possibility helps to alleviate the pain it causes.

Rejection has a great emotional effect on the recipient, eliciting such pain that it causes anger, clouds their judgment, erodes their sense of belonging, and reduces their self-esteem.

Rejection creates four distinct psychological wounds:

Emotional pain. Often it is emotional but manifests as physical pain. Studies have shown that the parts of the brain that register the physical and emotional pain of rejection are the same. Pain dampens logic and reduces the ability to make rational decisions.

Anger and aggression. Rejection incites these emotions, both of which will cause us to lash out at those who have rejected us. Even the sweetest people will exhibit this upon rejection.

Loss of self-esteem. Rejection can damage self-esteem significantly and make the recipient feel unworthy of human connection or love. This translates into a drop in confidence and will go a long way to affect the work ethic and performance of the individual.

A lack of sense of belonging. The pain caused by rejection finds root in our need to belong to a group, a person, an idea, or a philosophy. Once we are rejected, we lose our sense of belonging, which translates into the pain we feel.

To treat rejection and the pain it causes, we must create counter-arguments for the pain we feel. Instead of concluding we are the problem, we must rationalize that the reason for the rejection might be something we had no control over and move on, whether in a relationship, work, social gathering, or otherwise.

Search for explanations to interpret the sting of rejection; it isn't always about you.

2. Loneliness is a strange feeling of being alone even when we are surrounded by family and friends

Loneliness is a feeling of depression resulting from being alone or having no companions. It is the gaping feeling left behind when we are removed from our human connections, or at least the ones we truly desire.

In today's world, we have been granted the power to reach multiple people simultaneously at the click of a button or the swipe of a screen, yet there is an increase in loneliness. Lonely isn't the same as being alone, yet many people live alone—27% of the U.S. population is made of single-person households. There are more cases of lonely people who live with their spouses or with their families.

Loneliness is not dependent on the number of human connections but the subjective quality of these connections. A person may have a solid friendship support system but longs for a romantic relationship. Consequently, they feel lonely despite having friends.

Loneliness isn't about the quantity of human interactions but their subjective quality.

Loneliness leads to suicidal thoughts, clinical depression, hostility, and poor

sleep patterns. It causes high blood pressure and high cholesterol. It also affects immunity due to the release of stress hormones.

Loneliness is contagious. Those who have been in contact with lonely people have been said to develop loneliness themselves. Regardless of this obvious danger, loneliness is mainly ignored today.

The effects of loneliness on mental health are numerous. But there are three primary areas it damages:

Painful misconceptions: When we feel loneliness, we tend to sink into a cycle of introspection, blaming ourselves for getting left out or abandoned.

Self-defeating prophecies: Loneliness also causes us to create false predictions for our futures, ones where we end up being alone, and it's our fault.

Atrophied relationship muscles: Because we have already resolved that the loneliness we feel is our fault, we refuse to engage in any kind of relationship-building efforts.

To treat the psychological wounds caused by loneliness, we must first fight pessimism. Pessimism is a general belief that bad things will happen. In this case, one will end up lonely no matter how hard they try. This mindset must be arrested and remedied.

We must be willing to change our mindset to conquer loneliness.

3. We experience traumatic events in our lifetime, one of the most profound being loss

Trauma is an emotional wound that leads to psychological injury. It is often the effect of a greatly damaging occurrence, maybe even physical, but the aftershock is mainly mental.

Loss can lead to trauma, especially the loss of something or someone very dear to us. Trauma and loss are aptly placed together in this chapter because they share a close bond, one causing the other in an endless cycle of some sort.

Trauma and loss are conjoined twins; to heal from trauma, you must reconcile what was lost.

Trauma from loss has four primary effects:

- Interrupted life: Trauma can hinder one from being able to fit back into society. After recovering from physical trauma and pain, dealing with emotional trauma usually impedes any normalcy for the individual.
- Interrupted identity: Trauma can delete a person's identity and cause them to go through life unaware of who they are and their purpose in life.
- Beliefs interrupted: When experiencing trauma, they lose faith and belief in themselves and sink into depression since they have become unhinged.
- Relationship interrupted: Certain trauma is associated with relationships, especially if the individual has been in many that were heavily traumatizing and have made it impossible to form new ones.

There are steps one must take to treat the psychological wounds caused by loss and trauma. These steps must be deliberate because loss and trauma are much more profound than other emotional wounds.

First, you need to soothe your emotional pains away. This pain you feel resulting from the trauma is both yours to feel and yours to heal. You must be your own therapist and give yourself closure.

If you are traumatized, it would be unfair to heap more emotional strain on yourself; you must learn to heal yourself of the trauma.

Second, recover parts of ourselves we have lost, those parts of our minds that

might have been shut off due to the trauma and pain associated with it.

Finally, we must try our hardest to find meaning in tragedy. It will bring us much-needed closure if we give sense to the tragic things we have experienced.

4. Guilt is the evidence of a functional conscience, but it can linger, grow, and become a weight on your shoulders

Guilt is the feeling of responsibility for wrongdoing—the awareness or feeling of having done wrong. And the aftertaste of doing something wrong is a sign of a conscience in good working condition. Guilt is quite common as we are prone to doing wrongs in our daily endeavors. It can be a weighty thing, causing a sort of heaviness that continues to judge us.

Studies estimate that people experience roughly two hours a day of mild guilt, five hours a week of moderate guilt, and three and a half hours a month of severe guilt. In some cases, guilty feelings persist for years and even decades. Guilt reminds us that we have done something wrong, proof of an active conscience.

Guilt is a moral compass or at least a reminder for when we do the wrong thing.

But when it lingers, guilt can cause grave psychological damage, some of which are detrimental in the long run:

Self-condemnation: Guilt forces you to be overly critical of yourself, often suggesting demeaning opinions on elements of your self-worth. This usually becomes self-loathing and self-condemnation, where the individual constantly bashes themselves and judges their actions or mistakes harshly.

Blocked relationships: Guilt makes connecting to another human being increasingly challenging because the individuals constantly judge and critique themselves. There's no room for friends, family, or lovers in a mind consumed

by guilt.

To treat the psychological wounds inflicted by an unhealthy amount of guilt, you must first approach the situation as you would someone you love and want the best for. When you feel you have wronged someone, practice the act of proper apologies. Don't just glaze over the apology. Make it thoughtful by highlighting everything you think you did wrong and acknowledge the person's hurt feelings.

To avoid the stench of guilt hanging around even after fixing the wrong, you must learn to apologize properly.

It is also important to forgive ourselves; we aren't above hurting and offending ourselves, and we must be ready to forgive ourselves as well. If we cannot forgive ourselves, we won't grow or be free of guilt.

Did you know? The brain doesn't feel pain. Although it's the interpreter of pain, the brain itself does not have pain-sensitive nerves. Only the structures that surround the brain feel pain. Once inside the brain, surgeons can operate on the brain without anesthesia.

5. Deep thinking can be beneficial for our mental health, but letting the thoughts fester can be harmful

Rumination is the act of deep thought or consideration, negative cyclic thinking, persistent and recurrent worrying or brooding. It is normal to be caught up in thought. One way for humans to make sound decisions is reflective thinking. But this can be twisted, changed into something dark that taunts the individual constantly.

Sometimes, we think too long and too deep about the wrong things, and it'll end up damning us.

Rumination is oddly deadly and can cause irreparable damage if left to run unchecked. The offshoot of rumination includes the following:

Exaggerating our misery: When we focus too much on our life's woes, we might, in the process, make a mountain from a molehill.

Anger inflation: This is a condition where every emotional response is inflated or exaggerated. This happens because we spend too much time thinking about it.

Cognitive leak: Ruminating focuses so much energy on random thoughts that it leads to a massive reduction in intellectual resources. When one focuses more energy on meditating, there is little left for any important mental work.

Strained relationships with family and loved ones: Relationships greatly suffer when individuals are lost in the habit of meditating because they would be too obsessed with ruminating and thus unable to make connections.

The first step to treat the psychological wounds of rumination is to change your perspective. Instead of ruminating on negatives, you can try to occupy your mind with positive thoughts. And if that doesn't work, maybe it's time you stopped contemplating altogether and found something to distract yourself from it, permanently.

Put your mind onto more positive thoughts and think more highly of yourself and your situation.

6. Failure haunts even the most assured of minds; so coming to terms with its inevitability is important

Failure is a condition where one does not meet a desirable or intended objective. It leaves a sour taste in our mouths, especially when there was a tangible investment for success.

Failure is quite common but still as damaging due to unfulfilled or unresolved dreams.

Failure makes the most qualified and skilled individuals wallow in self-pity and hinders them from attaining their full potential. It doesn't have to be a colossal failure; it can be little ones piled on top of each other, breaking the will even to try.

Fear of failure is a potent adversary, and even without it lingering around, failure can still pack a punch. Here are some of the psychological effects of failure:

Reduced self-esteem: When one is constantly bombarded with the memories of failure, there is little chance of them having any confidence left.

Passivity and helplessness: Letting failure consume you is not only risky; it's unhealthy as it can cause one to feel helpless and dormant.

Performance pressure: Because the feeling of failure has consumed the individual, they always expect to fail.

To adequately handle the effects of failure, we must first be kind to ourselves, and instead of judging ourselves harshly, we should shore up our confidence and try to learn from these failures.

Everyone makes mistakes. What differs is how and what we learn from these mistakes.

Another way to treat oneself from ills of failures is to focus on the things you can control. It is more profitable to focus on those things that are within our power. And it is advisable to stop worrying or blaming ourselves and focus more on what we can control.

It is also essential that you take responsibility for your failures. We are not perfect beings. We will make mistakes, and we must accept that this isn't our

fault; it is a prompt for us to do better. And as you accept your tendency to make mistakes, you must find ways to distract yourself from the anxiety of performing at optimal levels. Approach each task without feeling like you must accomplish it on your first try, and you'll find peace from the strain of failure.

“We often neglect our psychological wounds until they become severe enough to impair our functioning.” ~ Guy Winch, Ph.D.

7. An eroded sense of self-worth is often the result of continued indulgence in self-destructive thoughts and habits

Low self-esteem results from a continued barrage of rejection, prolonged exposure to loneliness, delayed recovery from loss and trauma, intentionally nurtured guilt, and wanton rumination.

An individual plagued by the feeling of rejection will experience an erosion of self-esteem. It's pretty dangerous to have low self-esteem as it renders even the most talented individuals impotent.

Low self-esteem is likened to a fast car with no fuel in the tank; it can run fast on a good day but not today.

The psychological damage from low self-esteem is much more profound than any else. It feeds into the individual's doubts about themselves and their capabilities and proceeds to wear away whatever semblance of confidence that's left.

Among the wounds inflicted by the presence of low self-esteem, there are the principal wounds:

- Weakened ego: A low self-esteem causes a dip in confidence which translates into a weakened ego. This also means the individual loses their sense of self and suffers a drastic drop in confidence.

- Inability to accept positive remarks: An individual with an eroded sense of self will find it very difficult to take a compliment or positive feedback. This is because they do not feel worthy of either.
- Disempowerment: A low self-esteem can lead to a general feeling of weakness, often manifesting as physical and emotional weakness.

This condition isn't terminal. It can be treated quite easily if one is determined to get better. One way to treat the psychological wounds of low self-esteem is to adopt self-compassion. Don't be so hard on yourself; cut yourself some slack and celebrate your little wins.

Appreciate and celebrate your little wins; they are the building blocks to more successes in the future.

Secondly, instead of focusing on your weaknesses and failures, identify your strengths and affirm them, improving yourself as you go. And lastly, compliments aren't meant to mock you; you must see them as helpful feedback that you truly deserve. You are doing a great job already; don't deny yourself the satisfaction of acknowledging it, especially when others do. Accept it; it'll do you a world of good.

Conclusion

It is no secret that we face many situations that will leave us scarred, damaged, and changed, but we must find a way to heal and move on from them on our own. In the absence of a trained physician, we have to tend to our physical wounds ourselves. That is what we call first-aid—a patch up until professional help can be offered. For every emotional damage addressed in this book, quick fixes are tailored to deal with each one of them. Take charge of your life today. Don't let an emotional wound keep you permanently incapacitated.

The first step to healing from emotional pain is to forgive and go easy on

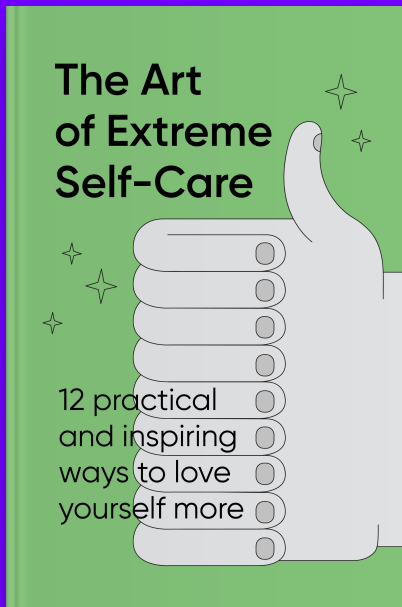
yourself. It is not your fault you got rejected or any other experience that may have left you emotionally down. When we hold on to the feeling that we are undeserving of acceptance, it only rots our self-esteem. You must also be aware that the thoughts you indulge in can either help build your confidence or destroy it.

Guilt is usual if you've misbehaved or committed an offense, but when you let it stew and linger, you are only hurting yourself, physically and emotionally. Emotional pain registers as strongly as physical pain, sometimes causing you to find it challenging to fit in with society. So, it must not be overlooked or taken for granted. You must acknowledge the relationship between your mental and physical health today.

"We skip the voting booth because we don't believe the candidate of our choice can win." ~ Guy Winch Ph.D.

Try this:

Meditation is not easy for everyone as it can be hard to concentrate, but always make time at the end of every day to be calm and still your mind to cleanse it of all the day's worries.



The Art of Extreme Self-Care:

12 Practical & Inspiring Ways to Love Yourself More

Cheryl Richardson

Read to boost:

- Decision-making
- Mindfulness
- Self-care
- Diligence

What's in there for me?

Extreme Self-Care is a handy guide that prompts us to make decisions that reflect the true nature of our soul. It is a life choice that raises our integrity level and helps us become more committed to truth. In this practical and action oriented guide, Cheryl Richardson offers simple strategies to transform your life one month at a time. Each chapter is targeted at altering one behavior, helping you live a trouble-free life.



Awareness is a powerful catalyst for positive change.



“After all, I want to live my life, not rush through it.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Identify the areas of your life that are calling for greater consciousness as this awareness will help you understand what need to change

Overgiving is often a sign of deprivation — a signal that a need isn't being met, an emotion isn't being expressed, or a void isn't getting filled. For example, while you might dedicate hours to coordinating the family's social calendar, you may actually be yearning for deeper and more meaningful connections, stimulating conversation, or greater intimacy with yourself. You might also be available and generous with others because on some level you have an unconscious desire to get what you give, whether it's acknowledgment, affection, recognition, or support.

Becoming aware of how and why you feel deprived is key to recognizing what needs to shift emotionally and physically to achieve Extreme Self-Care.

Consider the following complaints and what they mean:

- When you catch yourself saying things like “I never have time to do what I want to do,” what you're really saying is: “I don't take time for my needs.”
- When you insist, “I always end up doing everything myself,” the truth of what you're really saying is: “I don't ask for help.”
- When you hear yourself complaining, “No one appreciates the things I do,” what you most likely mean is: “I take on way too much, hoping that someone will notice and tell me how good I am or how grateful they are.”

Awareness is a powerful catalyst for positive change.

During the month, whenever you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, burdened, or resentful, stop and ask yourself:

- Where do I feel deprived?
- What do I need more of right now?
- What do I need less of?
- What do I want right now?
- What am I yearning for?
- Who or what is causing me to feel resentful and why?
- What am I starving for?

Then write the answers down. The choices you make either honor your Extreme Self-Care or they leave you feeling deprived. It's really that simple. Your answers to these questions will help you identify the areas of your life that are calling for greater consciousness, an increase in your awareness of what needs to change to keep you from feeling deprived.

Did you know? Becoming aware of how you experience deprivation in your life is critical to making the changes required to achieve optimal wellness and happiness. Keep your inner antenna finely tuned to what you need.

2. Self-love and self-acceptance are foundational elements of extreme self-care

Extreme self-care involves surrounding one's self with people who are smart, self-aware, and interested in two-way relationships. It also means that you are ready to start loving and accepting yourself like never before. It means taking bold steps, such as eliminating clutter from one's life, for good; creating a soul-nourishing work and home environment, and keeping it that way.

Extreme self-care means getting one's financial act together so that one will always have choices about how to live life; and not making any commitments whatsoever out of guilt or obligation.

To practice extreme self-care, you must learn to love yourself unconditionally, accept your imperfections, and embrace your vulnerabilities. Loving yourself more, enables you to treat others with more respect and kindness. It enables you to take care of yourself more and give more love to others. Practice saying to yourself while looking in the mirror 'I love you' and you will realize overtime that it helps you want to take care of yourself more.

To practice the art of extreme self-care, you may need to disappoint others. Most of us don't like to hurt or disappoint others. It's an uncomfortable thing to do. Some common reasons for this are that we don't want to feel guilty, we don't want to disappoint others because we know how bad it feels or we want people to like us, and we feel uncomfortable when they don't.

One of the harsh realities about practicing extreme self-care is that we must learn to manage the guilty feelings that arise when other people are disappointed, angry, or hurt when we decide to break our pattern of self-sacrifice and deprivation.

You need to start saying no, setting limits, and putting boundaries in place to protect our time, energy, and emotional needs.

You need to know how to disappoint the right way. A lot of friends and family who are used to receiving favors from you all the time may find it hard to accept it when you say no, however, you need to be honest, direct, and resolved to take care of yourself. Don't over explain, defend, or invite a debate about how you feel.

Did you know? Preparing people early on for the possibility that you won't be able to help them encourages those who are asking for help to consider other options sooner rather than later.

3. Repetition and rhythm are necessary to practice the art of extreme self-care

Creating routines at work is a very effective way to increase performance and productivity. Scheduling activities such as meetings at the same time each week, uninterrupted work time, or visits with clients, creates a sense of order that gives the mind a much-needed rest.

Setting up regular periods of time when you're not disturbed will give you a chance to get work done without energy-zapping distractions. There's something healing about repetition and rhythm, when you experience this in your everyday life, you feel less overwhelmed but energized, centred and balanced.

Routine adds stability to our lives and helps us feel more secure.

Taking your hands off the wheel and asking for help is necessary to practice extreme self-care. People fail to ask for help for several reasons. Some of which include: Not wanting to appear weak, not wanting to go through the stress of explaining what they need, fear of being disappointed when people don't follow through, fear of being told no, fear of being indebted to anyone and the believe that they can do it faster, cheaper, and better.

We have however forgotten that apart from having enough time to take care of ourselves, when we ask for help, we ease up on our tendency to micromanage others so they feel more valued and respected for their contributions. When we let go of control and allow others to take the wheel, we empower them. We teach them to trust themselves, to become resourceful, and to take greater responsibility for the quality of their own lives.

Life just gets busier and more complicated all the time, and the more you try to do everything yourself, the more exhausted and resentful you'll feel.

Allowing others to help means learning to surrender to the reality that there will be mistakes made, and that things will not always get done our way. That's how people learn and grow. Consequences of attempting to do everything ourselves in an effort to maintain control, includes wounding our most important relationships, becoming critical and overbearing with loved ones, causing them to feel inadequate, frustrated, or incapable of handling even the simplest tasks. Another reason it is necessary to let go is to allow one to enjoy intimacy.

Did you know? If you currently feel that you're not organized or grounded, there's a good chance that the peace of mind you long for lies in your ability to create consistent routines in your life.

4. Creating an Absolute No list will help you raise your standards for what you will and will not tolerate in your life

The idea of "self-care" is not selfish. Practicing the art of extreme self-care requires that we create a list of things we must start saying no to and we must stand strictly by them. The concept of creating a list of absolute no's is important, it serves as a potent reminder of what you no longer do so you can protect your quality of life.

The Absolute No list you create will tell you a lot about yourself. If you can't think of anything, it could mean that you need to put your needs on the front burner. If your list only has two or three items, then it may be time to give more consideration to what needs to change in your life. And if you look at your list and feel good about the rules you live by then it might be time for you to rejoice, you are making progress.

The Absolute No list serves as a potent reminder of what you no longer do so you can protect your quality of life.

Below is an example of an Absolute No list:

I no longer:

- Rush
- Argue with people who see debating as a sport
- Use my credit cards unless I can pay them off in full at the end of the month
- Keep anything in my home that I don't love or need
- Keep my mouth shut when someone is out of line
- Go to events that require hours of idle chit chat
- Tolerate, or participate in, gossip
- Deal with difficult life situations alone.

Extreme self-care means you create spaces that give you inspiration, energy and allows you to express your creativity within a realm of peace and calm. Where you live and work both need to reflect the things that are important to your soul. Your surroundings have a true impact on your life.

A soul-loving environment is a home or office free from clutter and disorganization, a space filled with elements that allow us to be and act our best.

When we live or work in a place that's crammed with too much stuff or devoid of beauty, it drains our energy. We end up feeling depressed, exhausted, and unmotivated. We don't function well, and this can ultimately end up affecting other areas of our lives.

Did you know? In order for your room to be a soul-nourishing space, it needs to be quiet and serene and have clear, clean energy.

5. Sensitivity will put your whole life into perspective, helping you understand yourself in a brand-new way

When we give presence to our sensitivity, we're better able to see beauty everywhere and in everything from flowers to weeds, in joyous experiences, and in the poignantly sad ones as well. We tend to be kind and compassionate people who can easily put ourselves in the shoes of another. These are wonderful gifts to us indeed. We however need to protect our sensitivity, by becoming aware of the people, places, and things that cause us to shut down or numb out.

Sensitivity is about being open and receptive to life. We must avoid anything that tries to take this away from us.

How you can protect your sensitivity

- Step into the moment

Presence ignites sensitivity. It is in the present that we find the richness and meaning we long for. One of the first things we need to do to protect our sensitivity is to pull our attention back to now.

- Stop the violence

Another way to protect your sensitivity is to limit your exposure to all forms of sensational or violent news. Anything that desensitizes you to some aspect of life sets you up to tolerate less than what you deserve hence you must limit them in your life.

"After all, I want to live my life, not rush through it." ~ Cheryl Richardson

- Put limits on toxic people

Anyone who constantly puts you down, chronically complains about how miserable they are without doing anything about it, criticizes you, or sucks your

energy in any way is affecting your ability to remain openhearted and sensitive. It is dangerous to be open and receptive in such a toxic environment.

Taking stock of your health matters while practicing the art of extreme self-care. The foundation of a good life is good health. While the concept of extreme self-care can be applied to all areas of your life, career, spiritual well-being, relationships, and so on, without your health, you have nothing.

Think of your body as a classic automobile — a beautiful Rolls-Royce — and stop for a moment to consider the care this amazing vehicle might need. It's probably high time for a tune-up, so please take the opportunity to check out the different parts of your body that may need your attention.

Did you know? The more you practice tuning into your body, the more you'll respond to its needs in an intelligent way. Your feelings become powerful messengers that direct your actions toward healing. You'll tolerate less stress because you'll catch the symptoms sooner and take action to alleviate the source.

6. The power of restraint will keep your self-respect intact

Many times, we get angry and find it difficult to control our anger. However, it is necessary and important that we learn restraint if we are going to be practicing the art of extreme self-care. We must practice extreme self-care by expressing our anger responsibly. Few things we can do to ensure that we manage our anger so that we can protect our relationship with our self and others are:

- Close your eyes and breathe: By closing your eyes and taking several slow, deep breaths you will immediately cause your brain to calm down.

- Find a safe person to vent to about the situation: Be sure to choose someone who can listen well and allow you to process your feelings. Don't choose someone who simply fuels the drama by egging you on with his or her opinions of how you've been wronged.
- Get more information: Before you confront the other person, ask questions. For example, if an email caused your anger, ask the sender what he or she intended to communicate.

We all get our buttons pushed. It's just a part of life. But the growth lies in our ability to make better choices.

Finding your passion is key as you embark on the journey of extreme self-care. Many of us lose sight of the things that make us truly happy. Our interests and desires get put to sleep as we do our best to get through the stress of daily living. One of the great benefits of practicing Extreme Self-Care is that it starts to afford us the time, space, and energy to devote to the things we feel passionate about — those dreams or aspirations that may have been lost over the years. The challenge is knowing where to look for them when we finally come out from under our busy lives.

What parts of you are longing to be met and expressed? Start with what you love to see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. Maybe your love of essential oils is trying to lead you down the path of making your own custom blends. Whether you sell them or not doesn't matter — it's the interest and the desire that needs to be honored.

7. When you feel scared, unsteady, and desperate to find a way back to center, you need an Extreme Self-Care First-Aid Kit

An extreme self-care first-aid Kit is a well-prepared plan of action put in place before you need to use it. It consists of things you can do on a physical,

emotional, and spiritual level that will give you comfort, connection, and a feeling of steadiness while navigating the rough waters of a crisis. When faced with a difficult period, what matters most is that you return to the behaviours and practices that reflect Extreme self-care as quickly as possible.

The Extreme Self-Care First-Aid Kit consists of 10 ways to take good care of yourself when you need the most support. To create your kit, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who can I turn to for support when I'm afraid? Who comforts me, makes me feel safe, and allows me to have my feelings?
- Who do I need to avoid? Who adds to my anxiety level?
- What does my body need to feel nurtured, strong, and healthy?
- What responsibilities or commitments do I need to let go of to clear some space
- What unhelpful coping strategies or activities do I need to avoid?
- What spiritual practice restores my faith or connects me with God
- What do I need to feel comforted at this time?
- How will I best express my feelings?
- What object can I use that will remind me to breathe, relax my thinking mind, and return my awareness to the present moment?
- What can I do when I need to take a break from the emotional stress? What's my best healthy distraction?

The answers to these questions will help you formulate a plan of action that you can use when faced with big life challenges.

Conclusion

Congratulations! You've completed an important life-training program and you now have the skills you need to honour your deepest needs and desires. These new, healthy habits will carry you through life's inevitable ups and downs with more ease, clarity, and inner strength.

Over the course of this summary, you've learned to stop depriving yourself of what you need. You're no longer willing to tolerate unhealthy relationships, draining environments, and a lack of support from others.

These new standards will serve you well. That said, please remember that you'll most likely forget what you've learned in this book when life gets challenging. And it will. The first thing you'll want to do when faced with a difficult situation is go directly to your Extreme Self-Care First-Aid Kit — the one you developed in Chapter 7. This kit will remind you of where you'll find the right support and what you'll need to do to get centred so you can take good care of yourself during a difficult experience.

Try this:

Get the Care You Deserve

- Have you had a manicure or a pedicure lately?
- How about a facial?
- Is it time for a mammogram, thermogram, or prostate screening?
- Have you had a complete physical in the last year?
- When was the last time you had an eye exam?
- Is a trip to the dentist in order?

- How's your back? Have you been intending to see a chiropractor or make an appointment with a massage therapist?

These are just some examples of the basic body-care areas that, when handled, go a long way in supporting your emotional and physical wellbeing.



Brain Wash:

Detox Your Mind for Clearer Thinking, Deeper Relationships, and Lasting Happiness

David Perlmutter M.D.,
Austin Perlmutter M.D.

Read to boost:

- Critical thinking
- Life satisfaction
- Wellness
- Self-awareness

What's in there for me?

Authors Dr. David Perlmutter, neurologist and Dr. Austin Perlmutter, internal medicine, have provided a simplified guide to living a healthful, happy, and fulfilling lifestyle. There are several subtle ways the contemporary world manipulates and influences our everyday choices. However, having knowledge of such trends will make it possible to break loose from world propaganda, helping us to make decisions that work best for our wellbeing.



A reset of your brain and body will help you reclaim your health and joy by giving back control over your thinking, decision making, and behavior.



“We can change the expression of more than 70 percent of the genes that have a direct bearing on our health and longevity.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. There's more to a happy life than chasing shadows

Struggles, disappointments, and challenges are inevitable, but you have close-to-absolute control over what you make of life in the long run. In this summary, the guidelines to be set forth are steps to rebirth and are not a surefire shortcut to happiness. However, when utilized dynamically, a healthful, fulfilling, and by implication, successful life is assured.

Brain Wash is the materialization of a father and son's collective passion. That is, finding the factors behind the evasiveness of health and happiness in the 21st century. Significant contributors like social media, digital gadgets, processed food have a tremendous effect on our lifestyle than we admit. Our individual lives, in turn, affect our family, society, and even our environment's sustainability.

Far from conspiracy theories, we shall be shedding light on how the modern world subtly manipulates our daily choices. And it all boils down to how our brains function and responds to external stimuli or arousal.

A personal self-tutelage of the brain's functionality will help you realize the addictive pathways that influencers of our choices utilize.

It's time to break loose from the labyrinth of influence that the modern world wields over your life choices. Breaking loose from the fast-paced digital life propaganda, on-the-go meals, and no-sleep binges will unveil a new possibility of a long and healthful life.

For example, the Internet attracts a large following due to the "supposed" incentive for more social connections. Naturally, this, in effect, should create a happier life, with whatever we need being at the reach of a "click." Unfortunately, the reverse has primarily been the case. Loneliness, depression, and suicide have been on the rise, despite the unfettered access people now have to a global network of digital friends and resources.

The industrial revolution, particularly in the agricultural and food processing industries, has led to the churning out of foods that make health bills pile up. Nonetheless, “Brain Wash” is not all about “crying foul” concerning the state of things. We shall be examining the recommendations of the Perlmutter on getting out of this modern rot.

2. How the brain influences your thoughts and decisions

There is a strong synergy of casual events that unconsciously charts the course of human lives in the 21st century. Events as casual as our sleep, food, TV watching habits are influenced by the pop culture invading our daily lives. Gone are the days when amusements are localized in theaters, circuses, and parks. These days, you don’t need a long drive on a highway to see advertisement billboards. We now carry devices that place the world at the tip of our fingers, in our jacket pockets.

Through continuous exposure to advertisements, you are being reminded thousands of times a day that instant gratification is the way to happiness.

A combination of Internet, TV, and sports commercials tend to influence what we purchase and how often we do. These media have been engineered by experts who know what makes the brain tick. Invariably, the implication of using whatever is peddled does not raise the dust with the potential buyer. After viewing the average modern commercial, you’re left with a thirst for instant gratification.

Every other TV commercial publicizes a product which the manufacturer claims to be just the thing everyone needs for a happy life.

Now, disconnection syndrome is the illusion of happiness created by companies. These illusions are often psychological coercion to make you patronize their product or services.

The food you eat and the beverages you drink change your emotions, thoughts, and how you perceive the world.

There are two key decision-making centers in the brain of the modern human. They are the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. These two, and many other parts of the brain are connected by neurons and chemicals called neurotransmitters. The amygdala handles activities related to impulsivity, emotion, and rewards. However, the prefrontal cortex is the center of judgment, as it gauges and checks the amygdala activities.

The amygdala is the predominant influencer of decisions in lower animals. Unsurprisingly, which is why lower animals cannot almost check their appetites for food and sex. Humans may suffer a similar predicament if exposed to chronic stress, lack of sleep, or a chemical alteration in the brain. Such alterations could rob the prefrontal cortex of its decision-making responsibilities and handover the helms to the amygdala.

A bad diet, not enough restorative sleep, or unrelenting stress, individually, can be devastating to the brain.

When the amygdala has precedence over the prefrontal cortex, then there are several tendencies of addiction. These portions of the human brain have not always retained their present structure and function.

All said, your health is a function of how well you've been able to connect with your true self, other humans, and the environment. The secret hack to this is paying close attention to the subtle channels through which the modern world assays to hijack our brains.

Did you know? Organizations cash in on your daily thoughts and decisions because they are valuable — they translate into corporate profit.

3. Feeding your psychological reward system may be doing more harm than good

Lisa is a child with curiosity levels that far surpass those of adolescents her age. She leaned casually over the barn fence as she watched Craig, her teenage brother, lure some turkeys with grains. Thanksgiving was around the corner, and the farm will be playing host to several guests. Back in the kitchen, Lisa gave her mother some severe drill about why turkeys are so gullible. “Aren’t turkeys aware they’ll eventually die? If I were them, I’d run away and forget the grains,” she remarked.

Luckily, humans are not as susceptible as turkeys. We have highly complex and advanced judgment abilities that help us await delayed gratification. Unlike lower animals, we know just when to put our appetites for pleasure in check—mainly when it’s at the peril of health or life itself. However, though many homo sapiens may feel ashamed to admit it, studies reveal this quality is a downward spiral.

Obesity, social media addiction, insomnia, and other modern society plagues are not necessarily their human victims' fault.

Things that bring pleasure to the average man have undergone a severe morph since the last century. The reward pathway of the brain provides the human body with moments of enjoyment. These moments are made possible through the arousal of the senses and exposure to pleasurable stimuli. However, with new revelations of how the brain works, the human reward system has become broadly commercialized.

From staple foods to music videos and children’s toys, manufacturers peddle every product using the brain exploitation strategy. So, when we prolong the appetite for things that offer instant gratification, we leave the prefrontal cortex at the whims of the amygdala. Remember that the amygdala is the center of compulsion, compared to the prefrontal cortex’s reflection. So, the brain’s

chemical changes, caused by perpetual instant gratification, are likely to cause addictions.

In a healthy human, the prefrontal cortex is larger than the amygdala. This variation is because the prefrontal cortex has more neural connections and surface area than its counterpart. But when we start indulging in activities that cause chronic stress and impulsivity, our amygdala receives decision-making precedence. In this context, impulsive actions include online shopping, binge eating, social media abuse, keeping up with negative news, etc.

Surprisingly, research establishes it as unadvisable to use our brains to make decisions in an unbridled and impulsive fashion. Of course, it's not as if these activities are explicitly conscious. But, armed with the right knowledge, we can coordinate them right, through mindfulness.

We are in the Information Age, and technology has come to claim its fair share of the disconnection syndrome pie. At the onset, technological gadgets made our lives easier and better. But in recent years, technology seems to have attained its point of diminishing returns. To understand the paradox, we'll need to examine the many addictions that now plague humans, thanks to technology.

The average teenager with a smartphone interacts more with personalities across the globe than with their family. Virtual friends cannot entirely replace real ones. Hence, loneliness and depression have become commonplace in today's society. This work is not out to witch-hunt technological advancements. But balancing out social media usage, for example, should take you off the radar of addictive tendencies. To protect your reward system from getting addicted to other people's reactions to your social media activities, try out the TIME tool. Make your use of social media Time-restricted, Intentional, Mindful, and Enriching.

4. The empathic haul towards a better brain

It's Tuesday morning in downtown New York. Frank resides in the suburbs of the city and comes in on the subway every day. He notices a sluggish figure trying to cross the road with just some blocks to cover before arriving at work. Paying a little more attention, it turns out to be an older woman on crutches.

Everyone rushed by, and some even slightly nudged the woman in the process of passing by her. Frank is a nice person, but he straightens his head and walks by, brushing off the thought of assisting some random older adult.

Classical literature often uses the words "heart" and "mind" interchangeably. People, forthwith, call empathic individuals "large-hearted." But we are all aware of the physiologically negative implications of that term when taken literally.

Having a "large heart" means to possess exceptional attributes of compassion and selflessness in reality. In fact, large-hearted individuals have a good grasp of their prefrontal cortex in light of the preceding. Thus, being able to put the repeated impulsiveness of the amygdala in check.

You'll discover that the recent craze for materialism has brought about an all-time societal high in selfishness. TV sitcoms, commercials, video games, and some work environments teach people to be narcissists. Even the kiddies shows reek of narcissism. Parents have arrived at that point, where they may have to screen shows in the kid's category before granting view access to their children.

High levels of empathy are associated with life satisfaction, rich social networks, healthy relationships, heightened workplace performance, and greater overall wellbeing.

Furthermore, studies indicate that both the initiators and receivers of empathic acts potentially benefit from them. A clinical study assessed the recovery of

sick patients in hospital wards due to their physician's empathy. Empirical observations show patients that receive compassionate attention as recovering faster than those their physicians visit casually during ward rounds.

5. The smell of dust at the first splatter of rain

Do you notice your toddlers gravitating more towards nature when in the outdoors? For example, you may find them more likely to play with dirt or play by a pond. No worries; your child is not exhibiting primitive traits or being uncultured. On the contrary, you have observed the child yielding to the instinct, calling it to interact with nature.

The last time you went for a walk, in “the greens,” say a garden or park, what were the first things you noticed? Probably the fresh air, correct. The aroma of flowering plants, dead leaves decay, and leaves rustle as the wind goes by. But, the sense that first registers the outdoors and your environment is your nose.

“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home. Wilderness is a necessity.”

~ John Muir

Research has found that a simple pot of flower in hospital wards considerably aids patients' recovery rates. And more surprisingly, similar studies discovered that the symbol of nature does not have to be real to affect the patients. Even a scenic painting of the outdoors—garden, trees, or the ocean, can have a similar effect on people.

Nature heals, and you may have to recourse to it often; for optimal health.

Long story short, we need to reconnect with nature. The architecture of the places we frequent—office, school, mall, even our cities, should incorporate

nature. Nature refreshes us psychologically and affords a healthier and happier life.

6. Sleep and diet, the healthful cohort

Before hacking down on yourself for the inability to practice a healthful lifestyle, you should look at the façade from another perspective. The problem is more of your being primed to find it difficult to detach from the unhealthy diets. Such unhealthy diets are addictive due to the subtly harmful substances introduced to our daily consumables. Some of the additives added to food in the United States are color dyes, preservatives, and sweeteners (mostly high-fructose corn syrup).

The agricultural revolution brought us this far. The United States produces more corn syrup annually than it could consume. The implication? It becomes available for any food processor who cares for some. You have sweetened meat, sweetened corn, sweetened drinks—sweetened!—the selling point of any edible that sells today.

The importance of food goes well beyond its nutrient content. Moment to moment, our food choices allow each of us to control our gene expression.

Unfortunately, sweet foods can be quite addictive. So, we subconsciously keep reaching out for more. Anxious, depressed, or just feeling stressed out, what Americans reach for in the refrigerator tells how unconcerned we could be about healthful living. The high-carb diets are on the mall shelves, asking us to be their guests. They are cheap, affordable, and ubiquitous.

But as more and more people indulge in sweet, highly processed, and instantly gratifying food, life expectancy shortens, waistlines enlarging, gym subscriptions are at an all-time high, national medical budget is unfathomable. All these being a product of our unhealthy and monotonous diets.

During the coronavirus lockdown, mid-2020, several corporate farmers in the United States had to bury several truckloads of potatoes. They also gave out the little they could, however, incomparable to what went to waste. That was several pounds of carb that would have made French fries and other not-so-healthy meals.

Advertisements that target children do not help matters. According to research conducted at Dartmouth College, “TV ads for high-sugar breakfast cereals directed at children increased the number of cereal children ate.” If the kid on Nickelodeon is eating it, it has to be right; so thinks junior.

It is high time we stepped back from the processed and genetically modified foods we consume today. A healthful diet resonates with our brains. It makes us less anxious, well-rounded, and psychologically balanced.

Besides diet, sleep deprivation also has a massive contribution to how our brain functions. When we have the prescribed eight hours of sleep, our biological clock gets to calibrate appropriately at sundown. That’s also the perfect time for our brain to self-heal and self-detox. The brain gets to sort the barrage of memories gathered during the day, and the useful ones are retained.

More than half of the world population stares at some digital screen for at least two hours daily in our modern world. The blue-light syndrome may be the cause of more insomnia cases than we can imagine. Your smartphone, laptop, TV, and recent technologies emit blue light that alters your sleep pattern.

7. Feel better by moving and keeping still

Circumspection is critical in the things we do and choose not to do.

Starting today, make it a point to casually observe the thoroughfare on the residential streets in your vicinity. And it may surprise you to notice that a sizable number of people have started snapping out of the trend of inactivity.

Senior citizens stroll on weekends to break their one-mile trek record from the previous week. What other motivation are you expecting? Get off that couch! Don't wait till the few pounds you gained during the lockdown explode to fifty. You may start small, but by all means, get active today.

Reconnecting with nature and watching your diet alone won't pull the trick. It is expedient to get active. You can choose to subscribe to a gym or buy a home kit. However, being accountable to someone will help you keep fit. You're not active to keep abs or merely lose some flesh. You find that your mood improves when you exercise regularly. Studies show that exercise works well as an antidepressant.

On the other hand, "quiet" also has a role to play in healthful living. Away from the noise, the bustle, and grinding of everyday life, we ought to occasionally seek out some quiet. You need to decongest your brain and allow it some time of reflective rest.

Silence is a great healer. It helps reprogram our brains for wellbeing, empathy, and gratitude.

Such periods of quiet allow you to cultivate mindfulness or, as we commonly call it: meditation. Moments of quiet peculiar to yoga and other meditation forms slow your heart, relax your muscles, and decrease blood pressure.

Did you know? The average American adult does not get even thirty minutes of physical activity; the recommendation is sixty.

8. A structured path to recovery

The Perlmutter's are well aware of how the brain may play tricks on you and prove elusive, particularly when you're trying to make changes to addictive habits. The duo suggests a 10-day guideline to follow for a total rebirth if you find yourself lacking in willpower.

A reset of your brain and body will help you reclaim your health and joy by giving back control over your thinking, decision making, and behavior.

The ten days will have you work on your digital interactions, empathy, nature exposure, diet, sleep, exercise, meditation, and relationships.

“The secret of getting ahead is getting started.” ~ Attributed to Mark Twain

To avoid making an unrealistic commitment, while actualizing the 10-day plan, you need to follow three ground rules.

Be Honest: It's pointless to tell your family about the new diet you just started, if you'll secretly steal away to McDonald's, occasionally. Decide to be truthful. It won't be easy. But, think about the reward of a healthful brain, body, and life.

Commit: The ten-day plan does not offer an overnight solution to your unhealthy habits. Hence, register it in your mind that this is going to be a long haul. Prepare your mind, and commit to the journey.

Find what works: The Ten-Day Brain Wash plan is largely generalized, because it applies to a large spectrum of readers. So, try to be dynamic, and make modifications that work best for you.

Conclusion

It may surprise you that individuals like Adolf Hitler, Elon Musk, and the Dalai Lama share similar cravings as yourself. In the deep recesses of their heart, all humans pant after happiness, success, and a sense of belonging. But there's always a means to follow before attaining our ends.

First, the anxiety, pessimism, lack of empathy, and unhealthy addictions of the present age have to be eliminated. We need to reconnect with ourselves, friends, family, and the world. After reconnecting to your true self. It is essential

to lay hands on the reins of life and pattern it appropriately. No more should the tides of modern society dictate the destination of your life.

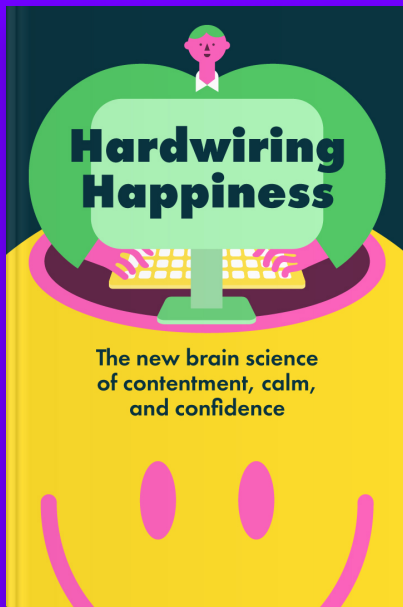
In light of the roadblocks posed by the modern world, here are some things we'll need to put in check in ourselves:

- Disconnection through abuse of technology
- Pervasiveness of narcissism
- Aversions for nature
- Unhealthy diets and eating habits
- Indulging in sleepless nights
- Compounding calories through inactivity
- Sheepishly following World trends

Determine how happy you want to be, and go for it. Choose a healthy life and work actively towards it. And most importantly, help others around you see the possibility of living a fulfilled life without going with the world's disconnection syndrome.

Try this:

Never lose yourself; build the mansions of fulfillment on foundations of healthful living. Discard the propagandas of the world, and live in unity with yourself. Foster healthy relationships with people around you and your environment.



Hardwiring Happiness:

The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm, and Confidence

Rick Hanson

Read to boost:

- Stress-relief
- Self-discipline
- Mindset
- Optimism

What's in there for me?

Rick Hanson is a clinical psychologist who teaches simple strategies to override the brain's default to negativity. As he claims, neuroscience and contemplative techniques can teach our brains to use the good experiences of life to sustain us through life. We can regain control of our mental processes so that we can deploy positive emotions in our lives.



As you plant and nurture positive thoughts, you begin to change the structure of your brain from negative bias to positive bias.



“The more actively and bodily we engage positive experiences, the greater their impacts.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Pay attention to the positive moments you experience daily to give them lasting value

Most of us go from one day to another, trying to surmount different obstacles. These obstacles can be overwhelming, so that we are unable to notice the positive experiences. By default, our brains diminish the positives and exaggerate the negatives.

In this summary, you will learn why and how to tap into the power of positive experiences to transform the quality of life you live. Good moments can help develop a great brain that is confident, comfortable, relaxed, and values itself. These moments are not expensive to experience. They are everyday activities like having a cup of coffee, feeling satisfaction after doing a chore, or enjoying the kindness someone significant shows to you.

The methods discussed in this summary are not another program for generating positive experiences. These strategies focus on turning the fleeting pleasurable moments you already experience into tools to improve the quality of your neural network.

To be well, to cope with stress, and to succeed, we need inner strengths hidden in our brain structure.

Our ancestors tapped into their inner strength, but their primary objective for doing so was to escape danger. Consequently, humanity developed the negativity bias. This bias makes negative experiences stick in our brains while the positive ones pass without notice. As you develop your brain, you will uncover the positive experiences that can meet your needs for safety, satisfaction, and connection. Over time, you will no longer depend on external circumstances to experience wellness.

Building inner strengths, contentment, and love enables you to stay unperturbed through life's situations.

Of all the parts of your body, the state of your brain is the most important. It controls what you think, feel, and do. Neuroscientific studies reveal that your experiences have the power to change your brain. Now, it is up to you to control the process and stop being a victim of circumstances.

Using the acronym HEAL, Rick Hanson suggests that you can take four steps to become good at channeling your positive experiences to build a great brain. HEAL stands for:

- Have a positive experience
- Enrich it
- Absorb it
- Link positive and negative experiences to replace the negative with the positive

“Taking in the good helps you see the good in yourself, and in the world and other people.” ~ Rick Hanson

2. Hardwiring happiness means using your positive experiences to build inner strengths

Peace, contentment, resilience, confidence, determination, insight, and love are seven inner strengths that a person must possess. With this core, you can deal with life’s difficulties such as healing from old pain, recovering from a stressful life, maintaining your well-being, achieving your goals in your professional and personal life, showing care toward others, and being patient with difficult people.

It takes time and skill to develop these inner strengths. The goal of this summary is to show you how you can use your highs to develop inner strengths. You need to pay close attention to what’s going on in your mind. Locate the positive thoughts you have and magnify those thoughts. Think of

your mind as a fertile uncultivated field. If left uncultivated, weeds and unwanted plants will grow on it. However, if you want flowers in your field, you need to plant them there intentionally.

As you plant and nurture positive thoughts, you begin to change the structure of your brain from negative bias to positive bias.

When a mental activity takes place, a neural connection is established. When we repeat a mental activity, it strengthens the neural connection. This type of strengthening is called experience-dependent neuroplasticity.

You can use your mind to change your brain to change your mind for the better.

When you seek to develop these inner strengths, the best way is to experience them. These experiences become signals that you can amplify in your brain. Think of a good mental state as software that you need to install into your brain. Once installed, you can use your mind to launch the happiness app from time to time.

Did you know? There are 80 to 100 billion neurons in your brain signaling one another in a network of about half a quadrillion connections called synapses.

3. It is the underlying structures and processes of the brain that produces our experiences

The modern brain is a product of 600 million years of evolution. You have in your brain the strategies for survival developed by ancient primates and humans. The problem is that most of these ancestors developed a special alertness to danger that enabled them to survive. Those who didn't develop this capacity were killed by wild animals. The genes of the survivors are what run through your body today. That's why you tend to look for bad news and react to it with intensity. Your brain focuses on the bad news or bad experience.

This experience is stored in a neural structure that forms the baseline for whatever you do. While you may experience happiness, you have developed a negativity bias which makes you vulnerable to stress, anxiety, disappointment, and hurt.

Fear makes us overestimate threats and underestimate opportunities and resources.

Negative experiences trigger the brain to be on the lookout for the negative. This alertness produces more negative experiences that go on in a vicious circle of negativity. We need to become intentional about paying attention to inner strengths such as happiness and resilience to be able to store positive experiences in our brains. With our current brain structure, positive experiences do not get stored until we choose to install them.

“The brain is like Velcro for negative experiences but Teflon for positive ones.”
~ Rick Hanson

Negativity bias may be helpful for survival, but it cannot help you thrive. Good life, healthy relationships, personal growth, and long, healthy living are possible only by regularly taking in the good and storing it in our neural network.

How much you gain psychologically each day will determine the rate of conversion of positive mental states to positive neural traits. Ask yourself daily what you're grateful for and savor every moment of gratitude you feel. Doing this will compensate for the two tendencies of negativity bias — increasing the negative and decreasing the positive. As you turn up the volume on the positives in your life, it will counterbalance the negative and eventually supplant it.

4. The evolution of the brain shows that we have three basic operating systems with two settings

The operating systems represent the three stages of development of our brains. From the brainstem to the subcortex and the cortex, our brains evolved into what they have now become. Think of these stages as the floors of a 3-story building. The subcortex rests on the brain stem that emerges from the top of the spinal cord. The cortex is responsible for abstract reasoning and represents the outer shell or superstructure of the brain. While the subcortex handles emotion, connection, and motivation, the cortex deals with memory, ambition, empathy, cooperation, planning, and language. Simultaneously, we developed the autonomic nervous system with the vagus nerve. The autonomic nervous system has two wings: parasympathetic and sympathetic. These two wings work in a complementary fashion. The sympathetic enables the pursuit of opportunities and fighting or fleeing in response to threats, while the parasympathetic promotes withdrawal or freezing in a threatening situation. The parasympathetic inhibits or calms while the sympathetic energizes or excites.

In simple terms, we have the green brain and the red brain.

The green brain is responsive, while the red brain is reactive. When we are in green mode, our brain works to build us up, and while in red mode, all building projects are suspended. The ancients spent more time in green mode and triggered red mode only when the situation demanded it. Today, we are mostly in red mode because of the stress and anxiety that modern life brings.

“As the brain evolved, so did its capabilities to meet our three core needs — safety, satisfaction, and connection — through, respectively, three ‘operating systems’ that avoid harms, approach rewards, and attach to others.”

~ Rick Hanson

We employ these systems in our daily lives. Imagine meeting a friend for dinner. While driving to the restaurant, you avoid running a red light. When you get there, you approach the reward of something good to eat, and talking with your friend satisfies your need for connection.

5. The brain stem, subcortex, and cortex can switch between responsive and reactive modes

Each of these operating systems can switch between two settings: responsive and reactive settings. When your brain is not disturbed by threat, loss, or rejection, you're in responsive mode. In this mode, you can meet challenges without them becoming stressors; your parasympathetic nervous system (PNS) initiates and maintains a homeostatic condition. A moderate to high PNS means that your heart rate is slower, your blood pressure is lower, digestion is easier, and your body, brain, and mind replenish. We can activate the energy and excitement of the sympathetic nervous system in the responsive mode.

We become playful, curious, and creative when we feel safe, satisfied, and connected.

In the responsive mode, your emotions are positive. You pursue your goals with enthusiasm and optimism, you stand up to injustice, live with passion, make love, spend time with friends, cheer your children on, assert yourself, and are strong. You have no fundamental sense of deficit or disturbance, even though things may not be great. You are in your essence — your natural home base.

The reverse is the case for the reactive mode. This mode is the red setting of your brain. In this mode, you enter into an allostatic state where your long-term needs are suspended for urgent demands. You enter this state when you are disturbed by threat, loss, or rejection. Adrenaline and cortisol will course

through your blood, and your mind will experience fear, frustration, and heartache. The negativity bias will strengthen the storage of the negative experience in your memory.

By design, this red mode is necessary, although infrequent, brief, and moderate. However, modern life has violated this design. With the influx of information, multi-tasking, working for long hours, and attending to many urgent tasks, there is hardly time for responsive recovery.

“In effect, one of the brain’s major design features for passing on genes is now a design flaw, a ‘bug,’ in the twenty-first century.” ~ Rick Hanson

What you can do is to use your mind to change your brain. As humans, we have a unique ability to sustain states of mind unrelated to our immediate environment.

6. We can choose to switch from negativity bias to responsivity bias

The five basic features of negativity bias are:

- Reacting in the face of challenging situations.
- Having a sense of dissatisfaction, disconnection, and uneasiness even when things are fine.
- Over-learning from bad experiences.
- Becoming quick to switch to reactive mode.
- Being slow to return to responsive mode even when conditions have returned to normalcy.

To turn your brain to a responsivity bias, you need to:

- Use repeated positive experiences to build inner strengths so that you can face life’s challenges without fear, frustration, or heartache.

- Take in the good to remind yourself that you are basically all right, worthy, and cared for. Focusing on the good shows you reason for gratitude and gladness.
- Amplify your positive experiences so that there is no room for negative experiences in your mind, much less entering your brain.
- Teach your brain to look for the positives and become a Velcro for good.
- Initiate your recovery from reactive mode by taking in the good.

Developing a responsivity bias does not mean you won't get into reactive mode. Instead, it helps you return easily to your center after you've been stretched by the reactive experience.

Even if one of your operating systems is in red mode, the other two can be in green mode. You may be worried about a debt you owe (avoiding) while also being grateful that you have a job (approaching) and feel support from your spouse (attaching). By learning to exhale slowly, savoring a physical pleasure, remembering a time you felt strong, thinking about someone who cares about you, and feeling loving yourself, you can switch from red to green.

“Peace, contentment, and love are important aims for most people. These are the rewards...of a good life. Every time you take in the sense of feeling safe, satisfied, or connected, you stimulate responsive circuits in your brain.”

~ Rick Hanson

Your brain wants to be in a responsive mode because it functions well in that mode. The responsive mode is the foundation of psychological healing, well-being and effectiveness, long-term health, fulfilling relationships, and the highest reaches of the human potential.

Going red feels bad emotionally, shifts perspectives negatively, and impairs learning.

It makes you dream small dreams and self-medicate with drugs, alcohol, or overeating. It takes up the resources that should have been invested in personal growth, pleasure, and ease. Reactive experiences can be risk factors for depression and other mental issues. For example, PTSD is related to the avoiding system. Substance abuse is related to the approaching system. Borderline personality disorder is related to the attaching system.

Did you know? The gradual accumulation of reactive experiences in your body is called allostatic load. It increases inflammation, weakens your immune system, and wears on your cardiovascular system.

7. To take in the good is to be intentional about internalizing positive experiences in implicit memory

The 4-step procedure to do this is captured in the acronym HEAL — Have a positive experience. Enrich it. Absorb it. Link positive and negative material. The first step initiates the process, while the next three steps ensure the positive experience is stored in your brain.

Most of us have positive experiences and really enjoy them. However, it takes learning and practice to saturate our brains with these experiences. If you have six brief positive experiences in a day and choose to savor them, they will add up to something big for you. You can choose to savor these experiences at the close of each day or in the course of your daily activities.

For situations involving the avoiding, approaching, and attaching systems of your brain, you can create key experiences that relate to each system using the HEAL steps.

These seemingly ordinary experiences you create have hidden power. They can build resilience, heal distress and dysfunction, improve relationships, promote physical health, and grow durable happiness.

Some of these positive experiences already exist. You simply need to notice them. Some of these experiences are in the background of your awareness, and you need to bring them to the foreground, where you can notice them and enrich them.

To notice a positive experience is to be aware of the thoughts it brings to mind. What are the images, perspectives, expectations, plans, and memories that this experience brings to you? Also, a positive experience can contain a sense perception, an emotion, a desire, or an action. A sensory perception includes pleasure, relaxation, vitality, and strength. Desires relate to your hopes, morals, intentions, and wants, while actions speak to your inclinations and skills.

The awareness of these positive experiences is a positive experience because awareness is peaceful and not tainted by what passes through it.

The ability to call up inner strengths at will is vital to coping, well-being, and everyday effectiveness. Calling up inner strengths means you can create positive experiences. After a while, these positive experiences will become automatic and activate on their own.

Good facts are a potential basis for positive experiences.

A good fact can be anything in your present or past life. It can be personal qualities you possess, the lives of others, imagining the future, finding the good in the bad, imagining things that can be and can't be, and caring for others. Seeing life as an opportunity is another source of good experience.

8. You can turn a good mental state into good neural traits by enriching and absorbing positive experiences

A fleeting mental event can become a lasting neural structure when it is heightened by five major factors, namely:

- Duration
- Intensity
- Multimodality
- Novelty
- Personal relevance

Each of these factors is directly proportional to the retention of the positive experience in the memory.

Staying with a good experience a little longer and giving your mind over to it in a positive way will strengthen the memory of it. If you find your mind wandering, you can bring it back by recreating the stimulus for the experience.

To intensify a positive experience, you need to raise your awareness of it by paying attention to how it feels on your body and its effect on your mind.

Multimodality refers to an awareness of the different aspects of an experience. For example, you can weave feelings like love or peace into a moment when you are thinking of a friend's good qualities or carrying out an exercise as simple as getting a sense of breathing as the whole body.

“The more actively and bodily we engage positive experiences, the greater their impacts.” ~ Rick Hanson

Find something new in the positive experiences you have, especially if these experiences are commonplace. It could be registering how good it feels to hug someone you love or exploring how a few breaths feel in the belly, chest, diaphragm, and throat.

Practice relevance-seeking! How does an experience help you, and why is it valuable to you? Saying something like “This applies to me because...” can help you identify the personal relevance of a good experience.

The third step of the HEAL process is to absorb a good experience. Taking in the good is like making a fire. You need to light it, keep it going by adding fuel

to it and let it fill you with its warmth. This warmth you feel comes from keeping the fire going. Similarly, absorbing a good experience is possible because you enrich it.

Each person employs different methods to absorb a good experience. The important thing is to have the willingness and courage to be changed, no matter how little, by the positive experience.

By routinely giving yourself a basic sense of peace, contentment, and love, you will find that you're returning to the responsive mode and deepening its neural traces.

Did you know? Studies show that leaning toward a reward increases the brain's response to it. Your facial expressions, posture, and even whether you open or close your hands influence your experience and behavior.

9. The flowers of positive experiences can crowd out and gradually replace the weeds of negative thoughts, feelings, and desires

There could be value in some of the unpleasant experiences we have in life. When we have a responsivity bias, we can learn from these unpleasant experiences without storing them as negative material in our brains.

If a negative material that has been stored in your implicit memory is activated, it does not appear in one piece. Instead, it is usually reconstructed in a dynamic process. As you bring it to your awareness, it attaches itself to whatever is already in your consciousness at that time. When you are done with it, it returns to your implicit memory reconsolidated in a dynamic process.

This reconstruction and reconsolidation of negative material in your memory means you can change the material using two methods: overwriting and erasing.

To overwrite the negative is to use prominently positive material to soothe and compensate for the negative until it is overwritten. To erase the negative, you need to bring a neutral trigger associated with the negative material to disrupt the reconsolidation process until you are able to erase the association between the neutral trigger and the negative material.

To link positive and negative material, you need to hold both positive and negative in your awareness while making the positive more prominent and not getting hijacked by the negative.

Good experience is an antidote for negative material.

When you are in situations that start with a negative experience, allow yourself to witness the difficult situation with self-compassion. Next, let it go when the time is right. Then, find an appropriate positive experience to link with the negative experience.

Once you are able to connect positive experiences with negative materials, you will find that you will become capable in difficult situations over time.

Taking in the good can significantly improve your gains from experiences such as human resources training, psychotherapy, mindfulness training, coaching, or the psychological aspects of health care treatments. Rewarding experiences that relate to the behaviors you want to encourage in yourself can be taken in using the HEAL steps.

As you search for vital experiences, show resourcefulness and kindness to yourself. Despite the effect of painful events and the shortage of psychological supplies, you can use key experiences to fill the hole in your heart.

Should you be dealing with depression or trauma, enrich the benefits of standard interventions by taking in the good. Appreciate and internalize what is good in your relationships to make each person feel better and strengthen the bond between you and them.

Experiencing obstacles when taking in the good enables you to learn more about yourself. Your experiences of key strengths will help you meet new challenges in responsive ways. Using these inner strengths repeatedly will empower you to stay responsive even in the face of increasing challenges.

Conclusion

For each core need, there are seven inner strengths you can develop using the HEAL steps described in this summary.

For safety needs, the inner strengths are protection, strength, relaxation, refuge, seeing threats and resources clearly, feeling alright right now, and peace.

For satisfaction, the inner strengths you need to develop are pleasure, gratitude and gladness, positive emotion, accomplishment and agency, enthusiasm, feeling the fullness of this moment, and contentment.

For connection, you need to feel cared about, feel valued, compassion and kindness, self-compassion, feeling like a good person, compassionate assertiveness, and love.

Taking in the good can be powerful for a person, and it has implications for the wider world. The “us” versus “them” mentality, which helped hunter-gatherers survive 60 million years ago, is now fueling conflicts between groups and nations.

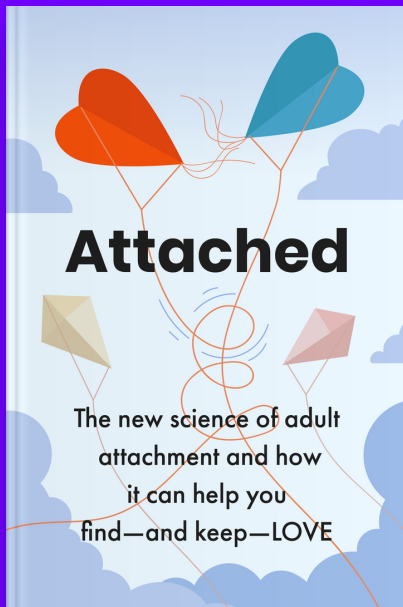
“We’ve armed a Stone Age brain with nuclear weapons.” ~ Rick Hanson

The reactive settings of our brains are making us deplete the limited resources on earth. Deforestation, mass extinctions, and global warming are some of the grave consequences of this ignoble desire. Today, we have an unprecedented opportunity to protect, feed, and care for every single person on the planet, thanks to technology. The question is whether we will choose to do that.

We have learned that improving external conditions is insufficient to fulfill this opportunity; we need to improve internal conditions as well by building up inner strengths and the bone-deep ongoing sense that core needs are already met. This mind shift will make us immune to commercial and political manipulations that have preyed on our sense of deficit or disturbance till now.

Try this:

There are 21 strengths that can help you meet your core needs — safety, satisfaction, and connection. Take three weeks to boost your mind, your brain, and your life using the HEAL steps. Pick a new strength each day, and feel it growing inside you.



Attached:

The New Science of Adult Attachment and How It Can Help You Find — and Keep — Love

Amir Levine, Rachel Heller

Read to boost:

- Relationships
- Communication
- Empathy
- Self-awareness

What's in there for me?

In this summary, neuroscientist and psychiatrist Amir Levine and psychologist Rachel S. F. Heller explain the concept of "attachment theory," a modern-day advanced relationship science that can help you find and keep love. This tidbit explains how to determine your and your partner's attachment styles and offers strategies and plans for building more fulfilling and healthier relationships.



Humans need to form close bonds with others in order to feel secure and safe in life.



“Feeling close and complete with someone else — the emotional equivalent of finding a home.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. All relationships are unique — one explanation won't describe them all

Every human being craves a sense of belonging, either toward family, friends, or a spouse. When humans become attached to someone, the influence of one on the other regulates their natural states. It influences each other's psychological and emotional well-being.

Humans need to form close bonds with others in order to feel secure and safe in life.

Relationship problems can be excruciating; they encompass the innermost core of people's lives. No one has a finite description that fits the bill as each case of relationship issues is unique and personal, coming from an endless number of possible root causes.

You may suffer from constant tension and emotional problems if your partner cannot meet your basic needs, which can have severe consequences on your emotional well-being, self-esteem, and even physical health. That's why it's essential to understand your attachment style and the attachment style of people close to you, especially your spouse.

Research has shown there are three main attachment styles or manners in which people see, understand, and respond to intimacy in romantic relationships. These findings are parallel to those found in children:

- Secure attachment style
- Anxious attachment style
- Avoidant attachment style

If you are someone with an anxious attachment style, you'll spend a lot of time worrying and thinking about whether your partner loves or cares for you. You will also be bothered about if they're spending enough time with you and what

is going on in their mind when they don't call you back within a few minutes of missing your call.

The avoidant attachment style indicates that you value your independence and time alone more than your relationship. A secure attachment style fits between both styles. It is an ideal balance between caring enough and not worrying too much.

People with each of these attachment styles show lots of differences in:

- The way they see intimacy and togetherness.
- The way they deal with conflict.
- Their behavior towards sex.
- Their ability and means to communicate their wishes and needs.
- Their expectations and desires from their partner and the relationship.

In this summary, you will learn more about how you develop attachments to other people and how to enhance your relationships and become closer. After all, isn't that what we all want?

2. Attachment styles are dictated by your upbringing

Your current attachment style is determined by how you were cared for as a baby. In other words, if your parents were sensitive, available, and responsive, you would have a secure attachment style. If your parents were inconsistent and inappropriately responsive, you would likely develop an anxious attachment style. If they were distant, rigid, uncaring, and unresponsive, you would probably display an avoidant attachment style.

But this doesn't mean you can't change your attachment style over time; you would need to have positive experiences with partners, friends, and family

members in order to turn the tide to help rewire your brain into thinking in a new way.

The way you were treated as a child affects your life in a huge way. You learn how to love, feel, and react from your parents.

However, total change isn't always necessary. Sometimes it's better to understand your current style of attachment, work out the negative elements and twist them into something positive, and learn to get the most out of your situation.

Someone with an anxious attachment style can learn to be more at ease when away from their partner. That doesn't mean they're instantly going to be comfortable with it and have no issues from that point onwards. It simply means that they're making baby steps towards changing a harmful habit. Whether a person can ever entirely change their attachment style is very debatable. What you can do is identify your partner's attachment style and be more understanding.

Did you know? The "dependency paradox" states that the closer you are to your partner, the more independent you're able to become on your own. It means that you know you have someone close to you if you need support or help.

3. When you understand attachment, you're able to connect more meaningfully with other people

Understanding your specific attachment profile will help you know yourself more, achieve more goals, and guide you in your relations with others, bringing happiness and fulfillment to your relationships.

When people hear about relationship attachment styles, they usually have no difficulty recognizing their style. Most people declare right away, "I'm anxious," "I'm avoidant," or, "I think I'm secure," while others have a more challenging time figuring it out.

Attachment styles are stable most of the time but still subject to change.

If you find it difficult figuring out your attachment style, the following guide will help:

- If you feel quite relaxed around your partner and you're not constantly questioning the connection, you're secure in your union.
- Suppose You desire and long for intimacy and closeness, but you have many insecurities, are unsure where the relationship is going, and little things your partner does tend to set you off and anger you. In this case, you're probably anxious.
- You're probably avoidant if you feel uncomfortable when things become steamy and intimate, or you value your independence and freedom more than any relationship.

Discovering other people's attachment styles is usually more stringent than identifying your own. You alone know yourself best, but knowing yourself is not just how you behave; it's also what you feel and think when in a relationship. To make this easier, most people give away all the clues about their attachment style by how they live their lives and their actions without even knowing it. The deal is to know what to look for.

Golden Rules for discovering your partner's attachment style:

- Find out whether they seek intimacy and closeness.
- Discover how preoccupied and involved they are with the relationship and how sensitive they are to rejection.

- Don't focus on one "symptom," look for various signs.
- Assess their reaction to effective communication.
- Be alert and look for what they are not saying or doing.

4. Things to note before getting serious with a partner

When getting involved with someone, carefully tread; the stakes are high, and your happiness depends on it, especially true if you have an anxious attachment style.

“All happiness or unhappiness solely depends upon the quality of the object to which love attaches us.” ~ Baruch Spinoza

People with an anxious attachment style are quick to notice changes in others' emotional expressions. They are also sensitive to other people's cues. However, they also jump to conclusions very quickly, and when they do, they tend to misinterpret people's emotional states.

Practicing patience is an essential lesson for someone with an anxious attachment style.

If you can wait a little longer before reacting and jumping to conclusions, you will be able to understand the world around you and use it to your advantage.

If you're anxious, you shouldn't be dating someone avoidant because of the following reasons:

You want closeness and intimacy, and they want to maintain some distance — emotionally and physically.

You are very sensitive to any rejection, and they send mixed signals that you often interpret as rejection.

You often find it challenging to read verbal and non-verbal cues during communication and don't think it's their responsibility to do so.

You need to be reassured, shown love, and feel loved, but they tend to put you down to create distance as a means to deactivate their own attachment system.

Effective communication means that you communicate in a way that is inoffensive and does not put your partner on the spot but allows them to be open with you without feeling attacked, criticized, or blamed.

5. Learn what suppresses your ability to attach to others in a meaningful way

Your attachment style decides what you expect in relationships, how you interpret and see romantic situations, and how you behave with your date or partner.

Avoidant attachment types always try to keep people at a distance, even in a serious relationship.

Here are some popular strategies that suppress one's attachment system:

- Acting or thinking, "I'm not ready to commit"
- Focusing on minute imperfections in your partner
- Flirting with others without caring about your partner's thoughts
- Not saying, "I love you," often
- Avoiding physical closeness

If you're avoidant, you will unconsciously act out these small, everyday deactivating strategies to ensure that the person you love won't get in the way of your freedom.

Imagine if a parent couldn't read their infant's cues. The parent wouldn't tell whether their baby is hungry or tired, wanting to be held or left alone, wet or sick. How difficult life would be for the baby and the parents. The baby would have to labor hard and cry so much longer to be understood.

An avoidant attachment style can often make you feel like this. You will not be firm at translating the many verbal and nonverbal signals you receive during everyday interactions into a coherent understanding of your lover's mental state, causing a lot of problems in your relationship.

However, the good news is that there are things you can start doing today to stop pushing love away, such as:

- Identifying deactivating strategies.
- Removing emphasis on self-reliance and focusing on mutual support.
- Being with a very secure partner.
- Knowing your tendency to misinterpret behaviors.

Avoidants should embrace the idea of finding a partner who is perfect for them to help push down their avoidant behaviors and thoughts so they can focus on the positives.

6. Cultivate the secure attachment style to enjoy higher levels of satisfaction

Many experts agree those with avoidant attachment styles tend to be less happy and satisfied in their relationships, because they can never totally connect with their partner. They will always have something on their minds that makes them question whether it's right, safe, and appropriate to be there.

It is believed that each attachment style evolved and improved to increase the survival chances of humans in particular environments.

Studies have demonstrated that individuals with a secure attachment style report higher satisfaction levels in their relationships than people with other attachment styles. Happiness is the primary measure of satisfaction.

“People with a secure attachment style are more likely than others to forgive their partner for wrongdoing. Secure people naturally dwell less on the negative and can turn off upsetting emotions without becoming defensively distant.”

~ Rachel Heller

People with secure attachment styles fare better in relationships and create fantastic effects, raising their insecure partner's relationship satisfaction and functioning to a greater level. So, if you're with someone secure, they will nurture you into a more confident stance.

Some of the following characteristics influence every aspect of romantic relationships:

- Great conflict deflators
- Mentally flexible and smart
- Effective and great communicators
- Avoids game playing
- Comfortable with closeness, set no boundaries
- Quick to forgive
- Practices and views sex and emotional intimacy as one
- Treats their partners like royalty, with respect
- Secure and confident in their power to improve the relationship

- Responsible for their partners' overall well-being

There is evidence to show that a secure attachment style doesn't originate from a single source. Many factors aside from parenting, such as genes and romantic experiences as adults, come together to create a safe attachment pattern.

Making a secure base for your partner entails that you do the following:

- Avoid conflict
- Don't play games
- Be comfortable with closeness
- Set boundaries
- Be quick to forgive
- Have mental flexibility
- Communicate effectively
- Be secure in your power to improve the relationship
- Treat your partner like royalty

Conclusion

Genes sometimes affect the way we act and the decisions we make. However, to become attracted and attached to another, we must use our willpower and focus on learning the nature of attachment to create healthy and strong connections. Connections are essential for a happy life, after all.

Always remember that your attachment needs are legitimate. Do not feel bad for depending on the person you are closest to — it is part of your genetic makeup. A relationship or attachment should make you feel more self-

confident, happier and give you peace of mind. If it doesn't, this is a wake-up call to make things better. Above all, remain true to your authentic self; avoid playing games — it will only distance you from your ultimate goal of finding real joy and happiness, be it with your current partner or someone else.

It's easy to focus on the things you deem to be negative about yourself, but the truth is that nobody is perfect; we all have strengths and weaknesses. Concentrating on your weaknesses too much will not allow your strengths to shine, and as such, you'll beat yourself up for minor mistakes you make. Relationships are about give and take, but they're also about trust and forgiveness.

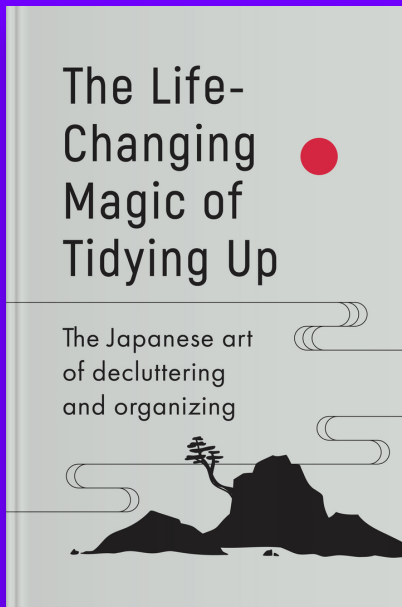
It's time for a bit of soul searching. Do you avoid commitment, or do you run towards it too fast? How do you interact with your partner? Do you truly listen to them, or do you speak over them all the time? Sometimes we make small mistakes without realizing it, purely because they're part of our genetic makeup. However, that doesn't mean you can identify them and then work to change their adverse effects.

Try this:

Learn to listen as much as you speak! Effective communication isn't just about saying words in the right way; it's also about listening to your partner and reading body language to get the whole picture.

Identify your attachment style. Do you avoid attachment out of fear? Understanding your attachment style will allow you to make progress and overcome any blocks between you and relationship happiness.

Have trust and patience in your partner. Sometimes it takes people a little longer to open up, and that's okay! Rushing the situation will only lead to a negative outcome. Take your time!



The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up:

The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing

Marie Kondō

Read to boost:

- Organizing
- Self-discipline
- Orderliness
- Decision-making

What's in there for me?

Do you wonder why your space never seems to look tidy no matter how much you try? Then this summary is for you. Marie Konmari Kondo is an author and a Japanese organizing consultant. Her techniques will help you tidy better by giving you detailed steps on what to do and how to stop tidying the wrong way. Knowing what to do and what not to do when tidying gives you an added advantage in living a tidy, well-organized life.



Tidying is more than just getting rid of physical garbage. It helps clear the mind and soul of mental garbage, too.



“Keep only those things that speak to your heart. Then take the plunge and discard all the rest. By doing this, you can reset your life and embark on a new lifestyle.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Tidying is not an innate talent; it's the continuous effort of clearing up things the right way

Tidying is not something that comes with age or home experience. Older people don't necessarily tidy better than younger people because tidying is not relative to age. If you want to be very good at tidying, then this summary teaches you how to do that using the **Konmari method** propounded by Marie Kondo.

When you remove the useless things around you, you create enough space for other things that are valuable to your life.

While you are thinking of which objects should stay or go, a part of your mind is also thinking about storage. You are trying to determine where you'll put all the stuff that you are keeping. Sorting clutter and putting them in storage doesn't create the change that's expected to come with tidying. Simply folding all your clothes doesn't mean you've tidied your room, it only means you've arranged your clutter inside the same place but at different locations. The clutter remains, and your room is still untidy — which is why you have to sort by categories and not by location.. The worst part of it is that if you're not careful enough, clutter will cause rebounds, which is when you keep on tidying over and over again without achieving a fulfilling result. This has a high chance of discouraging you about tidying. Mastering the techniques behind tidying will make your life better in many ways. Continue reading to find out how you can learn new tidying skills.

2. Tidying up improves your physical, mental, and emotional strength

Why should you tidy up? This is a question that has a straightforward answer — or so it seems. A lot of people believe tidying is just for keeping a place in

order, but it is more than that. Tidying is an art that should be studied and mastered because it's not as simple as people think it is. While there are many courses on a lot of things like yoga, cooking, sewing, and many others, you will rarely see instructions on how to tidy up and keep places in order. The idea behind this is that tidying up is expected to come naturally. Many believe that it cannot be taught or passed down from one generation to another, like cooking and sewing. If you think back to your childhood, you'll discover that you were barely taught how to tidy, and even if you were, it was not reinforced until you mastered it.

Getting rid of clutter is not an easy task. Clutter can make you feel frustrated, tired and unhappy at times. Rebounds happen when you don't feel any sense of accomplishment after tidying. This is usually because you haven't gone through the tidying process with the right approach. The idea is for you to tidy up in one go, in what the Japanese call **Ikki ni**. When you are merely sorting instead of tidying, you would feel rebound and almost lose interest in tidying altogether. When you tidy a little a day, there's a chance you'll end up tidying forever.

Tidying is more than just getting rid of physical garbage. It helps clear the mind and soul of mental garbage, too.

A clean environment allows you to clear your head and think pleasant thoughts. Since you have not been taught the art of tidying right from childhood, it becomes tough to change the habit of not being used to tidying. Don't tidy up clutter based on a particular location, for example tidying just the books in your room or your library. Instead tidy up by category by bringing all the books in the house together so that you can sort them at once. Bringing them together lets you realise how much you have and how much you can discard.

3. Discarding things you shouldn't come before deciding what you should keep.

It has been established that the best way to tidy is to tidy all at once, but how do you prepare your mind to get used to this approach? When you tidy completely, you experience a deep change in scenery that is so good you'll want it to last forever. This feeling is best achieved when you tidy in the right order. Discarding must always be your first step no matter what — failure to follow this order would render your effort almost useless and leave you very frustrated.

“The garbage can is for things that have no importance. If it did have some value, it no longer has any.” ~ J.R. Ri

Right before you discard, think deeply about your goal, i.e., what you want to achieve by tidying up your space. Discarding might look simple, but it's not. A lot of times, you'll find yourself undecided about discarding an item. Sometimes, you're not sure whether you should keep it or not.

When you focus on what to dispose of instead of what to keep, you'll find out that you would be left frustrated at your attempts to tidy up.

Knowing what to keep or discard is not an easy task, sometimes, you're undecided about discarding objects. In this case, there's a simple and effective method that will help you decide what to discard and what not to. It's a selection criterion that asks the question “does it spark joy?” The process is simple. Pick up the object you're undecided about, ask yourself if it sparks joy, and if the answer is in the affirmative, then you keep it. Items that spark joy are items that touch your heart differently. They are items that give you a deep sense of connection. These are the items you should keep.

While there are tasks you should carry out while discarding, there are things you shouldn't do as well. Some of the things you shouldn't do include:

- Don't discard by location instead of category
- Don't start with mementos like pictures and diaries that bring back fond memories
- Avoid letting your family see what you're about to discard

Did you know? Clutter occupies our visual fields and gives our brains limitless stimuli to process. As a result, it's more difficult to focus on tasks, as there are more things to draw our attention.

4. Following a correct pattern simplifies the process of organizing things

When you follow guidelines and orders laid down for a particular process, you'll not only find the process easy; you'll also find it fun. When you start with the easy part before moving on to the hard part, you'll find out that tidying is fun.

Like every other skill, you have to follow the correct pattern to tidy up appropriately.

Gather all your clothes together in one spot without leaving any piece out. Start the process of discarding with off-season clothes because it's the easiest for you to discern when discarding. A lot of people get scared and concerned about the number of clothes they are discarding, feeling like they might not have any nice clothes left after the whole process. The thing about that sort of fear is that as long as you have enough good clothes to wear, you're good to go.

Another pattern you should pay close attention to is folding. While some people believe that it is better to hang clothes than fold them, it is the other way round. Folding makes your clothes look better and last longer. This is not to say you shouldn't hang your clothes — some clothes should only be hung and not folded (suits, coats, jackets, etc.). When you are done folding, it is time to

arrange the clothes in your drawers. The two challenges people face when it comes to arranging is that the closet is too full, and an apparent lack of knowledge. The best way to arrange your clothes is by category. Put the suits together, place the jackets together and fold clothes with similar textures together.

Once you're done with your clothes, it's time to move on to your books. Books are very hard to let go of because of the information contained in them. Using the same selection criteria you used for your clothes, discard books by keeping the ones that spark joy in you and toss the ones that don't. Photos create memories, but not all memories should be hung on to forever. Make sure you follow your intuition well, and you'll discover that in the process of tidying all the time, you'll end up knowing just the right amount of stuff you need.

5. You must understand the importance of space and storage to achieve effective tidying

Whenever Marie Kondo gets home from work every day, she places her belongings in designated places as she enters the house, appreciating each item for doing its job for the day. This approach lets her tidy her house without the stress of pulling everything down and sorting it. Designated places for your belongings make it easier for you to have a clean place. Put your bags where other bags are, dump your dirty clothes in the laundry basket, hang your jacket with other jackets, and place your scarf where it's supposed to be.

Pursue ultimate simplicity in storage — store things in simple storages where you'll be able to access them easily.

Extravagant storage might make your space look cool, but most times, they are not necessary to use. Also, don't scatter storage spaces. Put similar items in one place so that you'll know where to look for them if you need them. For

people who live alone, this is easier to do than for people with a family. If you have a family, create designated storage spaces for each person so they know where to check if they want anything of theirs. Put things where they belong, and your space will remain very tidy.

Some storage tips are important and worth paying attention to:

- Avoid storing things in a pile, store them vertically
- The best place to store bags is in another bag
- Don't buy storages that would only be useful for the short-term
- Empty your bag every day
- Use the closet more often than the floor
- Don't store things in the bath and the kitchen sink
- For those who believe in charms, make use of the top shelf of your bookcase as your personal shrine
- Remove clothes from their packages and arrange them immediately
- Eliminate excess visual information that doesn't inspire joy
- Treat your possessions like they matter

Storage processes are essential in keeping your home tidy. Not only do these storage guidelines make you orderly, it prevents rebound and frustration from disrupting your tidying.

“Keep only those things that speak to your heart. Then take the plunge and discard all the rest. By doing this, you can reset your life and embark on a new lifestyle.” ~ Marie Kondo

6. Tidying transforms your life in unimaginable ways

When you look back on your childhood, you'll find elements of what you loved doing then in your present life. The things you did back then have a way of influencing your life, same as tidying. Tidying is more than physical cleansing. It is mental and spiritual cleansing too because tidying your house helps you discover the things you like.

One of Marie Kondo's friends had just finished tidying when she looked at her bookshelf and discovered that the majority of the books there were related to social welfare. Other books she had bought had been discarded, while the books she had gotten in junior school had remained. Suddenly, it dawned on her that she wanted to be a social welfare worker where parents could work without worrying about their kids. Due to this realization, she quit her job and pursued her dream career. She was able to reflect on her life because she got rid of books that didn't give her joy while keeping the ones that sparked it.

Being around things that spark joy impacts every aspect of your life positively because your life starts the moment you put everything in order.

Tidying lets you realize that letting go is better than adding. Another of Marie Kondo's clients had been reluctant about discarding her seminar notes and documents, but when she finally let them go, she felt a huge weight lifted off her. She gained more clarity in her approach to life by freeing the clutter in her space.

Tidying improves your decision-making skills greatly because when you're able to discern what sparks joy, your brain automatically adjusts to it, thereby expanding your decision-making skills. Your possessions are a big part of you; treating them well means treating yourself well.

Conclusion

You can start living a good life in different ways, and tidying is one of them. When you create space and achieve orderliness in your environment, it is easy to see where improvements are needed and how they should be done. Tidying is an art that should be thoroughly discussed across all levels of education because it has a huge chance of transforming your life for good.

Attachment to things of the past or the fear of the future can hinder your decision-making skills if you're not careful. Clinging to things you're not sure of discarding is a pointless expenditure. Ask yourself if the reason you can't discard it is that you're attaching it to a past or picturing its use for the future. The decisions you make reflect your life choices. Your choices reflect your actions, and your actions determine your life. Only keep things you need, things that are necessary to your life. Getting rid of things that don't spark joy barely have negative effects. In fact, this only goes on to show that you've been surrounded by things you don't need all these while.

Regardless of your personality type, discarding is the first pattern that you must follow to effectively tidy up. Effective tidying involves undertaking two essential actions: discarding and deciding where to store things. Of these two actions, discarding must come first.

Try this:

Create time for yourself, pick the stuff you want to tidy by category, sort it using the Konmari method and evaluate the result at the end of the whole process.



The Joy of Missing Out:

Live More by Doing Less

Tonya Dalton

Read to boost:

- Productivity
- Setting priorities
- Decisiveness
- Self-consciousness

What's in there for me?

Tonya Dalton is a CEO and productivity expert. Her simple approach to productivity will give you a liberating shift in perspective: being overwhelmed isn't a product of having too much to do — it is a result of not knowing where to start. Contrary to popular belief, doing less is the key to productivity. You will learn how to identify your real priorities and say no to the tasks that pull you away from your essential duties.



Following your personal core values fulfills you and helps you focus on the person you want to be.



“Productivity isn't about doing it all, it's doing what's most important.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Real productivity is about finding joy in missing out on trivial things

Today, most of us, no matter who we are or what we do for a living, are struggling to keep our heads above the proverbial waters. We are extremely overwhelmed by everything, from our lives to our responsibilities and even by our own to-do lists.

The truth is, being overwhelmed isn't having too much to do; it's not knowing where to begin. But it can be extremely difficult to know where to start when we are too busy saying yes to every opportunity that comes our way, focus on other people's priorities, or try to keep up with everyone else.

Real productivity is the key to knowing where to start. It is making the conscious choice to cut through the clutter and noise in our lives and focus on the things that matter to us.

Productivity is about finding happiness in a life centered on our priorities.

Most people are ignorant of the fact that being busy is not the same as being productive. They believe that they always have to be engaged and have their days filled with activities for them to be happy. Unfortunately, after spending their days being busy, running like a hamster on a wheel, trying to keep up but not really going anywhere, they end up exhausted and frustrated. They're unsatisfied, unsuccessful, and unhappy, despite keeping themselves busy all day long.

"Productivity isn't about doing it all, it's doing what's most important."

~ Tonya Dalton

It's time we turned the myth that being busy equals being productive on its head. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have to stop glorifying "busyness." We need to shift our mindset and redefine what it means to be productive. We need to start focusing on our priorities rather than trying to get

more done. When we do that, we can finally live the fulfilled, healthy, happy lives we want to live.

In the following sections of this summary, you will learn how you can design a life centered around your priorities.

2. To create an extraordinary life, you must let go of the illusion of balance

We all want to be recognized for our efforts and hard work, which is why we get up each day and try to get as much done as possible. The problem, however, is that too many of us tie our self-worth to our busyness.

To most of us, stress is a medal of honor declaring our worthiness. Society has even lulled us into believing that if we are not busy, we are failing. So we try to achieve balance by doing everything. But the more we do, the less we succeed. The reason for this is that balance is nothing more than a mirage. It is practically impossible for anyone to do everything equally.

“Magic doesn’t happen when life is centered and balanced — it happens when we lean into our priorities.” ~ Tonya Dalton

Generally, there are three buckets in our lives that need to be filled: work, home, and personal. While each of these areas is important, it is impossible to keep them balanced all the time. We can’t distribute our time, energy, and focus in each of these areas evenly — we can’t keep buckets evenly filled.

To create an extraordinary life for ourselves, we have to move away from balance.

We have to lean into a priority and dedicate our most valuable resources — time, energy, and focus — to it. And when we give time to the most important

things, we have to take that time away from something else. We cannot give the same time to all the tasks on our lists.

When we buy into the idea of balance, we spend our days trying to make everything even. We don't channel our time and energy and focus on moving in the direction we really want to go. In chasing this illusion of balance, we end up creating a busy life void of any meaning.

To live a happy, meaningful, and content life, we must be willing to go out of balance. We must be willing not to do everything.

3. Your North Star helps you make choices that are in line with your purpose

Throughout history, the North Star has been a constant in the night. Long before there were maps, sailors and adventurers used the North Star to navigate the path to their destinations.

While we may not be sailors, we still need a constant in our life to help us navigate the darkness. In fact, no one simply finds themselves on a fulfilling and deeply satisfying path — it is something we create for ourselves. If we want to become fulfilled and productive, we must define our North Star and allow it to guide us.

If you don't define your North Star, others will define it for you. When that happens, you'll spend your time being busy rather than focusing on moving forward in the direction you truly want to go. Your North Star shows how you want to spend your time and, most importantly, guides your decisions.

So how do you define your North Star?

Your North Star is composed of three major elements:

- Mission statement

- Vision statement
- Core values
- Each of these elements answers the question of who you really are.

Your mission statement answers the question: “What do I do?” It should be true to you and specific enough for people to understand what you do and why you do it. Make sure it’s clear and concise. Your mission statement should be easy to memorize and repeat.

Your vision statement answers the question: “Where am I going?” It is where you dream you’ll be in life. Unlike a mission statement that reflects where you are today, your vision statement clarifies where you want to be in the future. It helps set your trajectory and define your destination.

“A vision statement is an opportunity to dream and imagine the best possible future.” ~ Tonya Dalton

Your core values answer the question: “How will I support the mission and vision statements?” Your core values are a group of words that work together to create the standards that guide your behavior and shape your decisions. Your goal is to create a set of core values that are concrete and inspirational, so they have both meaning and action.

Following your personal core values fulfills you and helps you focus on the person you want to be.

When your mission, vision, and core values are an integral part of your life, you will not be overwhelmed. Your North Star will guide you to know what decisions to make and how to start.

4. Goals help shape our choices to get us to our desired destination

One simple fact that most people are ignorant of in life is that productivity is not about creating a huge effort; it's about focusing like a magnifying glass to set things on fire. One way by which we can ignite that fire is by setting goals.

When done correctly, goals are the magnifying glass we need to concentrate our energy and sharpen our focus. They help us cut through all the information and center in on the steps we want to take for us to progress. This is essential in propelling us along the path toward which our North Star is guiding us.

“Focus all your thoughts on the task at hand. The sun’s rays don’t burn until they’re brought to a focus.” ~ Alexander Graham Bell

In a study, researchers asked a group of Harvard MBA students before graduation if they had set clear, written goals for their future and made plans to accomplish those goals. They discovered that 84% of students had no goals set, 13% had goals in mind but didn't write them down, and only 3% had goals written on paper along with clear plans to accomplish them.

The researchers checked back in with the graduates after 10 years and discovered that the abstract goal setters were making twice the amount of money as the students who had set no goals. What's even more impressive is that the 3% who had written their goals were taking home ten times the amount of the other 97% combined.

“When you lose focus on your priorities, you’re simply along for the ride, going wherever the day takes you.” ~ Tonya Dalton

The reason why setting goals is so effective is that it helps us clarify what we want to accomplish. Put simply, goal setting shows us where to focus. It makes the path we want to take crystal clear and triggers our behavior.

Without goals, it will be impossible to know the trajectory of your path.

When we set a goal, it naturally steers our focus to where we want to expend our energy and time. Goals tell us exactly where we need to aim to get the best result for our effort.

5. True productivity lies in working toward being effective, not being efficient

You've probably come across clickbait articles promising you can churn out a year's worth of content for your blog in three days or fooling you into believing that a week is more than enough for you to write a book.

In our effort to be efficient, we often send ourselves into a detrimental frenzy, moving as quickly as possible from one task to the next. We believe that the quality of our day is determined by how many tasks we can check off our to-do list during the course of that day. So we rush and hurry mindlessly around all day long without taking a moment to really live.

This is why we crash into our bed at night feeling like we didn't get enough done, that we weren't good enough even when we skipped lunch and did three tasks at the same time.

Rather than pushing ourselves to the edge daily, trying to be efficient, we need to stop, catch our breath, and ask ourselves the most important question of all: Why?

Why do these tasks need to be done? Why are they even on our list in the first place? Do we have to kill ourselves trying to do it all?

The truth is, productivity isn't about filling our day with tasks to quickly check off; it isn't about being efficient. Productivity is about being effective and asking yourself if you really have to do those tasks.

There is a significant difference between being efficient and being effective.

Efficiency is about getting a lot of things done; effectiveness is about doing the important work.

Quality trumps quantity every time. Sometimes we are so caught up in deadlines that we don't realize that the processes we believe make us faster — multitasking, skipping lunch, and not getting enough rest — are working against us. It's time we realize that focusing on being efficient only wastes our time and does nothing to improve our productivity.

Did you know? You wield the power over time, not the other way around. To exercise this power, you must first understand and accept that you don't need to do more. You just need to rethink busy and work toward true productivity: spending time on the things that matter most.

6. Dedicate the greater portion of your time to doing the essential

Your effectiveness is mainly determined by how you handle your priorities. You have to laser in on the important, rather than trying to do everything, which leaves you feeling like you are herding cats. The Pareto Principle will help you do that.

Introduced by Vilfredo Pareto in the 1700s, the Pareto Principle, popularly known as the 80/20 principle, states that 20% of our efforts produce 80% of our results. Most things in life aren't evenly distributed:

- 20% of a meeting gives you 80% of the information
- 20% of your wardrobe is what you wear 80% of the time
- 20% of the people on your team do 80% of the work

In essence, all things are not equal and, therefore, shouldn't be treated as equal. This principle has endured the test of time. For centuries, it has been proven time and time again in all areas of life.

You achieve more when you focus on less.

It is focused time that creates the greatest impact. Again, it's not about doing more — it's doing what's essential.

“We have the ability to do the work, but we often allow trivial tasks to drag out, stealing time from our day.” ~ Tonya Dalton

The majority of your success will come from the minority of your tasks. So why do you push yourself to a breaking point, trying to do everything? Learn to give the important tasks the larger portion of your time.

Give it a try: for a quarter, focus on the best 20% of your customers and clients, and see if your sales rise. Of course, you're not going to ignore the remaining 80%. However, the top 20 should be getting the lion's share of your attention.

Don't let insignificant things take over your day. Limit the time you give to trivial tasks so that you're able to focus on the essential.

7. Use the CLEAR framework to determine whether or not a task is a priority

Before you can effectively channel your resources — focus, time, and energy — towards what really matters, you must first get clear on what is important.

People who don't have a grip on what is important have priority blindness. And so they keep piling more and more priorities on themselves, which does nothing but weigh them down, keeping them from the life they want. If you are in this situation, you have to ask yourself: “Weighed down as I am, what do I throw

overboard to prevent my boat from sinking?” It’s time to become clear on what’s really essential.

Indeed, defining important tasks isn’t something easy. To make the process easier, Tonya Dalton has created the CLEAR framework to help differentiate the important from the merely urgent:

- C — connected to your North Star
- L — linked to a goal
- E — essential
- A — advantageous
- R — reality-based

Before you decide whether a task is important or not, ask yourself: “Is this task Connected to my North Star?” Your North Star doesn’t just determine how you want to spend your time, energy, and focus. It can also help clarify what’s important. So make sure any task you’ll tag important is:

- Tied to your mission statement
- In alignment with your core values
- Moving you closer to your vision

Next, ask yourself: “Is this activity Linked to a goal?” The best way to get to the vision you have for yourself is through your goals. Therefore, it’s paramount that your goals are a key part of your decision-making process when deciding if a task is important.

When your daily tasks are linked to your goals, you make small steps forward every single day. Small steps lead to bigger steps, which then lead to running. That’s the momentum you need.

Is the task Essential? Is it something that needs to be done by you? Or, is it something you can outsource or delegate?

Is it Advantageous? You want to make sure you're working on tasks that have a great return on investment. The time you put into your daily activities must pay off in dividends down the road.

Your time is a finite resource that you're constantly investing in the things you choose to do, so it's vital that you question how you are spending this time.

Finally, is the task Reality-based? We often think something is important because we believe it's something we are supposed to do — even if it isn't something we want to do. So make sure you are not doing that task to meet other people's expectations or to feel good about yourself.

8. Saying no to unnecessary commitments will help you make the best use of your resources

Ignoring the trivial things in your day to focus on the essentials will require you to uncommit. The word uncommit can be very uncomfortable, and the reason it feels that way is that we often assume that saying no to others means we are letting them down.

The truth is, we're already saying no all the time. Every single time you say yes to something, you are saying no to something else. Committing your time to other people's priorities comes at the expense of your own.

"Saying no is not selfish; it's an opportunity to be selfless." ~ Tonya Dalton

Every time you say yes to volunteering on a committee you don't genuinely care about, you are saying no to spending time with your family. Every time you say yes to coordinating some random project for a group, you're saying no to your own passion project. You can not say yes without saying no. As you

spend your time, energy, and focus on an activity, you're depriving something else of those resources.

No matter how innocent and attractive an opportunity seems, always bear in mind the commitments that come with them: time, energy, focus — your three most precious assets.

Ultimately, it's not just about avoiding commitments and saying no. You must commit to the thing that is essential to you. Make a commitment with your schedule to allow you an opportunity to pour more of your focus, energy, and time into the causes, people, and issues that truly matter to you.

When you're committed to nothing, you will be distracted by everything. So endeavor to commit to things that are important to you and get rid of what isn't. This is the key to making the most significant impact you can make on the world.

Conclusion

If you spend your days overwhelmed and pushed to your limit, it is not because you have too much to do; it is because you do not know where to start. The reason most people find it very difficult to figure out where to start is that they are too busy saying yes to every opportunity that comes their way.

As Tonya Dalton makes us understand, if you want to wrap up your days feeling fulfilled, you have to stop focusing on other people's priorities and trying to keep up with everyone else. Real productivity is the key to knowing where to start. It is about choosing to cut through the clutter and noise in our lives and focus on doing what really matters to us. It is about finding joy in missing out on trivial things and finding happiness in a life centered on our priorities.

Busyness is not the same thing as productivity. In fact, doing less is the key to productivity. That someone has a six-foot-long to-do list doesn't mean they are

a step closer to achieving their goals. They might just be busy setting themselves up for disappointment if the items on that list aren't centered on their priority.

Stop glorifying busyness. It's time you shift your mindset and redefine what it means to be productive. Start focusing on your priorities rather than trying to get more done. Once you get comfortable with rejecting the pressure to do more, you will discover you can finally live a guilt-free, abundant life. Your ideal life will become your real, everyday life.

Try this:

Get clear on your priorities. Whenever you find yourself turning in circles and wondering if you should treat a task as essential or not, stop and take a deep breath and ask yourself these questions: Is it connected to my North Star? Is it linked to a goal? Is it essential? Is it advantageous? Is it reality-based?

Each time you answer yes to any of the questions, simply raise a finger. If you have three or more fingers raised, then the task deserves to be treated as essential. Two fingers or fewer? That's a trivial task.



The Sleep Revolution:

Transforming Your Life
One Night at a Time

Arianna Huffington

Read to boost:

- Sleep quality
- Health
- Calmness
- Stress-relief

What's in there for me?

In *The Sleep Revolution*, Arianna Huffington reveals that our sleeplessness is born out of a perception that sleep is a waste of time. This mindset affects our health and decision-making process such that it sabotages our personal, work, and sex lives. She explores recent research on sleep and dreams and offers several tips and recommendations from researchers on how to have a better relationship with sleep.



Denying your body sufficient sleep can have devastating health effects; hence, sleep is essential to your health.



“Sleep is a key element of our well-being and interacts profoundly with each of the other parts.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Stress and burnout are not the prices we must pay to succeed

Arianna Huffington was raised in Athens, Greece, where people had great reverence for sleep. She shared a one-bedroom apartment with her mother and sister. The ground rule was that everyone must ensure that they maintain a quiet disposition around anyone who is sleeping, not to wake them. Therefore, whenever her sister was in the room sleeping and she wanted to read, she had to go to the kitchen so that the light wouldn't wake her. Huffington's mother was a woman who took sleep seriously. Yet, despite this upbringing, after Huffington left home for school and work, she ended up as someone who deprived herself of sleep due to the pursuit of success. She continued to sleep less for years until she had a breakdown in April 2007 due to sleeplessness, burnout, and fatigue.

A lot of things — like exercising, making informed decisions, and meditating — became easier when Arianna Huffington started getting enough sleep.

Although we are at a time where we have a lot of information on the importance of sleep, we end up depriving ourselves of sufficient sleep because of technology and the desire to succeed. This summary examines different methods by which we can use sleep to regain control over our out-of-point lives. As a result, you'd learn how to have a newfound respect for sleep, and you may also find yourself beginning a love affair with it.

“What I've learned is that in today's world, the path of least resistance is the path of sleep.” ~ Arianna Huffington

2. Sleep deprivation takes a toll on our mental abilities

In Japanese, Chinese, and Korean languages, death from overwork is called *karoshi*, *guolaosi*, and *gwarosa* respectively. Unfortunately, there is no single word in the English language for the phrase, but, nevertheless, people around

us are victims of it. Sleep deprivation is a significant issue in our world today. People no longer take time out to sleep well. Most of the time, we are so busy with many things that we value being awake more than being asleep. As a result, the 24 hours we have in the day are under severe attack.

Denying your body sufficient sleep can have devastating health effects; hence, sleep is essential to your health.

According to a Gallup poll, 40% of American adults get less than the needed amount of sleep, which is the minimum of seven hours per night. Just like we place a lot of importance on exercise, good food, and wearing a seatbelt, it's also imperative to have good sleeping habits. A lot of people believe that to be productive, they have to sleep less. Despite the number of hours workers put into work, sleep deprivation makes them unproductive at the workplace. This is because most people come to work already exhausted; hence they can't be productive. Sleep has a major impact on our mental and physical health, and it can be linked to most mental health disorders, especially depression and anxiety.

Did you know? According to Forbes, in 2011, 32% of people surveyed in the United Kingdom said they had averaged less than seven hours of sleep a night in the previous 6 months. By 2014 that number had increased to 60%.

3. The need to sleep is critical to our survival

In recent years, sleep research has dramatically increased, helping us understand the need to get enough sleep. Every day researchers discover new things about sleep; although the focus of their studies might vary, they all arrive at the same conclusion. They all believe that our bodies and brains become inactive each time we sleep.

The longer we remain awake, the sleepier we get; the longer we sleep, the more likely we wake up.

There are four stages of sleep:

- Stage one is light sleep, a stage where you are sleeping but still at a point of wakefulness. When you're in this state, you can easily wake up, and your eyes and muscles will still be moving.
- Stage two is slightly deeper than the first stage. It is when your eye movements slowly stop and your body temperature decreases.
- Stage three is a slow-wave deep sleep characterized by the cessation of muscle and eye movements. This is our deepest phase of sleep and if you're woken up at this stage, you might likely feel dizzy and disoriented. Sleep talking and sleepwalking takes place during this stage.
- The fourth and final phase of sleep is REM sleep. It begins at about an hour or half into your sleep. It is characterized by rapid eye movement, quicker and shallower breathing, increased blood pressure and heart rate, and faster brain wave frequency, looking like those of our awake brain. At this REM stage, our muscles are paralyzed. Dreaming takes place at this stage and if you wake up during this time, you are more likely to remember your dreams.

“The drive to sleep is so strong it will supersede the drive to eat. Your brain will just go to sleep, despite all of your conscious efforts to keep it at bay.”

~ Erin Hanlon

4. Sleeping issues that stem from medical conditions and their impacts on health

As sleep is essential for our bodies, so is it for our minds. For instance, there might not be a cure for the common cold yet, but we know sleeplessness increases the tendency of getting one. So, it's better to cure a cold before you get it. But if you have it, sleeping is a good remedy. There is an Italian proverb that says, "Bed is medicine." The potency of other treatments can increase by enough sleep. For example, research carried out at the University of Pittsburgh in 2012 revealed that sufficient sleep increases antibody levels of people who received hepatitis B vaccine. Conversely, sleeping for less than 6 hours made the vaccine abortive.

Sleep deprivation is detrimental to our immune system and general well-being.

Researchers from the Universities of Louisville and Chicago discovered that sleep deprivation in mice injected with cancer cells made cancer grow faster. In addition, lack of sleep affects how the immune system reacts to cancer, thereby making the disease more aggressive.

Sleep also affects our reproductive system. There is a strong connection between sleep deprivation and infertility in men and women, as it affects sperm count and hormone production. According to a Danish study in 2013, it was revealed that men who have high levels of sleep deprivation experienced a 25% reduction in sperm count. Lack of sleep is also linked with erectile dysfunction. According to Dr. Lisa Shives, the founder of Northshore Sleep Medicine in Evanston, Illinois,, "Testosterone is produced during the night. There are studies showing not only that a decrease in the total amount of sleep can lower a man's testosterone, but also that REM sleep is important to the production and release of testosterone."

5. Sleep disorders are an indication that something is wrong with our health

Most of the time, we are the cause of our sleeplessness. This is because we don't value sleep, and sometimes we do everything not to sleep so that we can attend to other things. These sleep deprivations can lead to sleeping disorders like sleep apnea, insomnia, etc.

Sleep Apnea

More than 25 million American adults suffer from sleep apnea. These interruptions can prevent you from experiencing REM sleep because sleep apnea occurs many times every night. There are two kinds of sleep apnea:

- **Obstructive sleep apnea:** In this type of disorder, people have issues breathing normally because of the blockage in the airway. This leads to snoring most times.
- **Central sleep apnea:** this occurs when the brain fails to send accurate signals to the muscles that control breathing. This often leads to tiredness, inability to concentrate, and illnesses.

Sleep apnea can lead to a high mortality rate and can impair cognitive function and spatial memory.

Sleep apnea is connected with serious health issues like depression, heart attacks, and heart failure. Hence, it is advisable to go for a check-up when you notice you have sleep problems.

Insomnia

When you constantly find yourself in that situation where you are trying hard to sleep but to no avail, it means you may have insomnia. So, you stay awake thinking about all manner of things.

“A third of adults have a hard time falling asleep, and about 10% meet the diagnostic criteria for chronic insomnia.” ~ Arianna Huffington

Other sleep disorders

Other common sleep disorders are restless legs syndrome, sleep paralysis, and exploding head syndrome. Seek medical advice if you notice you're suffering from any sleeping disorder. You can manage sleep disorders by getting enough sleep and reducing stress.

6. Your age plays a massive role in the amount of sleep you need

The most common question people ask about sleep is, “How much sleep is required per day?” In 2015, many peer-reviewed articles were surveyed by researchers from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society. They determined that a minimum of seven hours of sleep per night for individuals between the age range of 18-60 years is good healthwise. Your sleeping pattern changes as you age; hence, the National Sleep Foundation did the following breakdown:

Ages 0–3 months: 14–17 hours

Ages 4–11 months: 12–15 hours

Ages 1–2 years: 11–14 hours

Ages 3–5 years: 10–13 hours

Ages 6–13 years: 9–11 hours

Ages 14–17 years: 8–10 hours

Ages 18–25 years: 7–9 hours

Ages 26–64 years: 7–9 hours

Ages 65+: 7–8 hours

Sleep is the major activity of the brain during early development. Sleeplessness affects a child's learning, emotional regulation and can lead to infections, high blood pressure, obesity, and other health problems. In April 2015, researchers in Norway found that children who slept below 10 hours per night had more behavioral and emotional problems as they got older.

If babies have an unhealthy sleeping pattern during childhood, that pattern will continue as they grow older.

Babies need a lot of sleep, but the issue remains how to get them to sleep all night. Choose a sleeping method that you are comfortable with and ensure it fits the temperament of your child and make it a routine. For example, you can read books to your baby slowly and yawn while reading.

7. How to get sufficient sleep while on the same bed with your partner

Most times, the decisions people make about sleep are greatly influenced by others. This is very common in marriage, such that our spouses determine when, where and how we sleep.

So why do most people sleep in the same bed as their spouses? Roger Ekirch the author of "At Day's Close" asserted that the custom of sleeping in the same bed was born out of necessity and not intimacy. During the 18th century in Europe, among the lower classes, it was normal for all family members to sleep in the same bed. Nighttime was a time of fear and vulnerability for most people because they had to sleep without light. Having a bedmate made people feel secure due to the presence of imagined and real dangers.

There are huge differences between when we sleep alone and when we sleep with others. Many people actually prefer to sleep alone majorly because there is less chance of sleep disturbance. Sleeping in the same bed with somebody else puts you in a position where the person's snores, stray legs, and noise can keep you awake all through the night. The fear of not having sex is one of the major reasons couples sleep in the same bed. If a spouse is experiencing sleep deprivation because of the other, it can result in troubles in the relationship.

Sleeping in bed with someone who snores has a way of disrupting the quality of your sleep.

It's very uncomfortable to sleep beside a person who snores, and trying to stop the person from snoring can be a waste of time. Snoring occurs when air cannot move freely through the nose and throat while sleeping. You can use earplugs and noise-canceling headphones to block out sounds that might disturb your sleep. If those fail, then you might want to consider sleeping in a different room.

8. What to do, what not to do: tools, techniques, and tips for better sleep

From time immemorial, people have had issues with sleep. There are personal reasons why people deprive themselves of sleep depending on their routines and environment. But those reasons change from time to time. Below are some ways to still improve your sleep life:

- Reduce the light in your bedroom: if you want to have a good night's sleep, minimize the light in your room. This is because light reduces melatonin production, which helps promote sleep; hence, before going to

sleep, put off the light and transform your bedroom into a convenient state that can lure you to sleep.

- Blue light affects our sleep negatively. It suppresses the production of melatonin which is very bad for our sleep.
- Hot temperature: 60-66 degrees Fahrenheit is the best sleeping temperature. According to the National Sleep Foundation, when the temperature rises above 75 degrees Fahrenheit or falls below 54 degrees, sleep is affected. Hence, 65 degrees is the recommended sleeping temperature. Your body temperature reduces gradually at night and returns to its normal state as you approach morning.
- Engaging in regular physical activities helps us sleep better.
- Watch what you eat and drink if you want to sleep better.

Going between caffeine and sugar all day is an obstacle to a healthy sleep diet because we end up tired but wired at night.

9. Nature's arsenal: acupuncture, herbal remedies, and other sleep aids

For a long time, acupuncture has been used as a sleeping aid. Emory University evaluated 30 studies on the treatment of insomnia, and the results showed that acupuncture could be up to 93% effective in relieving insomnia. Additionally, Auricular acupuncture has been proven to be invaluable in resolving sleeplessness and related conditions.

Acupuncture is just as effective a treatment for insomnia as medication.

Looking closely into how acupuncture reduces sleeplessness, researchers from the Center for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto discovered that acupuncture increases melatonin and reduces anxiety. Meditation and sleep

work hand in hand. For example, a study carried out at Stanford in 2009 revealed that a 6-week mindfulness meditation course was beneficial to people who had issues sleeping. It helped them sleep faster in 15 instead of 33 minutes.

The molecular geneticist and the french Buddhist monk, Matthieu Ricard said that “those who do contemplative retreats in hermitages are far from doing nothing since they are always engaging in training their minds, but there is no ‘noise,’ no stress to cure, no ‘waste’ to eliminate, no chaos to reorganize. This means that there is less to repair during sleep, and the sleep quality of meditators is deeper.

Conclusion

If you're going to reconfigure your sleeping habits, you have to ignore all the suggestions, sleeping aids that telemarketers try to convince you to buy. Ideally, having a good night's sleep shouldn't require you to take medications or put yourself through rigorous routines that impede your rest. Rather, your ability to sleep well begins with how much you value yourself and your health. You need to know that you are more important than what goes on around you—good or bad. Hence, stop tying your identity to external things like achievements, success, job, marriage, family, etc. Instead, let your focus shift to you; when you do that, you will begin to value sleep. According to PubMed central, People who deprive themselves of sleep tend to add more weight than those who get good sleep. Sleep affects our brain, heart, lungs, and other tissues and systems in the body. Hence, lack of sleep affects these body tissues leading to depression, high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity. Sleep allows us to connect to our essence and in that position, it becomes easier for us to let go of the cares of the world.

Currently, many people are using smart technologies like bedside monitors, smartphone apps, smartwatches, bracelets, and headbands to track their sleep. These smart technologies will give you more information on your sleep and instigate you to take steps to improve it. Nighttime is not the only time to get some sleep. Taking a nap during the day is very effective for overall health and can increase productivity.

Try this:

To have a good night's rest, reduce blue light exposure in the evening, don't consume caffeine late in the day, and set your room temperature to 70°F (20°C), depending on your preference.



When The Body Says No: Understanding the Stress-Disease Connection

Gabor Mate

Read to boost:

- Relaxation
- Healthy lifestyle
- Emotion regulation
- Stress management

What's in there for me?

Gabor Mate, MD, is a Hungarian-born Canadian physician with a background in family practice and a special interest in childhood development and trauma and their potential lifelong impacts on physical and mental health. The way we live and the factors that contributed to our growth go a long way in determining what we become in our lives. This summary gives a deep insight into becoming healthier by being conscious of our stress levels.



Emotional competence demands of us, the capacity to feel our emotions, so that we know when we are experiencing stress.



“I promise you nothing is as chaotic as it seems. Nothing is worth diminishing your health. Nothing is worth poisoning yourself into stress, anxiety, and fear.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Medical professionals' consistent denial of the connection between stress and its effect on our health calls for immediate attention

Medical professionals need to forgo their orthodox mindset that everything must fit into the scientifically explainable definition. There's more to people's health than can be defined by scientific terms. It's essential for them to know that there's a great connection between people's societal upbringing and the illnesses they suffer later in life.

When stress is being discussed, many scientists view it as an isolated situation that's spontaneous enough to throw a patient off balance. They hardly consider its long-term effects and how historical background can be a significant influence. In the future of healthcare, the importance of childhood experience should be normalized, and doctors should be encouraged to learn more about their patients.

As a physician, Gabor Mate uses his experience with patients to narrate how important it is for doctors to inquire about their patient's upbringing. Several patients have met an untimely death due to the ignorance and negligence of the doctors attending to them. There's nothing wrong with knowing about a patient's mental history because it gives a clearer insight into why they suffer from the illness plaguing them.

2. Our body reacts to stress in ways that can be mild or devastatingly severe to our health

One of the most critical aspects of our lives in regards to our health is the environment we grew up in. The places we stayed in and the experiences we've had go a long way in determining our current health status.

Mary was a workaholic who always felt obliged to help people out. She was a joyous and cheerful person, but she lost her life early to a very little wound. She had injured herself with a sewing needle, and despite many surgeries and pain relief drugs, she couldn't make it. Her problem was traced to Raynaud's phenomenon, a medical condition in which the small arteries supplying the fingers are narrowed, depriving the tissues of oxygen. Before she knew it, gangrene set in, and she required surgeries, but it was not enough. After her death, the author, who was also her doctor, realized he and other doctors had done things the wrong way. As she went from one surgery to another, none of the doctors bothered to check why she had a problem healing; they treated the illnesses as they came.

Mary was a chronic smoker who also loved working all the time. As a kid, she had been abused and had to take care of her younger ones from the very young age of seven. Right from her childhood, she had neglected herself to look after other people, and this mindset stuck with her till her last days. The stress she was exposed to, and the fact that she didn't stop smoking early enough contributed to her death.

The body is a reflection of what happens around us. A lot of doctors and physicians never see the need to understand where their patients are coming from — some believe it's unethical to know such a thing. The claim is wrong and makes the treatment of illnesses in patients somewhat inadequate. We are influenced by what goes on in our society.

Natalie was a married woman who also found it hard to say no to helping people. She was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, a brain anomaly that impairs the functions of the nervous system's cells. While she didn't require any major treatment, she suffered relapses because she was in an abusive relationship where she had to care for her husband, who had cancer and a son who was into drugs and alcohol.

When we stress ourselves too much, not knowing where to stop, our body reacts in different ways that might range from mild to severe.

We need to understand how the body works to know when to stop and how to be productive without hurting ourselves.

3. Understanding the delicate balance of relationships among our cognitive performances, our emotional environment, and physiology is essential to general well-being

The general medical approach to health and illness continues to assume that our bodies and minds are separable from each other. People's definition of stress further fuels this assumption. Medical practitioners usually see stress as some highly disturbing events that plague the human mind and cause us to worry. While this definition is true to some extent, it doesn't fully explain what stress truly is.

Stress is not always visible on the face, and the victim can be oblivious of it. In the true sense, stress consists of the internal alterations that occur when the organism detects a threat to its existence or well-being. Though nervous tension may be a component of stress, one can be stressed without feeling tension. On the other hand, also, it is possible to feel tension without activating the physiological mechanisms of stress.

For us to fully grasp the true meaning of stress, we need to understand the importance of Emotional competence.

Emotional competence demands of us, the capacity to feel our emotions, so that we know when we are experiencing stress.

Emotional competence gives us the ability to express our emotions effectively, thereby knowing how to use our present and past experiences to determine when our body needs to stop working temporarily.

Knowing when to place our health above other people's needs is a crucial moment in our lives. It's important to know when to say no, regardless of the consequences involved. If we fail to respect our bodies, our bodies will fail to work for us.

Alexa was a teacher who had Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). This illness caused her to have problems holding something for long. Her shaky hands made it difficult for her to carry out her job, so life became complicated for her. When she was still a small girl, Alexa was abandoned by her parents, and she was taken care of by her stepmother. The stepmother didn't show her the care she needed, which greatly affected the young Alexa, who tried her best to impress her stepmother. She grew up believing that she had to take care of everybody so that they could like her. Alexa had good intentions, but like a lot of people, she didn't know when to stop and think about herself instead.

"I promise you nothing is as chaotic as it seems. Nothing is worth diminishing your health. Nothing is worth poisoning yourself into stress, anxiety, and fear."
~ Steve Maraboli

Our health is of paramount importance to us, and we must always endeavor to think about ourselves first before thinking about other people's.

4. We tend to dismiss the importance of stress, seeing it as a temporary state of mind that's expected of us when we are about to achieve a task

Our body knows when it's being strained beyond the limit, and like every other thing, it knows how to react. When you strain something beyond its limits, it

reaches a breaking point where things go bad mildly or severely. What's worrying about stress, however, is not just it's dismissal from the victims, but from medical professionals who should know better. Isolating psychological factors from mental illnesses can only give half-baked results — it doesn't tell the story from the patient's angle.

For seven years, Michelle had felt a lump in her breast that came and went, until it suddenly grew big overnight, and she became very uncomfortable. Fortunately for her, she knew what triggered her breast cancer and decided to take a break from work while she treated herself. Even though the pieces of evidence are glaring for medical professionals to see, a lot of doctors and physicians still find it difficult to ask patients about their personal lives.

There's nothing wrong with knowing about a patient because getting information about where they are coming from gives you adequate knowledge on how to address their problems.

It is also essential to know that some of our parents too are at fault for some of the things we go through in life. The form of stress associated with this comes from the desperate actions taken by parents or guardians that negatively impact the lives of their kids.

Whatever action we take goes a long way in affecting other people, especially those who are close to us. When Betty Krawczyk had Barbara Ellen, she was going through a tumultuous marriage that she felt emotionally isolated from. In the course of finding her own feet, she was unknowingly creating a huge psychological effect on her daughter Barbara. As the sixth of seven kids, Barbara was cut off from her older siblings, and from a very young age, she had feared being alone. She resented her mother for causing her emotional pain, and she found it challenging to stay away from a relationship for long. When she was about to lose her life to terminal breast cancer, Barbara became

very hostile to her mother because she felt that her life was a reflection of her mother's actions.

The decisions we make as parents can be very impactful on the lives of our kids.

Parents must make conscious efforts to make decisions that would be in the best interests of their kids now or the future.

5. Emotional repression occurs when we subdue our emotions and keep pushing it back into our minds

There's a general belief that smoking causes lung cancer. As true as this assertion may be, it's mostly inaccurate. Saying smoking causes lung cancer is the same as saying water drowns people. You cannot drown unless you stay too long in the water, the same way you cannot get lung cancer from smoking unless you are a chronic smoker. While it's true that smoking contributes a lot to lung cancer, there are other determining factors, and stress is one of them.

According to research by David Kissen, a British chest surgeon, people with lung cancer "have poor and restricted outlets for the expression of emotion compared with non-malignancy lung patients and normal controls." In simpler terms, most of the patients who have been diagnosed with lung cancer have had difficulties in expressing their emotions.

A lot of emotionally repressed people end up committing to smoking as a way of gaining respite from the burden of the emotions suppressed in their minds. This causes an addiction to smoking, which in turn triggers lung cancer and the rest.

The key to breaking people's addiction to smoking is by understanding why they smoke in the first place.

The connection between hormone levels and emotions is so important to the knowledge of cancer that it's surprising that medical practitioners don't pay much attention to it. For example, prostate cancer doesn't have any treatment that guarantees full recovery — the best treatments for prostate cancer require extreme measures such as orchidectomy or total removal of the male genitals. However, research has shown that prostate cancer is not caused by testosterone aggression as people have been made to believe. It is mainly triggered by the increase in hormonal levels, which is influenced by stress or bottled-up traumatic experiences.

Traumatic experiences have a way of playing on the intelligence of its victim — it forces them to believe that they are at fault for whatever went wrong.

6. Coping mechanisms developed at a young age go a long way in determining what we expect from the people around us

In 1946, researchers at John Hopkins University enrolled 1,130 White males over eighteen years and questioned their coping mechanisms regarding how they were brought up by their parents. This research was carried out to know how people coped with their overbearing or nonchalant parents while they were young. It was also carried out to establish whether there were psychobiological characteristics in young people that could help predict their susceptibility to future diseases. Years later, the research was revisited. It was discovered that the majority of the people diagnosed with cancer or any other mental illness were those who suffered traumatic experiences when they were young. These sets of people were distant from their parents, and many of them had to pretend just so that they could look like good children.

A lot of us develop coping mechanisms from a young age to protect our parents' image of us. Parents can be overbearing in enforcing their values on their kids, so we bottle up our emotions to please them. The coping

mechanisms we develop from a tender age can influence us when we are older. A lot of people are used to pleasing other people at their own expense, borrowing from their childhood experiences.

It is not ideal for any parent to be overbearing in enforcing cultural and moral values on children.

While it's essential to teach our children the best things to do, we must also give them the chance to learn and express themselves.

The obsessive need to please people to avoid backlash is also a significant determinant in how we have conditioned ourselves to accept blame. Often, we go for the easiest way out as long as it means we'll avoid confrontation. Avoiding confrontation is good, but it becomes addictive if we get used to it. It also makes us blind to manipulative tactics employed by other people who blame everyone but themselves.

Thirty-nine-year-old Martha realized how emotionally underdeveloped she had been when she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease. The disease, caused by the inflammation of the rectum, carries painful symptoms such as anemia, fever, bleeding from the gut, etc. She had been married to a manipulative husband who blamed her for everything, and the thought of being with such a man triggered a relapse in her treatment anytime she was ready to go back home. Her obsession with pleasing her husband almost took her life, but she was quick to realize what needed to be done to stay alive.

7. Paying attention to our past experiences gives us an insight to why we relapse from health treatments

A functional disorder is a medical term employed by medical practitioners in describing a situation where they feel everything the patient is complaining about is all in their head. This means that in a lot of cases, the patient is

suffering from a mental relapse and not a functional disorder as the doctors would claim. This is particularly common among patients who have suffered one trauma or another. In many cases, the doctors dismiss these patients without paying attention to what is actually bothering them enough to cause a relapse.

The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain where emotional memories are stored and linked with pain. People who suffer from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), or even those who have recovered from it, can suffer a relapse due to this connection. The sharp pain caused by the IBS is triggered by the recollection of some of the emotional memories that involve pain.

Recovering from trauma is not easy, it may take years; doctors must make conscious attempts to understand where a patient is coming from before dismissing their complaints.

One of the most common and prevalent mental illnesses is Alzheimer's Disease, also known as ADHD. ADHD is associated with dementia, which is a loss of memory. Dementia occurs in three percent of people who are seventy-years old, and it increases to about thirteen percent for people who are eighty and above. The relationship between dementia and stress can be linked to the hippocampus. The hippocampus is located in the temporal lobe of the brain, and it is associated with memory formation. Clinical examination has proven that the hippocampus shrinks when the body and brain are stressed internally or externally.

Our body, which is mostly protected by the immune system instinctively says no when we stress it too much. Just like the immune system itself, the presence of a virus or infection triggers a defensive reaction to protect the body. However, in an attempt to fight the invaders, the immune system goes berserk, tearing everything down. This is evident in our brains when we are stressed —

it informs the body to protest, and in a lot of cases, these protests end up badly for us.

8. The fear of abandonment and loss makes us vulnerable to needless anxiety

Unlike adults, children have no capacity for biological self-regulation. Adults can find a way to program their biologic environment to suit their current needs. For example, if the weather becomes too hot, we can switch on the air conditioner, and if it gets too cold, we switch on the heater. Infants are not afforded these opportunities, so they cling to the next available adult that they are emotionally attached to.

Emotional and social relationships are very important to our upbringing and the way we view life. The psychological connection children attach to their parents is based on how the parents connect with them in return. However, it's essential to know that lack of self-regulation can spill into adulthood and affect us mentally.

Adaptation cannot occur wholly within the individual because humans are a product of the connections established with family and tribe. Social and emotional connections are an integral part of our neurological and chemical makeup. We all know this from the daily experience of dramatic physiological shifts in our bodies as we interact with others.

When we are scared of losing someone, we tend to explain ourselves too much, just so the other person can understand our viewpoint. Instead of taking a stand over our decisions, we spend too much time trying to persuade the other party that we're doing the right thing. However, when this becomes a daily occurrence, it leads to stress, which can lead to frustration or depression.

The psychological connection between parents and their children is an endless cycle that has been passed on from generation to generation. While we may end up blaming our parents for affecting us with their choices, it's also important to note that they probably suffered the same fate as us with their own parents. This shows that people unintentionally pass on what they've learned from their parents to their own kids.

Stress can be transmitted transgenerationally, and that's why doctors need to be familiar with a patient's historical background. When we fully grasp this, we understand why we should absolve ourselves of blame and live a life of fulfillment.

The choice to become a better parent rests solely on your shoulders as an individual.

Being a better parent involves knowing when you are wrong and being conscious of the decisions you make.

Did you know? Approximately eight million deaths each year are attributable to mental illness.

9. We must dismantle the social beliefs programmed in us and install the determination to be better in its stead

Despite the number of years spent in researching the dynamics of our genes, people still fail to understand that genes alone do not form our full growth in life. As is evident with a plant, the environment in which a seed is planted determines how well the plant will grow. This example is the same with humans; we grow according to the environment we find ourselves in. Settling for the view that illnesses, mental or physical, are primarily genetic allows us to avoid disturbing questions about the nature of the society in which we live.

We are often programmed with unconscious beliefs that control our lives. We believe things like;

- I'm not lovable,
- I have to be strong,
- It's not right for me to be angry,
- I'm responsible for the whole world,
- I can handle anything,
- I don't exist unless I do something, etc.

Negative thinking imposes on our freedom and liberation. It makes us vulnerable to the societal beliefs listed above.

Liberation from oppressive and stressful external circumstances is essential, but that is only possible if we first liberate ourselves from the conditioned societal beliefs imposed on us.

Understanding our body is very important, and that's why we must learn the Seven A's of healing, as explained by the author.

- **Acceptance.** We must accept how things are to know where we stand and what to change.
- **Awareness.** We must be aware of the fact that our bodies and mind are connected.
- **Anger.** Repression of anger is not ideal for the body. We must let out our anger in a controlled manner.
- **Autonomy.** We must develop an internal care center and take control of our lives by eliminating the traumatic experiences of our childhood.

- **Attachment.** Attachment involves our connection with the world and how it's crucial to establish good and sustainable relationships with people.
- **Assertion.** We must stand our ground and make a confirmation of who we are. We must assert ourselves and establish our control over our lives.
- **Affirmation.** Affirmation deals with making a positive statement towards having a fulfilling life. We must take positive steps towards the things that are valuable to our lives.

When it comes to healing, we must look beyond the easy places and look deep within ourselves to find the answers to the questions that have a great bearing on our lives.

Conclusion

Our minds and bodies are connected in a way that makes it impossible to isolate them when it comes to health issues. Mental stress triggers a lot of psychological illnesses, and what's more worrying is that enough attention is not paid to it. People fall into relapse because the physician attending to them has failed to establish the connection between their life and what they are suffering from.

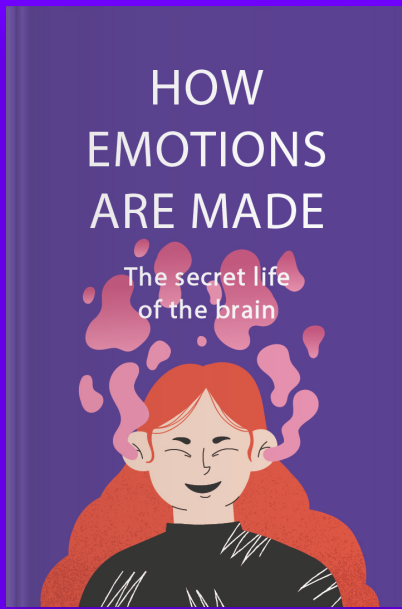
As individuals, we need to know when to say no and put our own health first before that of any other person. The things we do for people should have a limit, and once it starts telling on our health, we need to stop no matter how hard it may be. The body has its own way of reacting to both internal and external stress, which is why we must be careful.

As seen in this summary, failure to take care of ourselves can have devastating effects that can spill over onto our children and loved ones. In an attempt to

help people, we must never forget ourselves because only a healthy body can do many things.

Try this:

Make a comprehensive list of your daily tasks and check if you have enough time to rest and recuperate. If not, adjust your schedule to include more of yourself and less of others.



How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain

Lisa Feldman Barrett

Read to boost:

- Emotional control
- Sensibility
- Empathy
- Tranquility

What's in there for me?

Author Lisa Felman Barrett, Ph.D., is a highly respected scientist who has conducted countless studies in neuroscience and psychology. She explores the deep theories behind how the brain works and how emotions are formed. Are you born with a set of emotions that are triggered within a particular situation? How Emotions are Made answers this question while doing away with some of the long-held beliefs about evolution and emotional creation.



You have more control over your emotions than you think. You simply need to tap into their power and harness them in a healthy way.



“An emotion is your brain’s creation of what your bodily sensations mean, in relation to what is going on around you in the world.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. The classical view of emotion, and why it doesn't fit into today's world

For centuries we have believed in the “classical view of emotion” in terms of how all human emotions are created. This view tells us that we are born with a set of emotions that are triggered by specific situations in our lives. When we come into contact with a trigger, our brain's neurons fire, and specific emotional responses are created. These responses are saved as a “fingerprint,” something that is ingrained within our very being.

Lisa Feldman Barrett, Ph.D., never bought into the classical standpoint; she prefers seeking more individualistic answers for every human being. Beginning her studies as a clinical psychologist in the 1980s, she decided to study where emotions came from and found many surprising results along the way. One study really piqued her interest and pushed her to study further; this was a study of patients suffering from either anxiety or depression.

Emotions are powerful and often confusing things, but perhaps we have more control over them than we realize.

Upon asking them questions, she found that neither set of subjects could accurately describe which condition they had — anxiety or depression — by what it felt like. We know that anxiety and depression are two different conditions, but each has different feelings attached. From this, she discovered “emotional granularity,” the ability for some people to recognize emotions better than others.

“An emotion is your brain's creation of what your bodily sensations mean, in relation to what is going on around you in the world.”

~ Lisa Feldman Barrett, Ph.D.

People respond to different emotions in different ways, so how can emotions be something we're born with and have a set of fingerprint responses to? Dr.

Barrett set off on a journey to discover that perhaps emotions are far more individual in how they're triggered than most people believe. The following chapters will reveal more about her discoveries.

2. Understanding how emotions are prompted and simulated within the brain from past experiences

Our past experiences give meaning to the way we feel in the present moment. Our brains remember our experiences, how they made us feel, and the way we reacted; all this information is used to formulate a response when a similar situation, or one which the brain considers to be similar, arises in the future.

This process is called simulation, and behind the scenes, the small neurons within the brain are firing to recollect past experiences. Using these memories, they then put together the story of what you're experiencing now. These neurons all have different jobs to do; for example, some recognize the sensations of how something looks, some recognize how it feels, some remember how it tastes, etc.

Experiences are often remembered in terms of feelings. If something made you feel good, you remember it with a smile. If something makes you feel bad, you avoid thinking about it.

For instance, if someone handed you a piece of pineapple, your sensory and motor neurons would work together to remember information from previous pineapples you've experienced and give you a complete mental picture to work with. This is called simulation from a concept.

The concept is what you know something to be from your past experiences, and simulation is the process of your brain putting everything together. Therefore, Barrett sets forth the idea that the same concept and simulation process could be responsible for creating emotions.

A good example is if you suddenly develop a stomach ache while sitting at the dinner table. You piece together the reason for the stomach ache from your experiences; for instance, you've overeaten, or perhaps someone you miss just walked into the room. The cause of the stomach ache could be either option, but your brain will come to a conclusion based on your experience. Is this how emotions are also made? Lisa Feldman Barrett, Ph.D. calls this "constructed emotion."

Did you know? There are six basic human emotions: happiness, sadness, fear, disgust, anger, and surprise.

3. Do you believe that emotions are universally recognizable?

Barrett describes a picture of tennis player Serena Williams. This picture shows only her face, with her eyes closed and mouth open. From the picture, you could assume that she is terrified, screaming in fear. However, when you see the entire body picture, you see her body stance is showing relief and glee because she's just won the match point. From this example, you can see how emotions could very easily be mistaken for something else, and therefore possibly not universally recognizable. Does it all depend upon the situation and what snapshots you get to see?

The classical view of emotions says that you don't need to see the whole picture to know the emotion displayed. In the Serena Williams example, that would mean you could accurately tell what she felt from just the image of her face. But as we know, the classical view of emotions was not accurate here.

While our facial expressions are one of the most significant ways to communicate non-verbally, it entirely depends upon how the other person interprets them. So, the idea that basic emotions are clear via facial expression is not at all correct.

Body language and facial expression are vital in helping others to understand how we're feeling.

The brain is the control center of everything body-related, and that means your brain is constantly working, telling your body what to do, how to feel, and what to show. From that, what your body is showing to the outside world represents what your brain is thinking. But the brain doesn't work alone; it works with the rest of the body. If your body feels lethargic, your emotions will likely be negative, and vice versa.

"Your body-budgeting regions can therefore trick your brain into believing that there is tissue damage, regardless of what is happening in your body."

~ Lisa Feldman Barrett, Ph.D.

4. A combination of concepts and categories helps the brain create emotions

Earlier, we touched upon the idea of concepts, and without these, your brain is working in the dark. As you move through life, you add new concepts to your list, which means you can experience a wide range of emotions. Concepts help the world to make sense to you as an individual. When you experience a new concept, your brain begins to categorize it, to make sense of how it links into your interoceptive network and how you will react to it in the future.

Put simply, a concept is what you understand something to be; for example, the sky is blue.

When a word is linked to a concept, it becomes more powerful, but that doesn't mean that you can't experience that concept without an actual label or title for it. For instance, children do not know the words that describe something they've experienced; they only have the concept they've just encountered and how they felt about it, the emotion.

Categorization becomes more complex because there are many ways to respond to a particular emotion or situation. For instance, one person might start shouting and screaming when they become angry, whereas another person might simply sit there and seethe silently. Your brain comes up with the winning idea via categorization. This is chosen using your past experiences, particularly how they felt and how you reacted, with a bit of prediction thrown in for good measure. Your perception of that emotion will then influence the way you act. This explains why reactions to certain emotions can be quite different between individuals.

5. Does society and its “rules” affect the way our emotions are created?

Many of our emotions are influenced by what society tells us they should be, which can vary depending upon the type of society. All it takes for someone to control emotions is to develop an idea via a concept, tell someone about it, and let the word spread.

For instance, if two people have the same idea of what anger looks like, they'll be able to tell instantly when the other is angry, perhaps by simply furrowing their brows. This is because they both connect brow furrowing to anger. These shared ideals are often part and parcel of close societies.

“Social reality is not just about words — it gets under your skin. If you perceive the same baked good as a decadent “cupcake” or a healthful “muffin,” research suggests that your body metabolizes it differently.”

~ Lisa Feldman Barrett, Ph.D.

The classic view of emotions doesn't give you any control. It tells us that our emotions are an integral part of our evolution, and they are ingrained within us

from birth. From there, a specific trigger will kick off the emotional response, and we're powerless to stop it. But as we know now, this is not always true.

Constructed emotion teaches us that the brain is predictive, not reactive. The classical view suggests the brain is always trying to predict what will happen next, basically because it is trying to keep you alive. Of course, your past experiences and the state of your body budget at that time are also going to come into play to create a complete forecasting system for your emotions.

The idea that our emotions are in control and we are just going along for the ride is outdated. Constructed emotion gives us far more scope for control.

6. Look after your brain and body, and learn to control your emotions

Our brains and our bodies — the mental and physical aspects — constantly communicate with one another to work together. When you do something physical, it affects the mental, and vice versa. For this reason, looking after both your brain and body is vital if you want to hold the reins of control over your emotions.

You have more control over your emotions than you think. You simply need to tap into their power and harness them in a healthy way.

Lisa Feldman Barrett, Ph.D. gives us some valuable suggestions on how to do this:

- Keep your body budget balanced by giving your body precisely what it needs, a healthy diet, plenty of exercise, and enough sleep.
- Try having regular massages, as touch is known to help with emotional health and wellbeing.

- Try yoga and mindful breathing to help you calm yourself down in a difficult moment.
- Spend more time outside in nature and natural light.
- Stay away from noise and pollution as much as possible.

Become more emotionally intelligent to give you more control over your emotions. You can do that by learning more words and opening your mind to new situations. Learning new words will help you create fresh concepts.

Aside from controlling your emotions in the general run of life, you also need to exercise control during difficult times. This is hard for everyone, but it can be achieved with a few valuable methods. Exercise is one of the best ways to handle the way you feel in the heat of the moment.

Recategorization is a handy tool, which you can use if you have a range of concepts at your disposal. By learning more words and creating new concepts, you're able to use recategorization to help you overcome difficult moments, and therefore avoid actions that you may later regret.

Another option is to try mindfulness. This teaches you to be present, and in the moment, rather than allowing your mind to wander off on a tangent, giving you a higher chance of detrimental actions. Mindfulness takes time, but once you have mastered it, you'll be able to simply observe emotions and thoughts without actually judging them or acting upon them.

Mindfulness helps you to be calmer, allows you to control your emotions, and stops you from living in the past.

Conclusion

The idea that our emotions are born within us and are triggered by a set of predetermined footprints does not fit in with the modern way of thinking. The idea of constructed emotions — our brains using a complex series of concepts, predictions, simulations, and finally creating the emotion we experience firsthand — is far more likely to be the actual case.

Of course, emotions are complicated to study because we cannot see them; we can only feel them. Measuring emotions is also challenging, especially in terms of scientific studies. Science doesn't tend to enjoy anything that cannot be seen or measured easily, which makes emotions a subject that confuses everyone from the get-go. As a result, lengthy studies have taken place over many years to try and gain the answers we need to understand our emotions more carefully.

Lisa Feldman Barrett, Ph.D., suggests that constructed emotion is far more likely to be the case, especially considering the vast differences between how one person may react to a situation and emotion versus how another may respond. A particular set of circumstances may not bother one person but may have another person in floods of tears and sadness. A regulatory set of triggers and footprints is therefore difficult to believe.

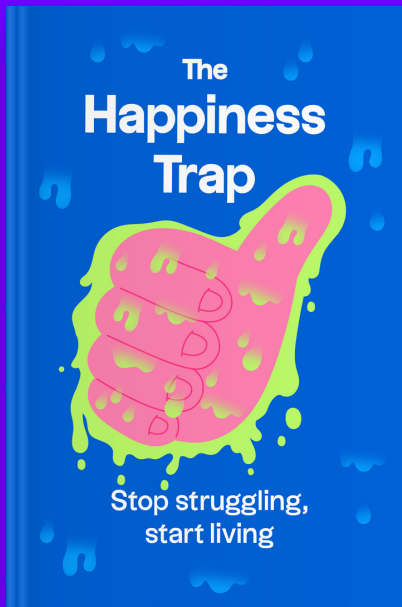
Indeed, the brain is a complicated organ to study! As more research goes into how the brain works, we will perhaps get a solid answer on exactly how emotions are created within the human mind. Until that time, we simply need to know our own abilities to control what is going on inside our minds and learn not to react adversely due to negative emotions.

Try this:

Focus on your diet, commit to doing more exercise, get outside in nature, and ensure you get enough sleep.

Commit to learning more words to help your brain come up with more concepts.

Keep an emotional journal for a week and see if you can identify the triggers that cause your emotions and the way you feel (mentally and physically) at the time.



The Happiness Trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living

Russ Harris

Read to boost:

- Life contentment
- Acceptance
- Flexibility
- Self-observation

What's in there for me?

According to Russ Harris, many people go about the pursuit of happiness in the wrong way, making them miserable, anxious, and depressed. His book explains the techniques and strategies of the ACT (Acceptance, Commitment Therapy) – a revolutionary psychotherapy-based research method in behavioral science. By clarifying your values and developing mindfulness, ACTs will help you escape the happiness trap and find true life satisfaction.



The more we fight difficult feelings, the more they smother us.



“Negative feelings mean I’m a normal human being.”

1. You Can Learn How to Recognize The “Happiness Trap” And Figure Out How to Climb Out of It

Science proposes we all are oblivious to the fact that humanity is caught and swayed by the Happiness Trap. But you can study its dynamics, and here lies the hope, as you can discover how to achieve lasting freedom from its chains.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), a potent behavioral change model has proven successful in alleviating mental health disorders, drug addiction, and severe pain in patients.

“Negative feelings mean I’m a normal human being.” ~ Russ Harris

Time has revealed that a better standard of living does not guarantee the happiness of people. If it were so, we all would have been happier persons with the advancement in medical research, extra cash, better access to welfare services, improved housing conditions, better environmental conditions, availability of basic and social amenities, better access to job opportunities, education, and entertainment. But the reverse is the case.

Indeed, true happiness is seen when we follow self-discovery paths and self-actualization while striving to meet the zenith of fulfillment.

It’s is saddening that the progression we have experienced in development over the years has confined us behind the bars of mental slavery. However, there is a soothing feeling we may get when we indulge in this. Still, we know there exists a negative side of fear, anxiety, and even pain.

Sooner or later, we all will need to face the brutal fact that life involves pain. It is an inevitable phenomenon because people grow, fall sick, die, and even exit our lives. But we can still live a full life, which is good news and it all depends on us.

2. The four major myths that make up the happiness trap

True happiness is somewhat difficult to come by. Many myths surround the happiness trap, the major ones are:

Myth 1: Happiness is the natural state for all human beings

So many people have bought into the lie that everyone is naturally happy. This has led to an increase in the rate of depression among the general population. Some think everyone has found happiness except them. This false notion fuels dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

Myth 2: If you're not happy, you're defective

Mental distress is generally perceived as an abnormal condition by western society. This has led many people to think they are defective when they experience distressing thoughts and moods, which are inevitable occurrences.

Labels perceived to be negative, such as, "You're depressed," often heard from health professionals' often reaffirms how imperfect we are.

A different and more balanced assumption is proposed by ACT. It reminds you that you are merely human with a sound mind performing its fundamental duties, which infers that you are not flawed. The good news is that ACT can teach you how to adapt perfectly to this truth in a manner that you will achieve a great deal of life transformation.

"The mind loves telling stories; in fact, it never stops." ~ Russ Harris

Myth 3: To create a better life, we must get rid of negative feelings

The society we live in teaches us to always seek escape from stressful, painful, or unhappy situations. Indeed, we live in a feel-good civilization. We often strive hard to replace uncomfortable feelings with distressing ones thinking we will find true happiness. Unfortunately, we still get caught up in the web of frustration, anxiety, fear, or even addiction.

Myth 4: You should be able to control what you think and feel

Experts have made us believe that we can actually control a lot of our thoughts and feelings. But this is not entirely true as we exert less control than they made us believe.

Note, these major myths make up the happiness trap. They make us engage in a brawl against our very human nature: a brawl in which winning is impossible.

Did you know? These four powerful myths provide the basic blueprint for the happiness trap. They set us up for a struggle we can never win: the struggle against our own human nature.

3. Using control strategies to search for happiness only creates a vicious circle

Resorting to liquor and evasion of social gatherings, are some control strategies for getting rid of or avoiding unfriendly thoughts. This will only be effective when used moderately. A good way of managing unpleasant feelings could be to use distractions.

A distraction is sure helpful after a verbal fight with your better-half. You can take a cool walk down your estate or see a hilarious movie until you feel calm. While sometimes, grabbing your car keys and hitting the road is best.

Using such methods of control leads to problems. You will also meet problems when the situations chosen for its application are not carefully chosen, and when the methods prevent you from engaging in the activities you are passionate about.

Furthermore, control strategies have three major costs:

1. A huge amount of time and drive are wasted, and they are generally ineffectual eventually.
2. We usually sustain a feeling of inadequacy and stupidity once we discover the thoughts and emotions we are trying to throw away keeps bouncing off an invisible wall to us.
3. Control strategies that prove effective in alleviating unpleasant emotions in the short-term usually have a negative effect on the overall quality of life of people in the long-run.

Experiential avoidance means the tendency to keep trying to avoid, change, or get rid of your unwanted thoughts and feelings, even when doing so is harmful, costly, useless, or destructive.

In a nutshell, the happiness trap means: the more we try to escape being caught up with bad feelings and emotions, the more bad feelings we find ourselves wallowing in. Depression, drug and alcohol addiction, eating disorders, and many other mental and psychological problems are all resultant effects of experiential avoidance.

Self-awareness is a powerful tool for evading the happiness trap. You could begin with being conscious of all the things you do each day to avoid negative or unpleasant emotions. Afterward, making a conscious effort of putting an end to the consequences of these evasion actions would be the last step towards achieving freedom from the happiness trap.

Did you know? Many women are reluctant to tell even their closest friends that they are feeling depressed or anxious, or not coping in some way, for fear of being judged weak or silly. Our silence about what we are really feeling and the false front we put on for the people around us simply add to the powerful illusion of control.

4. Using the six core principles of ACT, you can overcome negative feelings

Defusion, expansion, connection, the observing self, values, and committed action are the six core principles of ACT.

Principle 1: Defusion

Defusion implies a strategy of connecting to one's thoughts and feelings in a way that they have less impact and effect on you. As you apply this strategy to unpleasant feelings, you will find yourself living above being influenced by such emotions.

When you learn to defuse self-limiting beliefs and harsh self-criticisms, they will have much less influence over your behavior.

Principle 2: Expansion

Expansion means making room for unpleasant sensations, feelings, and urges, instead of suppressing them. Once you train yourself to accommodate these kinds of feelings, they will bother you less. This term is known as acceptance, and it is captured under ACT.

Principle 3: Connection

Living in the now is a proven way of managing our past hurts and evade worries about what lies ahead. This term is known as a connection. When we find ourselves genuinely connected to our present moment, we will be free from some unpleasant thoughts. This principle is known as "Contact with the present moment."

Principle 4: The observing self

As a potent facet of human consciousness, this principle will give you the ability to enhance your relationship with unpleasant emotions. Although this principle is very powerful, it has been severely neglected by western psychology.

Principle 5: Values

You make your life meaningful by understanding and connecting with the values you have laid down for yourself. This, however, is a crucial step towards ensuring we make the best out of our lives. Whatever is important and dear to you is found in your values. Your values determine what you stand for in life, what is meaningful to you, what kind of fellow you will be, and how well you can influence others around you. They motivate you to make important changes where necessary, and they guide your pursuits in life.

Principle 6: Committed action

A meaningful life is guaranteed through committed action guided by clarified values.

Did you know? Practically thanking your mind aids defusion and helps you free your mind from the tyranny of negative thoughts.

5. We're always experiencing emotion of some sort — they can be controlled

Our emotions do not necessarily have to control our reaction to events. You may choose to yell, wear a scary frown, or clench your fists when you are angry, or you may choose to act calmly. No matter the scene, you are in charge of the way you react to unpleasant feelings. The belief that emotions govern our actions is a potent illusion because most of our actions can actually be controlled, provided we make the conscious effort to stay aware of them. Just like the weather, our emotions are constantly changing.

A feeling refers to a discrete episode of emotion with distinctive, recognizable characteristics.

We often want to evade unpleasant emotions. This is why we find ourselves judging any feeling that is unpleasant as bad though sometimes we label them as negative. ACT enables you to embrace these unpleasant sensations as normal streams of constantly changing feelings passing through your body. It helps you drop the notion that just because some feelings are unpleasant, they are therefore termed bad. If you need help dealing with any obstructive thoughts about your feelings, any defusion strategy will surely prove helpful.

The more we fight difficult feelings, the more they smother us.

The struggle switch

Do you want to worsen your unpleasant emotions? Then turn on the struggle switch. The struggle switch is created unconsciously by our mind by re-echoing that unpleasant feelings are dangerous and must be avoided because they are bound to cause devastating damages to our person. If we agree with the silent tales in between this illusion, the switch goes on. Consequently, we then begin to view uncomfortable feelings as nothing else but threats.

Expansion helps you to stare down your demons

Practicing expansion aids us to dodge our thinking self, do away with its obstructive remarks, and unite with our feelings through the observing self. Our emotions are experienced directly by us, to accept them as they are rather than as our thinking selves perceive them to be.

The three steps of expansion

Observing your feelings; Breathing into them, and allowing them to come and go are the three basic steps of expansion. These steps are not usually easy to carry out, but it's definitely worth it.

Did you know? By making room for your feelings and willingly feeling them (even though you don't want to), you'll change your relationship with them.

They'll become much less threatening and will have much less influence on you. They'll take up much less time, energy and attention.

6. Every emotion gives you the impulse to act in a certain way; this impulse is called “urge”

These are the two ways of dealing with an urge. When you are faced with a strong urge, you ask yourself a few questions. Is acting upon this urge consistent with my values? Will it propel me in the direction I really want to go in life? Will my actions be of that of the prototype I want to model after? If your answers to these questions are affirmative, then you should go ahead and act upon it, the urge.

You can either act upon an urge or not act upon it.

Suppose we notice that our urge and our values both push us in opposite directions. In that case, it is advisable not to engage in a brawl with that urge because we may lack the stability to focus on committed action. Therefore, practicing the principle of expansion is best in this case. There is a routine you can follow if you find yourself having troublesome urges. You can remember it with the acronym OBSERVE:

- O = Observe: means you ponder upon this urge just the same way a curious scientist would do. What is your inference? Where can you feel it in your body?
- B = Breathe: means taking a few deep breaths. Making room for the urge.
- S = Surf: means you think of the urge as though it were a wave you were surfing.
- E = Expand: means making more room for the urge and believing that you are still bigger no matter how strong the urge gets.

- R = Refocus: means you release yourself from the grip of any obstructive thoughts, bringing your raft attention back to the present moment to be aware of what is happening around you.
- V = Values: means you seize a moment to unite with all that is important to your personality.
- E = Engage: means you take committed action. You allow your feelings to freely come and go, and you commit to your actions.

A simpler acronym you may want to stick to is ACT:

- Accept your internal experience
- Choose a valued direction
- Take action.

The unwillingness of many people to accept the discomfort that comes with change is why they are unable to make significant changes that could really enhance the quality of their lives.

Did you know? Besides urges associated with emotions. We feel the urge to eat, drink, sleep, have sex or get some exercise. Addictions typically give rise to extremely powerful urges: to gamble, get high or get drunk.

Conclusion

We must realize that making mistakes is inevitable, life involves pain, but we must embrace the opportunity in our difficulty and choose to grow. Whatever you attempt to do, you'll get the best results when you focus on what is in your control, which is mainly two things: your actions and your attention.

The whole purpose of this guide is to help you escape the vicious cycle of the happiness trap and to live a meaningful life instead of basing your existence on

chasing 'good' feelings and avoiding 'bad' ones. Of course, in a full human life, you will experience the full range of human feelings. You will be doing yourself good if you willingly make room for them all.

Try this:

How to escape The Happiness Trap.

Increasing your self-awareness is the first step. Pay attention to all things you do each day to change, dodge, or blot out unpleasant feelings and thoughts. When you find yourself using control strategies, notice the consequences.



Don't Overthink It:

Make Easier Decisions, Stop Second-Guessing, and Bring More Joy to Your Life

Anne Bogel

Read to boost:

- Mindfulness
- Actionability
- Decision-making
- Lightheartedness

What's in there for me?

Have you been stuck in a vicious cycle of what-ifs? Anne Bogel says you can escape this life! Not only can you overcome negative thinking, but you can also replace those thoughts with positive ones to bring you love, joy, and peace. Her book shares actionable strategies that will bring positive, immediate, and lasting changes in your life. Her framework for making choices frees you to focus on other important stuff.



At a certain point, waiting time becomes wasted time.



“Why not seize the pleasure at once? How often is happiness destroyed by preparation, foolish preparation!”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Living well depends upon thinking well — about the things that matter

When we refer to the term overthinking, we're not talking about having to meet our basic needs, like a place to rest our head when it's dark or where to locate our next meal. Those basic questions worth suspicion and needs thought. And neither are we talking about major life decisions, like whether to change careers or leave a relationship or migrate across the country.

Big decisions like these require genuine thought. Overthinking means those times when we waste mental energy on aspects of our lives that don't deserve it. Those times when nothing else seems to come to our mind, even though we realize our thoughts are better spent elsewhere.

Overthinking takes different forms. Sometimes it looks like worry.

Reviewing something we've done in the past or imagining something that might happen in the future might have us feeling stuck. We might lie awake at night to wonder what our friends think of us, or if someone we love seems tired of us, or if our library fines are getting really and truly out of control.

Overthinking may look like fretting about the small stuff, devoting disproportionate amounts of brain space to the relatively insignificant.

Whether the problems streaming into our thoughts are huge or little, we recognize the common thread: these thoughts are redundant, harmful, and unhelpful. Our brains are busy working hard without accomplishing anything. It is tiring and makes us feel lousy. Dr Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, a psychology professor at Yale whose research focused on women's mental health and well-being, made a study over twenty years showing that overthinking makes life harder, hurts our relationships, and may contribute to create mental disorders like depression, severe anxiety, and alcohol abuse.

When we spend our time overthinking, that's what we're doing. Let's face it: nobody wants to live a life dedicated to overthinking. But it doesn't feel like something we choose ourselves, it feels like something we can't run away from. According to the author, this book is for those who would like to look back one day and proclaim a life well-lived. Living well hinges upon thinking well about the kinds of stuff that matters. We want to learn how to stop feeling overwhelmed and bring more stability and happiness into our lives. That means learning strategies for approaching every decision we make.

2. Practicing new ways of thinking and reinforcing new habits of thought will prevent overthinking

Anne Bogel wrote in her first book, "Reading People" about how the way we see ourselves and the enormous implications it has on how we live our lives. "I'm the kind of person who _____" is a strong statement, no matter what is put in the blank. A shift in our sense of identity can rapidly lead to enormous alterations in our behavior.

Starting now, don't characterize yourself as a habitual over-thinker. Overthinking is not part of your identity anymore, though you may be engaging in it right now. Instead, start to portray yourself — if only in your head — as someone who:

- Can experience less emotional turmoil when making decisions and more joy and composure
- Can know how to make confident, thoughtful decisions
- Doesn't need to continuously second-guess herself
- Is understanding how to separate the unimportant, toxic, and harmful
- Is formulating procedures for halting overthinking in its tracks

- Is becoming prepared to bend when things don't go as planned
- Can set overthinking to one side to welcome great things into her life

Shifting your attitude is the first step, and also an important one. Now you've got some work to do.

Improvement won't happen on its own, and it won't happen overnight, but it will happen.

Learning to think adequately is a procedure. Some methods are easy to execute, while others are harder. Some really will feel like punching a button, while others will need persistence. Acquiring new mental practices and structures of thought may feel intimidating at first, and it's no wonder.

Dr Henry Emmons, an integrative psychiatrist, writes In his book, "The Chemistry of Calm", that it's no surprise we feel our current "wild mind" state is our natural way of being. Dr Henry advocates a holistic direction to mental health problems like depression and anxiety.

"Since childhood, we have spent many of our waking hours reinforcing our habits of thought. We empower them through attention and repetition. Anything that we practice this consistently we will eventually get good at."

~ Dr Henry Emmons

We've become very good at overthinking, as a result of all the practice we've put in. That's why we need to start practicing new techniques, and as we develop new ways of thinking and enhance new habits of thought, we will become much better at not overthinking.

Did you know? Many of us give strength to unhealthy nerve circuits through repetitive practice. Every time we repeat a fearful or pessimistic thought, we reinforce the connections that make it effortless to have that thought again.

3. Analysis paralysis is one of the most common manifestations of overthinking

When we're under its hold, the problem is not the initial decision itself but the way we reach it. Instead of helping us solve the problem, our mental habits make us more rooted in indecision.

Analysis paralysis is harmful because it will never resolve itself if left alone. We can't think our way out of it. Unless we understand what's happening and take action, we will remain stuck.

"Certainty is missing the point entirely." ~ Anne Lamott

Common signs of analysis paralysis include:

- Repeatedly pushing away decisions until later
- Suspending a decision while hoping that a bigger opportunity will present itself
- Wanting more alternatives when we already have enough
- Constantly analyzing the same information we've already compiled
- Fearing we will make the wrong decision
- Staying so long to conclude that we miss the opportunity to do something
- Reconsidering a decision after it is made

Causes of Analysis Paralysis

Analysis paralysis does not affect everyone the same way; some of us are more likely than others to get hooked in this particular trap. Sometimes our tendency to seek perfectionism, predictably reel us in.

Intellectual Curiosity

When looking for a solution, highly intelligent people may see whole areas of possibilities that others don't see, which may lead them to turn simple decisions into complex ones. These positive traits make our search for additional options, whether or not we need them.

Information Overload

When we're making a decision, more information can be a good thing. The problem is not the instinct to come up with the information but the degree to which we follow it. We may end up being trapped by our thoughts.

Information is good until it's bad.

Perfectionism

Perfectionism may manifest as any of the following:

- Procrastination
- A need to always seek the "right" answer before proceeding
- Processing All-or-nothing thoughts
- Struggling to complete a project because there's always more we could do
- A critical eye that demands imperfections
- Frequently reevaluating past decisions

Antidotes to analysis paralysis

We get into difficulties when we act as though the ideal answers to our questions are out there somewhere. We should understand that we can't keep searching for perfect solutions because they don't exist.

Get moving

To free yourself from analysis paralysis, you don't need more information. You need to work. Even taking baby steps forward can shift your rhythm and get you unstuck.

Kick perfectionism to the curb

Perfectionism makes us critical, uneasy, and annoying to be around. Besides, we're more likely to overthink when we're not in a good mood. There's no need to be so hard on ourselves because it doesn't have to be perfect to be good.

4. Needing to choose between two good options can lead to overthinking — take action to move forward

We may slow down when faced with a big decision because we want to be sure we're taking it seriously. Waiting purposefully has a place; there are times for slow and systematic decisions.

At a certain point, waiting time becomes wasted time.

We think moving unhurriedly will aid us, but we can waste so much time pondering our options that we get stuck in analysis paralysis. We have to understand that something being important doesn't necessarily require slow measures every step of the way. There should be a time when a decision doesn't need any more thought and anything else means we're overthinking it.

Sometimes, we can easily differentiate between deliberate pondering and overthinking; other times it takes a while to realize what's going on. But with enough practice, you'll get better at identifying when slowing down is a deterrent, and learn what to do about it. Here are some indications that it's time to make a decision.

When deciding between two good choices

Making a decision between two good choices sounds like a great situation to be in, but it's tough because there may be no clear way to decide. Our intuition may be to slow down until the right answer becomes apparent, but if we're not careful, our decision may lead us straight into analysis paralysis.

When we're facing two good options, we don't need more time. We need to move on.

When you know what to do but you are dragging your feet

Whether the dilemma is big or small, if the answer doesn't seem appealing to us, we may try searching for a better one, even if a better answer has no possibility of arrival.

When we put off doing something we don't want to do, we keep the awful thing right in front of us for much longer than we need to. As long as we're pondering the issue, we're dwelling on the negative. If we dread something, we can satisfy ourselves well by handling it sooner rather than later. If we overthink something we can do something about, the best thing to do is speed up, take action as soon as possible.

When you're tempted to beat yourself up

Sometimes, we slow down because while we seem to have moved forward externally, we've not moved forward mentally or emotionally. When we realize we need to move forward, we must do it with our actions and minds. As long as we're mulling over the issue, we're dwelling on the negative. Nobody's got time for that.

Don't wallow, don't wobble, move on.

5. You can make few decisions in a day, clear away your mental clutter to make sound decisions

Each decision we make in a day takes a toll on the amount of mental energy. Each small decision needs only a bit of brainpower, but the total impact is large.

The more choices available, the more likely you will succumb to decision fatigue.

This is the state where we become weary from making each decision, our capacity to decide breaks down. Unless we're on guard, we may not notice decision fatigue creeping in. Decision fatigue is very sneaky. Instead of feeling tired in a particular way, we feel overwhelmed.

To stay clear of decision fatigue, it helps to think of our mental energy as a budget. Making decision after decision has to come with a price.

The more the decisions you make in a day, the lower the quality of your decisions will be over time.

Our mental capacity to attack them wears off and overthinking sets in. Contrarily, the more decisions we eradicate, the longer we'll maintain our decision-making ability throughout the day.

Strategies to streamline decisions

Let's analyze some certain techniques you can use to limit your options and streamline repetitive decisions.

Eat the same thing

It's extraordinary how we have to decide every day about food. Food and mealtimes play a big role in our lives, so when we simplify these things, we save big.

Adopt a signature dish

This a dependable recipe you're always ready to prepare for friends. That way, you won't have to spend your mental energy determining what to serve, and you don't have to worry about selecting or carrying out a new recipe when guests come over.

Limit yourself to one time

If you find yourself thinking constantly about how to fit something into your schedule, limit your alternatives by creating a set time. However, devoting to a set time is hard for some people, but once the time is set, you don't have to think about it anymore.

Limit technology creep

Limiting our technology use smartly is very important because if we're not careful, our handy little devices can take over our lives.

Even if that's precisely what we don't want, every time there is a reason to use our devices we need to be able to decide to say yes or no.

Limit those constant recurring decisions by setting smart guidelines now.

If you're constantly asking yourself if now would be a good time to pull out your device, contemplate enforcing device-free zones in your life; physical space and, or a set time when you put your device away.

6. When things beyond our control inevitably happen — we have to change course, and we have to do it fast

Some of us seek opportunities to do things randomly and go off script, while others have a plan for every minute of their day. But whether we tend to go with

the flow by nature or carefully craft out our daily routines, life can force us to devise new plans

Things beyond our control can inevitably happen, and we have to make the best of the situation. We have to decide, and we have to do it fast.

“Why not seize the pleasure at once? How often is happiness destroyed by preparation, foolish preparation!” ~ Jane Austen

Moments like these when things go sideways sometimes feel like something we have to endure. Any type of time-sensitive situation — where we have to choose — is ideal for overthinking and decision paralysis. We can't make plans for every situation, but we prepare for things going awry, as they definitely will.

A sudden turn of events may throw us into temporary confusion, but if we can push through the renegotiation of our decisions in a hurry, we may discover satisfaction on the other side. The trick is knowing how to put ourselves in that position.

Just pick something

When it comes to overthinking, any chance for decision-making is loaded with risk, especially when there is no time. Even deciding between good choices is hard, and the added time pressure increases the stakes. It's easy to feel stressed out at the moment and to select carelessly because of it.

When it's clear a decision is what's needed for progress, the worst thing we can do is not act.

Making a choice is better than staying stuck deliberating our choices until the moment passes us by. Just choose something, anything. It's better than doing nothing, and besides, things that don't go according to plan often make the best memories.

Lean in, expecting good things

Our outlook influences how well we handle the situation at hand. When we discover the stakes to be high, we're more likely to stiffen especially if we're bent on perfectionism. When things happen unexpectedly, it's helpful to consciously embrace a low-stakes mindset. Instead of struggling to choose the standard option, we can try to choose a good one, reminding ourselves that the best memories often start with something going awry.

Build a margin for the unexpected

When we're utilizing our full capacity, we're unable to change course from our plans. We simply don't have the margin. But by creating space in our schedules that is by not upholding lives and calendars that are jammed to capacity, we are better able to improvise.

One of the ways to do this is by making plans to meet deadlines early. Keep in mind that things may go wrong and schedules may get disrupted.

Conclusion

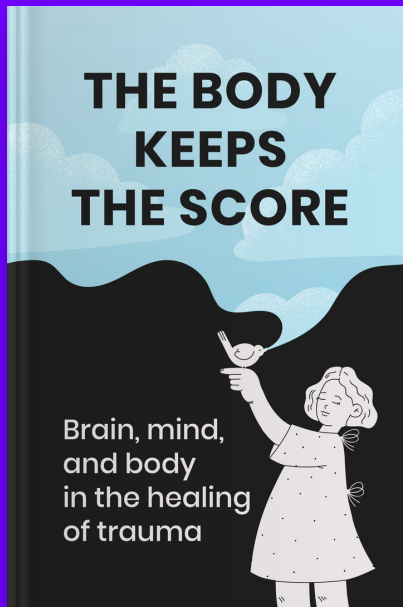
When we don't accept our overthinking behavior for what it is, it's difficult to get over it. Provided we keep relying on decision-making styles that promote overthinking, we're going to keep spending too much of our time overthinking. But once we recognize what's going on, we can begin to impact change. It might feel like a battle at first — especially if you've been assessing things to death your whole lives — but with time, it will start to feel habitual.

Try this:

Describe yourself differently

Stop describing yourself as a chronic overthinker, rather see yourself as someone who:

- Is capable of experiencing less decision angst and more joy and peace
- Can learn to make confident, competent decisions
- Is developing strategies for stopping overthinking in its tracks
- Is becoming equipped to gracefully pivot when things don't go as planned
- Can put overthinking aside to welcome good things into her life
- Doesn't need to habitually second-guess herself
- Is learning how to filter out the unimportant, unhealthy, and unhelpful



The Body Keeps The Score:

Brain, Mind and Body In
The Healing of Trauma

Bessel Van Der Kolk

Read to boost:

- Self-regulation
- Anxiety management
- Relationships
- Trauma healing

What's in there for me?

Many of us have come to see our traumatic experiences as normal, while others are either sinking in depression or actively seeking a route of escape. Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD., is a psychiatrist, educator, researcher and writer, and also an authority on post-traumatic stress research. How bad can trauma affect you? How do you overcome painful experiences? In this summary, you'll find answers to your questions on trauma.



Traumatized people view the world in a fundamentally different way. Most of them suffer from flashbacks that affect their current imagination.



“Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.”

1. Trauma is a potentially fatal menace, one to which society needs to pay attention

Trauma has the power to disrupt and destroy one's life, therefore, we need to know more about it. Traumatic experiences come from events that cause deep pain, sorrow and sadness. If a person is traumatized, they suffer the risk of depression and even death.

Dealing with trauma requires a lot of things, and those things are detailed in this bite-sized book. Trauma is widespread across the world, and it's worrying. What's worse is that little attention is paid to it, and this is making it hard for people to seek help.

Trauma is not something that's limited to war veterans who have experienced terrible things; it's prevalent among a lot of people in society.

Trauma doesn't necessarily need a horrific sight to happen, it can happen to anyone, and that's why much attention has to be paid to it. It can happen as a result of an experience or happening that has caused you frustration, stress or deep pain, leaving you feeling totally helpless. It can also occur as a result of a mistake or adversity that has plagued your life.

To fully understand how to overcome depression and painful experiences, continue through the chapters of this easy to read tidbit.

2. Numbness causes lack of emotional attachment, especially among war victims

For war veterans and victims of war, numbness might set in for them. A lot of them find it hard to love their family or friends; the only thing that interests them is the adrenaline rush of the war they've been in. Numbness occurs when a

person is emotionally uninterested in things that are supposed to matter to them.

Some traumatic events like rape, assault and child abuse are terrible events that leave a lifetime stain on the memory of the victims. As traumatic as these events are, they are unfortunately widespread in society. In 2014, an estimated 11 million women in the United States alone were victims of rape and sexual abuse. This goes on to show how widespread trauma can be, because the victims are likely to suffer the trauma of the events. In an even more worrisome revelation, more than 50% of these victims were abused when they were 15 years or younger, and this has not yet put into account the over 3 million cases of child abuse reported annually.

Traumatic experiences can affect the lives of the victims, as well as the lives of the people close to them like friends, families, and colleagues.

3. Trauma causes post-traumatic stress disorder, a condition which its victims think to be peculiar to themselves

A significant adverse effect of trauma is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts.

Traumatized people view the world in a fundamentally different way. Most of them suffer from flashbacks that affect their current imagination.

One of Dr. Bessel Van Der Kolk's patients had been left with his baby by his wife, and all was going well until the baby started crying. The baby's cry triggered the traumatic events he experienced during the Vietnam War as babies cried to death in agony. The traumatic event overpowered his imagination, and he started panicking.

Alongside the trauma itself, traumatized people find it hard to trust and associate with anyone who hasn't experienced and shared the same suffering that they have.

Trauma victims often assume that nobody can understand their pain, actions and positions.

Bessel van der Kolk, M.D., organized a therapy group for Vietnam veterans with the aim of helping them get over their trauma. Even though the group did help the veterans find people to share their experiences with, those who hadn't been victims of the war were not accommodated by the veterans.

Traumatized people find it very difficult to trust anyone, and this tells on their relationships with people. Often, they end up losing their connection with loved ones because they just can't find a way to trust anyone anymore.

4. Distressed people can be addicted to pain and recollection of pseudo-trauma can trigger mass hysteria in people living with PTSD

"The compulsion to repeat," as Sigmund Freud put it, is when a traumatized patient derives pleasure from the pain that gave them trauma.

Julia, a female research participant, had been brutally raped at gunpoint at 16, and even though she was traumatized, she started craving forceful sex. She began dating a pimp who regularly beat her, and if not for therapy, she would have continued being abused. This just shows how trauma can leave people addicted to pain.

"Scared animals return home, regardless of whether home is safe or frightening." ~ Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.

When someone who has PTSD is reminded of their trauma, it can cause them to enter a state of mind that makes it look like such a memory is real and happening. In a particular experiment, patients consented to listen to a script recording that recreated their individual traumatic experience. When the script gets played to them, they are then made to inhale a small concentration of radioactive particles. This activity is monitored by a brain scan device that would allow the researchers to see the exact part of the brain that is active while the patient remembers the event. Marsha, a 40-year-old teacher, one of Dr. Van der Kolk's patients, was a participant in this experiment. The script given to her took her back to the traumatic accident that cost her the lives of both her 5-year-old daughter and the pregnancy she was carrying at that time.

As Marsha listened to her own script, she experienced a massive spike in blood pressure and heart rate level. The activities in her left hemisphere deactivated over time.

The brain deactivation associated with PTSD makes it hard for patients to be conscious of what they are currently doing.

This deactivation especially rendered her Broca's Area totally weak, and she was unable to speak. Her stress hormone levels remained high for a very long period. This experiment goes on to prove how delicate and dangerous trauma is.

By reminding a traumatized person of their trauma, they can lapse into a terrible state that's similar to when they initially experienced the trauma.

5. Traumatic experiences can be a very tough process for an adult, but it is nothing compared to facing trauma in childhood

Unlike adults, children's brains aren't fully developed, so it becomes harder for them to deal with trauma. When kids get traumatized, there's a high chance that they will remain traumatized for life.

In most cases, traumatized children resign to fate and simply expect bad things to happen continually.

In an experiment carried out by Dr. Van der Kolk, some children were gathered for a test. Some of the children had experienced trauma, while some had not. Dr. Van der Kolk showed cards with pictures of magazines to both sets of children and monitored their reactions. One of the cards had an image of two kids watching their father fix his car. The children without trauma imagined beautiful and safe stories, while the children who had experienced trauma imagined horrific stories that involved blood and death. Unfortunately, these children grow with such a mindset and then find it hard to mix with people because of the things they imagine in their heads.

Another patient, Marilyn, a former nurse, reported that she had a happy childhood, but this wasn't true at all. While she was still a child, Marilyn was sexually abused, and it was a traumatic experience that went on to determine her adult life. Since the terrible experience, she would regularly lash out at men whenever they touched her. Alongside that, she had a damaged vision as a result of the stress put on her by the traumatic event she experienced. While she lived in denial, trying to believe that she had a great childhood, the trauma of the rape event continued to live with her even into her adult life.

Did you know? About 60% of adults report abuse or some difficult family circumstances during childhood, and 26% of children are likely to experience or witness a traumatic event before they turn 4 (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration research, 2014).

6. Details of traumatic events stick to the brain longer than that of an ordinary event

When humans narrate stories, they tend to polish, exaggerate, add, and omit parts of their experiences. Repeating a story, there's a chance you'll lose bits of information for every narration, subconsciously eliminating the essential aspects.

In a real sense, humans don't memorize the sensory details of events or scenarios. You might simply remember what you did or how you felt in a general sense, but you don't store accurate memories about a lot of things. Traumatic events, however, are different. Every detail is taken into cognizance by the mind and the brain, and they stick for a very long time.

Patients recall images of a traumatic scene much more than that of a regular event.

In a study conducted at Harvard Medical School, some 200 men were put to test over a period of time. This test was an experiment of how the presence or absence of trauma affected their lives. Most of the participants were World War II veterans and people living with PTSD. While the memories of participants who weren't traumatized by the effects of the war changed over time, the memories of the veterans who suffered traumatic events didn't change.

Trauma sticks with you, and will try to take total control of your life.

7. Your mind and body are closely connected to each other, and they work with each other to give you a healthy life

For you to have a balanced and healthy life, you must first understand what spikes your emotions and your reactions to certain things. Traumatized people, however, find it hard to do this because they are mostly very concerned even

in situations where there's no cause for alarm. To avoid these feelings, distressed people often resort to drinking, smoking, drug use and self-harm. A small respite here and there, and they get addicted to it.

There are cases of trauma victims who overload themselves with work so they can be distracted from memories of gruesome experiences.

Yoga serves as a new roadmap that guides you down a safe pathway to lead you to your emotions.

Annie, a rape victim and a PTSD patient, made up her mind to register for yoga. Due to her experience with rape, she found it difficult to initially cope with the yoga classes, especially at moments where the yoga instructor gave her a simple pat. Regardless, she stuck with yoga meditation. As time went by, she discovered that she was connecting to her emotions little by little. She started understanding her body and her fears, and rather than hide them, she started working on them.

“Neuroscience research shows that the only way we can change the way we feel is by becoming aware of our inner experience and learning to befriend what is going inside ourselves.” ~ Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.

Reaching your emotions requires grit, focus and determination. You will have to unlearn and learn a lot of things. The process takes time, but it's one that's worth every minute.

8. Mindfulness is an effective approach to healing trauma

Being conscious of your feelings and emotions goes a long way to help you pull out of trauma. Mindfulness gives you a clear analogy of the things you do, why you do them, and when you do them. It equally gives you an awareness of how your body and brain are structured to react to things.

Mindfulness is an effective way of finding out what makes your hormones spike or not.

Trauma patients are bound to have problems with mindfulness because trauma blocks one from facing your emotions head-on. It comes with fear and uncertainty, which is why trauma patients find it very hard to address their emotions.

Emotions are wired in a way that they will take total control of your life if you are not careful. When you are mindful of your emotions, you're a significant step ahead in dealing with trauma.

Nobody enjoys being sad, scared, insecure and in pain, but if you're not careful, the trauma will give you all these feelings, and they can stay with you for as long as you allow them.

You can get over the psychological and mental effects of trauma through mindfulness. Mindfulness allows you to get over depression, stress, pain, anxiety and insecurity. It's also vital for you to regulate your responses, reactions, feelings, and hormonal levels.

Alongside being mindful, associate yourself with supportive people. Supportive people are those who understand your plight and are willing to help you get better without reminding you of your trauma. A lot of people who experience trauma find company in religious gatherings, social clubs, organizations, etc.

When you always have someone you can turn to when things go sour, the fact that they are there at all gives you a sense of protection that helps you get better.

9. Everything that happens in your brain depends on electrical signals and connections

Actions and responses go on through the brain, and it's these actions that control your thoughts. For someone who hasn't experienced trauma, these signals work well, but for PTSD patients, it is not so.

Humans have multiple types of brain waves that trigger emotions. One of the significant brain waves is the alpha wave. Alpha waves are responsible for calmness and a relaxed state of mind.

A study at the University of Adelaide in Australia brought together some war soldiers who had been in Iraq or Afghanistan. These soldiers were individually asked how well their alpha waves worked, and they all said that the longer they spent in the war zone, the fewer alpha waves their brains produced. Their brains produced waves that disturbed their calmness instead, and this made it difficult for them to remain relaxed.

Another way to get over trauma is through neurofeedback. Neurofeedback makes it possible for trauma patients to create alpha waves.

It requires grit and total focus from the patient. A brain scan screen is shown to the patients, and the person in charge shows the patient his brainwaves, why they are like that, and how they need to make an effort to relax. Immediately the patient relaxes, they see the switch in brainwaves, and this helps them later.

Kendra Lisa is a 27-year-old woman who was abandoned by her dad when she was just three years old. Lisa's mother was a toxic woman who regularly abused her and tortured her, to a point where she ran away from home on more than one occasion. Since she couldn't stay with her mother again, she was put in several foster homes, and there were days she had to sleep on the streets.

Having been exposed to cruelty at a tender age, Lisa picked up the traits and started becoming very violent with herself and things. This caused people to stay away from her, and she was barely left with any friends. It took her sessions with neurofeedback before she was able to regulate her emotions and live a healthy life.

Conclusion

Although there are treatments for it, very few people pay attention to trauma, and talk even less of finding solutions to it. Each passing day, people with PTSD increase across the world, and thanks to sensitization and awareness, people are becoming aware of it. This is not to say that it has reduced. As a matter of fact, suicide and self-harm are on the rise, and a lot of people fall into depression in the current world, but because people are now aware of the symptoms, and what to do about it, patients can at least get help, unlike before.

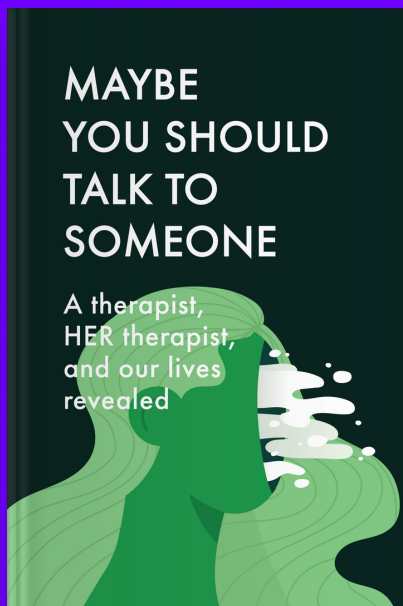
“In order to change, people need to become aware of their sensations and the way that their bodies interact with the world around them. Physical self-awareness is the first step in releasing the tyranny of the past.”

~ Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.

Trauma is an epidemic that eats into the soul. It is something that needs careful attention, and if not controlled, it might lead to disaster. So many people suffer from trauma, and only a few know what to do. The best you can do to overcome trauma is to seek adequate help and focus your mind on getting better. Performing activities that engage the mind also goes a long way in healing trauma. Exercise often. Practice yoga. Even music can be soothing, if music is your thing. Maintaining a healthy connection with the people who love and care about you is another effective strategy. Trauma victims who stay connected with friends and family almost always heal faster than the ones who more or less live alone.

Try this:

Seek therapy and join organizations where you are free to discuss your trauma. You can also apply for yoga meditation exercises to understand your emotions and how to control them.



Maybe You Should Talk to Someone:

A Therapist, Her Therapist, and Our Lives Revealed

Lori Gottlieb

Read to boost:

- Stress management
- Trauma healing
- Self-help
- Self-acceptance

What's in there for me?

Quite often, we find that many people around us are struggling with negative feelings. Perhaps they are frustrated and feel inadequate. Whatever it is they might be going through, you need to be able to say the right words if they come to you for comfort. For example, you could say the words that form the title of this summary: “Maybe You Should Talk To Someone.” And that “someone,” in this case, would be a therapist.



Problems are not always caused by external factors; sometimes, you need to do some self-examination.



“There is no change without loss. This is why many people never change even when they want to — they are not willing to go through loss.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Our emotions always need an outlet, and we have to find out what works best for us

Therapists are trained to help their patients through whatever problems they may be facing. In her Los Angeles office, Lori Gottlieb ensures that she listens to her patients, offers them comfort, and helps them through their struggles. But much as she tries, Gottlieb cannot control the things that happen in her own life. So, she also visits her therapist to get through her issues. This interwoven need to give help and receive help is the basis of this summary.

We all try to hide our quirks and weaknesses — sometimes even to a dangerous point. There's pain and joy that come with seeking help from others, even professionals, and there is also a fear that comes with revealing our innermost thoughts.

As scary as it is to let someone else into your personal space, it is necessary to facilitate your growth and healing.

Gottlieb employs humor and knowledge as a psychotherapist to usher us into her world as both a clinician and a patient. She explains how everyone is unique in their own way and how beneficial professional help can be and debunks the myth that professionals are perfect and do not need anyone.

"We are reflecting mirrors, showing one another what we can't yet see."

~ Lori Gottlieb

Stay with this summary to find out how Lori Gottlieb manages her issues and her patients and why it is important to be open to receiving help from others.

2. Therapists are humans with their own troubles and needs

Lori Gottlieb has had sessions with many clients. And one such client is John, a self-absorbed Hollywood writer, and producer. She experienced some

difficulty connecting with John, who she frankly thought was an asshole. The forty-year-old client, who came off as thoroughly self-involved and uncaring about others, reported that he felt stressed and found it difficult to sleep or get along with his wife. John referred to everyone he couldn't understand or get along with as an “idiot,” from his coworker, dental hygienist, and even down to his previous therapist, who only lasted three sessions.

As Gottlieb tried to understand John and help him through their sessions together, she remembered that her supervisor once told her that there's something likable about everyone. So, she kept repeating the mantra “have compassion” and tried to find the likable things about John. During this therapy session, she realized that they both dealt with their pain by covering it up.

As she listened to John, she realized that his need to rant about the world being filled with idiots and blame everyone else for mistakes resonates so loudly with her. To a large extent, she felt she understood what anger at others felt like, especially if she was certain that they hurt her.

Therapy is a two-way street. As much as the therapist helps the patient, the patient also helps the therapist see parts of themselves that might have been previously hidden. For example, as John narrated his problems, Gottlieb thought about her breakup and other things that troubled her.

Problems are not always caused by external factors; sometimes, you need to do some self-examination.

Feeling the toll of going through the day, her private troubles, and the emotional impact of hearing different traumatic delicate stories all weighed on her, so Gottlieb decided to seek help and start seeing Dr. Wendell — another therapist a mile away.

3. Always treasure moments of resistance; they signal what a therapist needs to pay attention to

There's a particular process of pointing out the mistakes that patients make. Do it too fast, and you might risk it all and lose them. Do it too slow, and they start feeling unsafe, like parents whose children refuse to hold them accountable. In Dr. Wendell's fourth session with Gottlieb, he discovered that one of his own defenses was his cellphone when Gottlieb drew his attention to her feeling dismissed when he texted during a session. She said if they were going to work together and make any form of progress at all, he'd have to stop using his cell phone during sessions. Surprisingly, he conceded, and through the remainder of the therapy, she discovered that he indeed had the capacity to love.

When people come to therapy, they present an in-the-moment snapshot of themselves. So, it is up to the therapist to cajole, nudge, talk, listen, and guide patients to bring other aspects of their life into view. Some snapshots are dark, while some are blurry. People don't always remember how an event or conversation went, but they don't forget how it made them feel.

Counseling is a skill that is capable of saving lives and repairing relationships.

As Gottlieb continued her sessions with Dr. Wendell, she remembered something her supervisor once told her, "Always treasure the resistance." She knew when to push for more answers and when to let go. For instance, Dr. Wendell once got antsy with the direction of her questions, slipped, and mentioned Gabe, his son, who died in a car accident at a young age. Gabe was sitting directly behind his driver's seat which was the direct point of impact.

4. Most people want relief when they come for their first session with their therapist, so they begin their stories with their presenting problem

In her first therapy session with her therapist, Gottlieb reported that she was finding it hard to get over her abrupt breakup with her ex-boyfriend. She referred to him as “The Boyfriend.”

The Boyfriend — who Gottlieb described as the sweetest guy she had ever met — broke up with her seemingly out of the blue after a two-year-long relationship. Because of how abruptly and blindsiding the breakup was, Gottlieb felt like she never knew him.

The Boyfriend was the kind of guy who'd drive down to the pharmacy at 2 a.m. to get her the antibiotic she needed urgently without complaints. He was the kind that would leave awesome post-it notes on her desk, hold her hand, open doors, and never complain about being dragged to her family events. He would send her Amazon packages full of books (because he knew books were her love language) for no reason, and he seemed to adore her family members genuinely.

Gottlieb noticed that The Boyfriend was unusually quiet as they settled in to pick a movie. So naturally, she asked him if something was wrong. This was when he dropped the bomb: he had decided he didn't want to spend the next ten years with Gottlieb's child under his roof. The Boyfriend revealed that he primarily had no plans to date anyone with kids, but he fell in love with her and got confused.

One mistake clients often make is that they present ideal scenarios, convinced they could only be happy with that exact situation.

We certainly have our deal breakers, but when we go through life picking and choosing, we lose out on lots of good things, thereby depriving ourselves of joy.

5. The presenting problem is often not the real issue but merely the beginning aspect of a bigger problem

In Dr. Wendell's office, Lori Gottlieb relayed her presenting problem by trying to paint The Boyfriend as either a sociopath or a selfish liar; and she wanted her therapist to confirm her assertion. She felt life would be a lot easier if someone, as qualified as herself, would back up her perception of him. However, Dr. Wendell refused to do that; he wouldn't admit that The Boyfriend was a sociopath.

He just listened, picked up cues, and tried to establish a pattern. After all, he did know that The Boyfriend was the presenting problem. The only way he could reach the real problem was by listening and observing Gottlieb very carefully.

Listening to the other party not only makes them feel better, but it also helps you understand the situation.

He knew what all therapists know — that the presenting problem, the issue somebody comes in with, is often just one aspect of a more significant problem. And one day, he picked up on the first cue: Gottlieb said that her life was half-over. Dr. Wendell thought maybe she was grieving over something more significant.

Before a therapist can break down a person's defenses, they need to help the patient replace the defense with something else, so as to not leave their patient raw and exposed, with no protection whatsoever.

Dr. Wendell's patience paid off as they both realized that Gottlieb's frustration over her ex-boyfriend was merely an external symptom that masked something rooted deep within — her fear of death.

6. Changing our relationship with the past is a staple of therapy

Lori Gottlieb, already in her late 40s, had begun experiencing a mysterious illness that none of her doctors could diagnose. The Boyfriend — and the imagined future built around him — served as a kind of curtain covering this fear. His going away left her to face the horror alone, even though she hadn't told him about her failing health. Dr. Wendell told Gottlieb that, with the loss of The Boyfriend, she had lost more than her relationship in the present: she lost her relationship in the future as well. Unfortunately, if we spend the present trying to fix the past or control the future, we can't move on. Gottlieb couldn't do anything else but stalk The Boyfriend because she felt that her life had ended. Moreover, she felt that, due to her age, she would never find another partner.

In one's search for happiness, it is possible to find life's meaning.

However, Dr. Wendell suggested that by stalking The Boyfriend online, she was holding on to a canceled future. She was watching The Boyfriend's future unfold while she remained stuck in the past. In an attempt to break off the pattern, Gottlieb tried something different: she stalked Dr. Wendell. Although she regretted her actions after the fact, she learned a lot about her therapist, including his parents, family, upbringing, and patients.

During her therapy sessions with Dr. Wendell, she realized that The Boyfriend was not merely a way to hide her fear of death from herself but also a great distraction from something that made her anxious.

Did you know? According to the National Center for health statistics, 19.2% of U.S. adults received mental health treatment in 2019.

7. Depression can make one dissatisfied with and tired of life

Rita was a divorced woman whose presenting problem was depression. She expressed regret over what she believed to be "bad choices" and a life poorly lived. Moreover, Rita reported that if her life didn't improve in one year, she planned to "end it."

When Rita had come for her very first session, she was so depressed that when she gave an account of her situation, it was as if she was reading an obituary. The final line had been written, and her life, she believed, was a tragedy. Thrice divorced and the mother of four troubled adults, grandchildless and living alone, and retired from a job she disliked, Rita saw no reason to get up in the morning. Her list of mistakes was long: choosing the wrong husbands, failing to put her children's needs above her own, not using her skills as an artist in a professionally fulfilling way, and not making an effort when she was younger to form a community. It was no surprise her kids hated her. She had numbed herself with denial for as long as it worked. However, recently, it had lost its efficacy; even painting — the one activity she enjoyed and excelled at — barely held her interest.

At old age, it is difficult to change a person's ideas and beliefs.

Now, her seventieth birthday was approaching, and she had struck a deal with herself to make her life better by then or stop living it. Lori Gottlieb deduced Rita would wait the whole year before doing anything drastic because she wanted to change, not die. When she gave suggestions to inject vitality into Rita's life, Rita shot down every single one.

8. Sometimes, people reflect on their past as a way of letting go of their emotional burdens

In an emergency session, Rita was agitated and uncharacteristically disheveled. There had been a man in her life named Myron, a "former friend" whom she met at the mailbox. At the time of their friendship, he was her only friend, and he asked her to go to the farmers market with him. Rita thought it was a date, so she dramatically declined, and they soon became fast friends. They had similar interests, and even though they weren't dating, they spent much of their time together. And while Rita at first found Myron merely "decent-looking" one day, as he was showing Rita photos of his grandchildren, something in her stirred.

Rita realized then that she had to say something to him about the direction of their relationship. But she lost her nerve and was too late; Myron had started dating Randie, a much younger woman he met on Tinder. Rita felt gutted, and that was why she had decided to kill herself at seventy if she didn't feel better.

Myron broke up with Randie three months later, and when he professed his undying love to Rita, she decided to come clean about her past so that he could make informed decisions on whether he still wanted to be with her.

Love is not restricted to any age group or sect; anybody can fall in love.

Rita detailed in a letter that she read aloud to Gottlieb amidst tears, her lonely childhood, her struggles with depression, and how it affected her children. She also talked about her abusive first husband, how being a neglectful mother, coupled with her husband's addiction to alcohol, messed up her children, making them want nothing to do with her.

9. Denying the existence of a problem does not make it automatically go away

Lori Gottlieb's newest client, Charlotte, reported that she drank "a couple of glasses of wine" nightly to relax. It turned out, Charlotte edited that part of her life and displayed an interesting snapshot of her life. When Charlotte entered treatment for anxiety and depression, she was in denial about her addiction to alcohol. She drank more than a "few glasses" and had started having gaps in her memory. She didn't believe there was anything wrong with "social drinking," and she worried that her real addiction was her therapist, Lori Gottlieb.

"Nothing is more desirable than to be released from a problem, but nothing is scarier than to be divested of a crutch." ~ James Baldwin

Charlotte hated having to rely on Gottlieb as much as she relied on her parents. She dated unavailable men because she was unwittingly drawn to men who replicated some of her father's unavailability traits when she was young. Her parents were inaccessible a lot while raising her. They often fought – cursing and yelling so loudly that the neighbors sometimes complained. They were never attentive, and because of this childhood experience, Charlotte came to unconsciously associate love with a sense of anxiety rather than happiness or tranquility.

Childhood experiences greatly influence one's life and decisions.

Conclusion

Gradually, through his sessions, John learned to acknowledge his grief, be more empathetic, and communicate better with his wife. They begin a healing journey together, coming to terms as a couple with their son's death.

Rita also began the journey to forgiveness and healing, finally freeing herself from her self-imprisonment. In a way, it was the therapy sessions themselves that did the trick: Rita needed someone to talk to. She had been isolated for a decade, coming to the point of splurging on pedicures just so that she could feel some human touch. Myron received Rita's letter, and after taking some time off to absorb what Rita revealed, he decided to take a chance on her. With Gottlieb's help, Rita efficiently identified and managed her weaknesses. She also started teaching art at a local college and opened a website to sell her art pieces.

Charlotte joined Alcoholic Anonymous and stayed committed to the program. She went cold-turkey on alcohol and cut out her old friends who encouraged her old lifestyle.

The strangest thing about therapy is that it is structured around an ending; it begins with the knowledge that the time between a therapist and their patient is finite. But the end of therapy doesn't necessarily mean the end of a relationship, the same way a relationship in real life doesn't end. Even when we, as therapists, stop seeing clients, they go on to live in our hearts. People grow in connection with others, and all four clients, including Lori Gottlieb, are proof of that.

Try this:

If you have issues you need to discuss with someone, find the nearest therapist and book a session. Also, you could make a list of the things you want to work on each day and start with small steps onward.



Everything is Figureoutable

Marie Forleo

Read to boost:

- Emotional healing
- Stamina
- Perseverance
- Self-assurance

What's in there for me?

Marie Forleo, a show host who has won awards for Marie TV and The Marie Forleo Podcast, shares how to think and break dreams into steps you can manage. She will teach you that you can always figure things out and bounce back when faced with harsh realities, frightening and life altering situations like the death of a loved one, or recovery from abuse.



Always direct your energy, attention, and efforts to what you can control and not what you can't.



"While our potential as individuals is unknowable, what we know for sure is that limiting beliefs guarantees limited outcomes."

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. You can overcome difficulties if you change your mindset

People will always come up with labels to describe you, which may make you think that something might be wrong with you. Do not believe that. No manual is involved in teaching how to deal with challenges in life.

The education system has left out how to use our thoughts, beliefs, and emotions to win life's battle in the field of learning. Therefore, we are not fully equipped to overcome challenges and truly win at life.

When we lack proper training, it becomes impossible to use the intrinsic power we have, and all the problems can be fixed. According to Maya Angelou, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better".

Constantly, creative people find it extremely difficult to complete what they start, they are usually distracted by the numerous ideas occasionally flowing through their minds.

You can overcome those challenges and become a winner.

"Everything is Figureoutable" changes your mindset to a positive one and also breaks down your goals into sizes you can easily manage.

Inside you will learn:

- How to handle opposition and being real with oneself
- Why it is important that you strive towards progress and not perfection
- The ways to bounce back from failure
- How to make time for your goals and therefore increase your income

People whose stories have been victorious and how the system of "everything is figureoutable" has helped to metamorphose their lives. This belief system is more than an ideology but also practice, which can make you unstoppable.

2. Peculiar difference is achievable in the world when change begins with us

It is important to believe in oneself in order to be intentional about change. A single belief system can be used to activate transformation and get our lives going, towards a productive change around us.

It is no longer possible for us to ignore the challenges and circumstances we sometimes find ourselves in as individuals or a group. There is a certain combination of forces that are forcing us to alter how we live. Such forces are political, social, societal, and economic in nature. Statistically, more than two-thirds of U.S. citizens are not actively engaged at work.

Also, looking beyond poor economics, there is the involvement of spiritual and psychological repercussions to the state of things.

Consequently, about 350 million people have been diagnosed globally with depression. The suicide rate in the U.S. has peaked for the first time in 30 years.

In order to change this trend, one needs humility and courage, self-compassion, and the willingness to experiment. One should be equipped with a vivid sense of humor, and a lot of patience. All these constitute the road map to arriving at a safe destination that is beneficial to you and those around you.

The brain is an extraordinary biocomputer that plays a major role in your productivity as a human.

It can work for you and can also work against you.

3. Train your brain for growth by spotting thought-viruses and therefore replacing them with growth-minded statements

Identify thought patterns of the mind that prevent one from learning something new and vaccinate against them. The first thought virus is “I know this already” and the second thought virus is “This won't work for me.”

Instead of “I know this already”, think more of “What can I learn from this?”

And instead of “This won't work for me”, think more of “How can this work for me?”

Sometimes, we may be forced to wonder if everything is really figureoutable, for example, a childhood dog that cannot be brought back from the dead. But knowing that growing beyond current circumstances requires opening oneself up to new possibilities. Subsequently, three rules will help you in staying focused on your growth.

Rule 1: All problems (or dreams) are figureoutable

Rule 2: If a problem is not figureoutable, then it is either a fact of life or a law of nature

Rule 3: The problem or dream you want to figure out must be something you are passionate about for Rule 1 to apply

Quantum theorist David Deutsch says, “Everything that is not forbidden by laws of nature is achievable, given the right knowledge.” So, test it, apply it, experience it, and live it.

“Because insight without action is worthless. Taking action is the only path to change.” ~ Marie Forloe

Did you know? The food we throw away every day in our homes, restaurants, and supermarkets is enough to feed nearly 1 billion hungry people.

4. The power to manufacture reality is given by our minds

The movies, stories, and books we've come across have taken a journey from the world of unmanifest to manifest. From formless ideas to concrete reality. The mind is a piece of magical creation machinery and is the birthplace of every extraordinary idea we've come across and even major breakthroughs encountered in human history.

Everything in the material world is initially created on the level of thought.

Everything that exists in our world exists in our minds first. That is the universal gift that's been bestowed upon us to help shape our lives, and collectively the world that surrounds us. The creation process starts from thoughts, then moves on to the feeling. Subsequently, feeling begets behavior and behavior produces results.

Deep inside our thoughts lies an even deeper and more rooted force that directs and takes control of our lives. This deeply rooted commanding force is our beliefs. They are the hidden scripts that run our lives. It is something you know totally and with absolute certainty. A thought you've consciously or unconsciously decided is the Truth.

Beliefs are the roots of our reality and our results.

Most of our pivotal beliefs are clouded during certain significant emotional experiences, many of which happen during childhood. The more heightened the emotions, the more it's likely to shape our lives. The environment we live in programs our brain with beliefs about almost everything, ranging from love, health, sex, our bodies, money, religion, beauty, relationships, other people, and the world at large. Close experiences to further cement those beliefs about ourselves, others and the world at large.

And naturally, all these beliefs are sometimes influenced by hand-me-down beliefs, both positive and negative, which stacks up over time and begin to

become stronger and deeply rooted, transforming who we are, and what makes up our reality.

Also, there are evidence-based beliefs. They are thoughts and ideologies we accept as “the truth” from authoritative figures and sources such as scientists, clergymen, research studies, doctors, academics, authors, the media, and the general society at large. But as certain fields such as technology, science, and culture progress, so also what we believe can evolve.

5. Find role models outside your immediate circle

Find inspiring examples through biographies, whether alive or dead, famous or unknown, watch movies, listen to interviews, or even simply pay attention to the good people in your life.

You may have no examples in looking for inspiration, yet there is the belief in what possibly burns so brightly in your heart thereby devoting your life to making it a reality. Roger Bannister breaking the 4-minute mile in 1954 is one example. No single person had achieved this goal, yet he believed he could, deep in his heart, and so he did, making countless others follow.

Research has shown how belief affects our physical well being and our cognitive performance.

Your beliefs are the commander of your behavior and your results. They control our bodies and how we react and respond to crises, opportunities, and criticism. The fact that our beliefs and reality cannot be contested. It affects you physically, emotionally, financially, spiritually, Intellectually and so on. Knowing in the long run, your beliefs determine your destiny.

Every belief has its own sequence, it could either heal you or it could harm you or basically it could either support or thwart your aspirations. They become your source of liberation or limitations, and it does not matter what is true, all that

matters is what you believe. So when you change your belief, you can change everything.

“While our potential as individuals is unknowable, what we know for sure is that limiting beliefs guarantees limited outcomes.” ~ Marie Forleo

Did you know? We choose to spend more money on ice cream each year — a whopping sum of \$59 billion, rather than the basic human dignities of education, health care, and sanitation to all humans on Earth, for a mere \$28 billion.

6. Excuses are lies that limit who we are and what we can accomplish

Excuses are a stumbling block and once you discover how flimsy your excuses are, you'll not only gain back enormous energy but also your power to change.

Two common words block our ability to be honest with ourselves 'can't and won't'. When we make use of the word "can't," we begin to behave like victims, powerless against our circumstances as though we do not have control over our time, energy, and choices. But when we use the word “won't,” we feel behaved and more powerful.

You are ultimately the determinant of how you spend your time and resources, thereby you feel more alive and free because you are taking responsibility for the state of your life.

You are 100% responsible for your life.

The responsibility of what you believe in lies with you, how you feel or, even behave. The actions of others are not your responsibility and neither is the injustice that happens to you but you are responsible for how you respond to

other people's actions. Happiness can only last when you take 100% responsibility for your actions and yourself.

Imagine if Malala Yousafzai felt she wasn't old enough, privileged enough or, even strong enough to champion the education of girls? Malala was a preteen at just age 11 when she began the fight for girls' to go to school. She was only 15 when she was shot in the head and remarkably, she survived and addressed the United Nations on her 16th birthday. At age 17, she received the Nobel Peace Prize, being the youngest person to receive such an award. She refuses to let a bullet to the head become an excuse for her to stop advocating for education.

You have more power than you think.

If you allow them, excuses can be dream killers. They can keep you locked in a prison of your own making. As the adage goes, if you argue your limitations, you get to keep them. We can always find something to blame for our lack of results if we want to, but nothing is more detrimental to our long term success than an untrained mind.

Do not allow any excuse space in your head or heart. Use the stories of those who can become touchstones for your mental and emotional strength, people whose stories of relentlessness and determination of you, use to keep your life in perspective.

“There are two kinds of people in the world, those with reasons and those with results.” ~ Marie Forleo

7. Embrace the actionable version of the acronym FEAR — Face Everything And Rise

The attitude to fear is what separates those who aspire and those who achieve. Fear is figureoutable, no matter what you change or overcome, fear will surface throughout your journey.

The good news then is that unexamined fear is like unmined gold. It inevitably contains riches for those wise enough and patient to pan through the dirt.

Fear keeps us alive and while others are paralyzed by fear, fear keeps others moving.

The ability to use fear to your advantage separates those who aspire from those who achieve.

Fear is not the enemy, waiting to stop feeling afraid is. Although it is an evolutionary response by our ancestors, fear does not need to be annihilated, it needs to be listened to and appreciated for the gifts it offers. Sometimes fear is healthy if it inspires you to act.

Taking into account a toddler trying to communicate by crying because of the language skills is not articulate, so also fear tries to communicate using the only tool she has, the ability to make one feel.

Action is the antidote to fear.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach that works for every individual in every fearful situation. Fear comes in different types of ways and transforming your fear is more art than science.

There are cognitive strategies that can transform fear into a productive and creative fuel. Some of them are:

- Explore fear as your GPS
- Leverage your language
- Think about a specific time you failed and mine the gold from that. What are the three good things that came from it? What lessons were learned? What valuable understanding did you now have that you wouldn't have otherwise?

Be curious and listen to your fear, the helpful positive signals your fears might be sending you.

"I win or I learn, but I never lose." ~ Marie Forleo

8. Not having something clear or meaningful to work towards can bring up a host of other problems

Writing down your dreams forces you to be clear and specific about what you want, even as basic as it is, most people still haven't cultivated the habit of writing down what is most important to them. Ambiguity is the greatest enemy of accomplishment.

Writing down what you want to figure out is a fundamental step to making it real.

After listing your top one year dream, what would you like to change, start, stop, pause, heal or achieve? Accomplishing these said dreams within the year is not necessary, but you must start now willingly.

Focus and get real about your dreams, select the dream you feel most drawn to from the list you've made, circle it, and ask yourself how important the dream is to you at that moment. Note that you have to be honest with yourself when answering that question.

If perhaps you were able to circle more than one dream, narrow it down to one because it is important to narrow it down. That single dream will serve as the training ground to mastering the figureoutable philosophy. Develop the ability to focus and concentrate and in doing so, you are cultivating a set of mental strengths and behavioral habits that will assist you in accomplishing your goals. Trying to multitask at this stage is a recipe for failure and frustration.

Convert your dream into something specific, measurable, and actionable.

Take small consistent steps towards your goals Instead of procrastinating because progress is better than waiting for perfection.

Determining your next 3 steps and getting started on them. What are those 3 simple actions to take in getting closer to that eventual goal of figuring it out? What could be done in 10 minutes or less, the first of which could be done right?.

Focusing on small active steps like making a phone call or setting up an appointment and if you must research, how you can make that research more hands-on. Train yourself to move towards discomfort, put yourself in scary and intimidating situations because that is where the figureoutable magic lies.

Always direct your energy, attention, and efforts to what you can control and not what you can't.

Here are what will always be in your control, your words, actions, behavior, attitude, perspective, focus, effort, and every. Also, you are in control of how you respond to certain events and circumstances as they occur, whether you like them or not.

Here's what's never within your control: other people and their words, actions, behaviors, attitudes e.t.c. you are not in control of the weather, acts of God, or natural laws that govern our existence (e.g, gravitational force).

Making a lifelong commitment to cultivating social intelligence because, at some point, all dreams require cooperation or at least harmonious interaction with others. This includes learnable disciplines like the act of persuasion, influence, marketing, and sales, even when you think you might not need those skills.

“You can do whatever you set your mind to if you just roll up your sleeves, get in there and do it. Everything is figureoutable.” ~ Marie Forleo

Conclusion

Future tripping is an act of stressing over future pain as a powerful catalyst for change in the present. Like asking oneself ten years from now, what would you regret not doing?

Most times we are struggling with how to try and fit into the societal construct rather than figuring out what works for us. Long before becoming a fully functioning adult, you are expected to choose one well-paying thing to be, incur debts to get educated on that one thing, and therefore stick to that choice for the next forty-plus years, praying you'll earn enough to one day retire and not die broke. Not only is this idea gross, it is dangerous in many ways being that many of us aren't built for that kind of narrow, long-term focus. While some people are happy and devoted to a single field, some of us are multi-passionate creatives.

Progress begins with making a brave decision to start even before you are ready, this will therefore fast track your learning and growth. Action spawns courage, not the other way round. It generates motivation, so instead of waiting for inspiration to strike, action implores you to keep going. Value growth and learning over comfort and certainty, Do not mistake procrastination for extensive research and planning.

Where you will gain new skills and capabilities is the growth zone. It is where you will acquire strength and expertise, and produce new results. Then the growth zone becomes your comfort zone.

Confidence increases and all the things that once terrified you no longer scare you, your conviction is strengthened to tackle new sets of challenges and you begin to embrace the uncertainty, vulnerability, and humility inside every learning process. All these cycles are fundamental to mastering the figureoutable philosophy.

All you need to make your dream a reality requires a new skill set, experiences, and understanding. Doing things you've never done before.

Try this:

Shy away from making excuses, it will only leave you stagnant and delay progress.



Judgment Detox:

Release the Beliefs That Hold You Back from Living a Better Life

Gabrielle Bernstein

Read to boost:

- Awareness
- Forgiveness
- Meditation
- Spirituality

What's in there for me?

The core of our discomfort in life is judgment. This book is an interactive process that can help us release the beliefs that hold us back from living a better life. This technique offers a path to true healing, love, harmony, and a deeper connection to the universe and those around us. Gabrielle Bernstein highlights the spiritual principles for breaking the cycle of judgment and presents them so that they are easy to apply and commit to.



Becoming aware of your darkness gives you the confidence to stand up to your fear.



“Judgment is the main reason we feel blocked, sad, and alone.”

1. Judgment is an addictive behavior caused by our separation from our true nature of love

Judgment is an all-pervasive unhealthy condition we all suffer from, no matter how kind, compassionate, and spiritual we are. We judge just about anyone, from people who share racy social media posts to our spouses who disagree with us on certain issues. We judge the guy in front of us in a queue for moving too slowly. And, of course, we judge ourselves for just about everything.

When we judge others, we get this profound feeling of self-righteousness that makes us feel good about ourselves. Judging them seems to make us better, more enlightened, smarter, healthier, savvier, and wealthier. Unfortunately, however, this feeling is only transient. It inevitably fades and leaves behind an even more profound sense of uneasiness, isolation, and misalignment with the person we want to be.

“I have a pretty straightforward definition for judgment: separation from love.”

~ Gabrielle Bernstein

The moment we perceive ourselves as separate from anyone else — either by thinking we're better than them or we're not as good as them — we become misaligned with our true nature, which is love.

By virtue of our nature, we are loving, kind, and compassionate beings deep down. But at a particular point in our life, some event, such as a deeply traumatic experience in our childhood, causes us to part ways with that true nature. That separation from love produces feelings of being special or inadequate, leading to loneliness, which, in effect, results in fear.

In an effort to protect ourselves from that fear, we project it outward as judgment. In our detachment, we live in a dream state, shutting out the connection to our loving truth. This separation sets the ego's perception of a

false “self” based on judgment. In order to feel secure in our isolated world, we grow to believe deeply in the false perception of ourselves.

In essence, we all have the same problem and the same solution.

Our problem is that we have separated from our true nature of love, and the solution is to return to love.

In the following chapters, we will discuss Gabrielle Bernstein’s steps to judgment detox and learn how we can heal from judgment and restore love.

2. Witnessing your fear and judgment renders them powerless and liberates you

The first step in the Judgment Detox is to be a non-biased witness of your judgment. You have to envision the ways in which you separate from love and get honest about the dark shadows in your mind.

Becoming aware of your darkness gives you the confidence to stand up to your fear.

When you expose your fear to the light, you suddenly realize there’s nothing to run from. You can see the fear as something that isn’t part of you, something you no longer have to identify with. You can clearly see judgment and fear as an addictive pattern instead of as a personality trait. By witnessing your fear and judgment, you strip them of their power and set yourself free.

Now, it’s time to look at your judgment and bring awareness to it. You’ll need your journal and pen for this exercise.

At the top of the page, write this: “I am willing to witness my judgment without judgment.” Then make four columns down the page and write the following sentence in each.

1. Who is the object of my judgment?
2. How does judging this person make me feel?
3. Why do I think it's right to judge?
4. What situation in my life makes me feel this judgment is right?

Start with the first column. List whatever judgment that comes to your mind without hesitation. For instance, "I judge my friend for having a political viewpoint that contradicts mine." Try to write at least 15 judgments.

Once you've written at least 15 judgments, move on to column two. Here, you will get honest about how judgment makes you feel. Go through the list of judgments and describe in great detail how each one makes you feel. Maybe the judgment makes you feel like you want to punch a wall, or perhaps it makes you feel justified, empowered, and fierce.

Next, move to the third column. This is where you take the time to write all the reasons you feel justified in your judgment. Don't feel guilty about your justification. Instead, give yourself full permission to write it down.

Now move on to column four. List all the possible triggers, past wounds, or traumatic events that may be the root of the judgments you listed in column one.

Continue to fill in the four columns throughout this detox. Make it a daily habit. When you wake up every morning, check in, and see if you have any new judgments that you want to witness.

3. To truly heal from your wounds, you must first acknowledge and honor them

There is a core wound beneath every judgment. Even the most insignificant assessments result from our shame and shadows. The truth is, we wouldn't go around judging people if we were happy and complete.

Judgment is an external projection of our feelings of unworthiness.

We've lulled ourselves into believing that we won't have to feel our pain if we project it onto someone else. So rather than address our feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness, we avoid our pain by fixating on what we perceive to be other people's shortcomings.

Unfortunately, we only get a temporary and tenuous reprieve from projecting our judgment onto other people. Not only do our feelings of inadequacy not disappear, but even worse, we feel a pang of overwhelming guilt for judging others, too.

In the first step, you examined the wounds that live underneath the surface of your judgment. You scrutinized the feelings, memories, traumas, and experiences that make you feel separate, inadequate, and scared. You acted as a non-judgmental witness of your judgment.

In this next step of the healing process, you will be honoring your wounds. To do that, you will be practicing the EFT — Emotional Freedom Techniques — also known as tapping.

According to Gabrielle Bernstein, EFT is a psychological acupressure method for nurturing your emotional health. One unique benefit of this technique is that it restores your energy and heals your emotions by combining the cognitive benefits of therapy with the physical benefits of acupuncture.

“My willingness to honor my wounds is what has helped me create significant, sustainable change in my judgmental patterns and in my life.”

~ Gabrielle Bernstein

Unlike conventional acupuncture, you do not need needles for EFT. All you have to do is stimulate specific meridian points on your body by tapping on them with your fingertips. In the next chapter, we will take a look at how to go about the EFT.

4. How to practice the Emotional Freedom Techniques for judgment detox

The first step is to rate your MPI — Most Pressing Issue. How emotionally charged are you when you think of the person you’re constantly judging? Here, the person can be a group of people or even yourself. So feel free to replace “this person” with a name. Rate your MPI from zero to 10, 10 being the most emotionally charged.

True healing begins when we become brave enough to face our wounds.

The next step is to start tapping on the karate chop point — the center of the outside of your hand between the top of the wrist and the base of the little finger — with your other hand.

While tapping, say this phrase out loud three times: “I deeply and completely love and accept myself, even though I can’t stop judging this person.”

Now, lightly tap on the following parts of your body sequentially while saying each phrase out loud.

- Eyebrow: “I can’t stop judging.”
- Temple: “I take pleasure in judging them.”

- Under the eye: “Judgement makes me feel good about myself.”
- Nose: “I need to judge them for everything they've done.”
- Collarbone: “After all, they deserve it.”
- Arm: “I don’t feel bad about my judgment.
- Top of the head: “They deserve it!”

Continue tapping through the negative rounds till you feel a sense of relief. Then move on to the positive rounds:

- Eyebrow: “But honestly, the judgment doesn’t make me feel any better.”
- Temple: “Love is better than judgment.”
- Under the eye: “But it's much easier to judge than love.”
- Under the nose: “What will happen to me if I stop judging?”
- Chin: “I’d be all by myself, I guess.”
- Collarbone: “It's better to just be myself.”
- Arm: “To forgive and love myself again.”
- Top of the head: “I will be free if I stop judging.”

When you’re done, say your MPI out loud: “I can’t stop judging this person.” Now rate it from 0 to 10 and relate it to when you first started. You’re sure to have felt relief if you tapped through each round with commitment.

Did you know? In a study, researchers at the National Institute for Integrative Healthcare conducted a series of physiological tests on participants before and after a four-day EFT workshop. They found that there was a decline in anxiety, depression, pain, and panic disorders. There was also an increase in happiness and improvements in resting heart rate.

5. Replace your judgmental thoughts with love through prayer

Now that you've witnessed your judgmental thoughts and honored the wounds with EFT practice, it's time to pray. This step of the judgment detox is about offering up your judgment through prayer.

According to Gabrielle Bernstein, each of us has a higher power working on our behalf to reconcile us with love. We can put love back on the altar at any given moment and let it shine through any grievance. Love is the cure for judgment.

Even the most deep-rooted judgment cannot withstand the potency of love.

The truth is, in order to break the vicious cycle of judgment, we need spiritual intervention. We must call on a spiritual relationship as we understand it — be it God, the Holy Spirit, the Universe, or the spirit — to replace our judgmental and fear-based thoughts with love. We must ask to let love in. Divine order unfolds when we surrender our issues to a higher power.

We open the invisible gate to receive guidance the moment we ask for help through prayer. The guidance can come in many forms: through a strong intuitive knowing, a song, a friend, a book, or a religious leader. The way through which guidance comes to you does not matter. Your willingness to ask for help is all that matters.

“The spiritual presence of your inner guide will act as an intermediary to lead your judgmental thoughts back to love.” ~ Gabrielle Bernstein

One of the prayers that Gabrielle Bernstein recommends that you use when seeking guidance is the “prayer to choose again.” This is a prayer you can practice when you wake up in the morning. Before you get out of bed every day, recite, “Today, I will judge nothing that occurs.”

Be very attentive to how the rest of your day unfolds. You may be quicker to notice when a judgmental thought starts coming up in your mind, or you may

stop yourself from making a critical comment and choose a different topic instead.

When you say the prayer to choose again, your thoughts are realigned with love, and the voice of your inner guide takes the lead. As you continue to make this choice, your urge to judge will fade. This prayer, in time, will become second nature and a simple way to rid yourself of judgmental thoughts.

6. Accept people for who they are and be compassionate

Once you've prayed and offered your judgment to your inner guide for transformation, you are ready to see the people you've judged for the first time. Seeing people for the first time means you see their innocence and light.

You can recognize that the light within you is the same light that shines through them. Judgment cannot survive in the presence of someone's light.

Most times, we judge others, including ourselves, by projecting our preconceived notions into our circumstances. When you practice seeing someone for the first time, however, you set them free from the false projections you've put on them. The false beliefs that separate you disappear. You'll start seeing the other person as someone calling out for love rather than through the lens of the past.

To begin the practice of seeing someone for the first time, start by accepting them where they are. It's a myth to think that you'll feel better after they change their behavior. In order to see them in innocence, you must accept them exactly where they are.

You also see people differently by accepting them for who they are. This is the most loving thing you can do for someone. It is absolutely unloving to try to change others into who we think they should be.

By trying to get someone to change, you're effectively telling them you know what is best for them. Your unsolicited "help" will only come across as a ruse to judge and control them.

People may not behave the way you would like them to, but when you accept them for who they are, you can forgive and let go.

"By consistently practicing to accept someone for who they are and see them with compassion, you realign with your true nature of love."

~ Gabrielle Bernstein

As you practice acceptance, you must also practice compassion. Relating to people with compassion helps you see their innocence. You'll realize that their past trauma and inner terror turned them into a monster.

Can you imagine the trauma and turmoil that must go on inside of anyone who can do grave harm to another person? By seeing them with compassion, you'll get a sense of their hardship, pain, and deep suffering.

Of course, being compassionate doesn't mean that you pardon their wrongs. But it means that you release them on a spiritual level. In effect, you will set yourself free from the terror they created.

7. Break the cycle of judgment by forgiving yourself and your thoughts

The final step of the Judgment Detox is to forgive yourself for the judgments you have made. To do this, you must understand that the reason you judge in the first place is that you're just looking for love. All you really want is to protect yourself from not feeling loved. In fact, fear, judgment, and any form of separation are nothing but cries for help.

Any time you find yourself in judgment, you can set yourself free by simply forgiving the thought. Let go of the thought and forgive yourself for having it.

According to Gabrielle Bernstein, we can use forgiveness to guide our judgment back to love in three simple steps.

The first step is to expose your ego. To do this, you have to bring the wrong-minded choices you've made to your awareness. Your wrong-minded choices are the ones you make in any instances in which you've judged yourself or someone else.

Whenever you catch yourself in a place of judgment, all you have to do is pivot. The moment you see yourself react with ego and judge, stop yourself and gently expose your ego to your inner guide.

The more you train your mind to expose your ego, the easier it becomes to start thinking with spirit.

The next step is to agree that you've chosen wrongly and choose again. You must see your judgment for what it really is — a mere projection of your own perceived sin, suffering, and guilt. You must also realize that the pattern of projecting your suffering outward is a choice you're making.

Witness the fear-based choices you've made and choose to make love-oriented ones with the guidance of the spirit.

The third and final step is to ask for help. You must ask the spirit to help you suspend your ego and accept spiritual healing. Only when you're healed spiritually can you turn your desire to forgive over to spirit for guidance and let love shine through your consciousness.

In essence, our willingness to forgive even the most horrific events is the key to breaking the cycle of judgment and reuniting ourselves with love. All you have to do is be willing to forgive, and the spirit will hear your call and guide your path to liberation. When you get to this point, you've chosen love over fear

and happiness over judgment. You are ready to live a gracious life and accept that the only rational choice is a life of peace and joy.

Conclusion

Each of us is susceptible to judgment and the illusion of ego, no matter how kind, compassionate, and spiritual we are. We judge others far wide, and we judge ourselves for just about everything.

When we judge others, we have a feeling of self-righteousness that makes us feel good about ourselves. Unfortunately, however, this feeling is only transient. It will fade away at some point, leaving us with a deeper sense of uneasiness and isolation.

Naturally, we are all loving and compassionate beings. But at a particular point in our life, we deviate from this true nature of ours and embrace judgment. That separation from love makes us feel inadequate and isolated. These feelings then result in fear. And to protect ourselves from that fear, we project it outward as judgment.

We have to realize that we all have the same problem and the same simple solution. Our problem stems from the fact that we've strayed from our true nature of love. To solve this problem, we must find our way back to love. And the key to doing that is to practice judgment detox.

To heal, you must:

- witness your judgment without judgment
- honor the wounds that live underneath the judgment
- transform your judgment by offering it to the care of your inner guide
- start seeing the people you've judged in their innocence and light

- and be willing to forgive yourself and your thoughts

This is the only way you can live a life of grace full of love and devoid of fear and judgment.

Try this:

Commit to practicing all the steps in the judgment detox program. You don't have to get everything right the first time around. But with willingness and constant practice, the spirit will step in and guide you to trade your judgment for happiness and your fear for love.



Codependent No More:

How to Stop Controlling Others and Start Caring for Yourself

Beattie Melody

Read to boost:

- Self-sufficiency
- Relationships
- Self-care
- Inner freedom

What's in there for me?

Many people have lost sight of their own lives and made it a habit to focus on other people's problems. If you're always excited over other people's lives and business, you might be codependent. Melody Beattie is a well-loved author in addiction and recovery circles. Her book is a simple, straightforward, and readable map of the perplexing world of codependency. It also provides a guide to freedom and a lifetime of healing, hope, and happiness.



It is important that you take responsibility for your feelings. This way, you can tell yourself the truth about what happened.



"Maybe we don't need to go deeper into our codependency. We can, instead, march forward into our destinies."

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. The concept of codependency has existed for quite a while, and can happen to anyone

In an article from the book “Codependency, An Emerging Issue,” Robert Subby — author and psychologist — explained codependency as “an emotional, psychological, and behavioral condition that develops as a result of a person’s prolonged exposure to, and practice of, a set of oppressive rules which hinder the open expression of emotions and conversations surrounding personal or interpersonal issues.” Earnie Larsen, another codependency specialist and a pioneer in that field, defines codependency as “the self-defeating, learned behaviors or character issues that result in a reduced capacity to begin or engage in loving relationships.”

According to Robert Subby and a leader in the codependency field, John Friel, codependency was a term used to describe anyone whose life is affected by their involvement with someone who was chemically dependent. The codependent person — spouse, child, or lover of someone who was chemically dependent — was seen as having formed unhealthy coping patterns as a reaction to someone else’s drug or alcohol abuse.

For a long time, professionals have suspected something strange happened to people who were closely involved with chemically dependent people. Some research had been done on the subject, and it showed that a condition similar to alcoholism seemed to appear in many nonalcoholic or non-chemically dependent people who were close to an alcoholic. Words that were used to describe this phenomenon include: co-alcoholic, nonalcoholic, and para-alcoholic.

When faced with challenges, people usually turn to various coping mechanisms. Some of these are unhealthy and can lead to long-term damage.

In 1979, when the word codependency emerged, everyone believed that codependents were people whose lives had become unmanageable as a result

of being in a relationship with an alcoholic. However, the definition of codependency has evolved since then. More professionals began to understand the many effects the chemically dependent person had on the family and vice versa.

Professionals also began to identify other issues such as overeating and undereating, gambling, and certain sexual behaviors. These compulsive disorders paralleled the compulsive disorder, or illness, of alcoholism. After a while, professionals began to notice that many people in close relationships with these compulsive people developed coping patterns that resembled those of people in relationships with alcoholics.

The ongoing argument is based on whether or not codependency is a disease. Some experts say codependency isn't a disease; they say it's just a normal reaction to abnormal people. Other professionals say codependency is a disease; it's a chronic, progressive illness. They suggest codependents want and need sick people around them to be happy in an unhealthy way.

Did you know? The word codependency appeared on the treatment scene in the late 70's in several different treatment centers in Minnesota.

2. It's easier to recognize a codependent when you know their characteristics

Although two codependents might disagree on the definition of codependency, if they discuss the issues with each other, each will probably sense what the other person means. They will share ideas about things they have in common things they do, think, feel, and say that is characteristic of codependency.

The family is the first agent of a child's socialization, and can be the root of many problems an adult faces.

Melody Beattie compiled the following characteristics of codependency:

Caretaking

Codependents may feel responsible for other people's feelings, thoughts, actions, choices, wants, needs, wellbeing, lack of wellbeing, and ultimate destiny. They also feel anxiety, pity, and guilt when other people have a problem. It is not uncommon to discover that codependents feel compelled to help someone solve a problem even when it puts them at risk. If they render help and it doesn't work, they might get upset.

A codependent anticipates other people's needs and wonders why others do not do the same for them.

Low Self-Worth

Codependents are usually from unstable, repressed, or dysfunctional families, but they usually deny this and blame themselves for everything. They are quick to reject compliments, but they get depressed when nobody compliments them. Codependents feel different from others and feel they need to be better than they are at any time.

"Codependents make great employees. They hardly ever complain; they do more than their share; they do whatever is asked of them; they please people; and they try to do their work perfectly — at least for a while, until they become angry and resentful." ~ Melody Beattie

Repression

Codependents refuse to stay aware of their thoughts and feelings because of fear and guilt. They become afraid to let themselves be who they are, and they appear rigid and controlled.

Obsession

Codependents feel a lot of anxiety about issues or people, worry about the smallest things, and may talk to many people about them.

Dependency

Many codependents are never happy with themselves, they look for happiness outside of themselves, and cling to whoever or whatever they think can provide happiness.

3. Attachment occurs unconsciously and can span a long time

When a codependent says they believe they are getting attached to you, they might not be joking around. They probably mean it. Most codependents have a strong connection to the people and problems in their environments. Attachment doesn't mean normal feelings of liking people, being concerned about problems, or feeling connected to the world. Attachment is becoming overly-involved, sometimes hopelessly entangled with someone or a situation.

Attachment can take several forms:

- One may become excessively worried about, and preoccupied with, a problem or person (mental energy is attached).
- A person may also graduate to becoming obsessed with and controlling the people and problems in their environment (all their energy is directed at the object of their obsession).
- One may become reactionaries instead of acting the way they want to (mental, emotional, and physical energy is attached).
- It is possible for emotional dependency to occur with the people around (now, this is the real attachment).

- A person may become a caretaker (rescuer or enabler) to the people around them (firmly attaching themselves to their need for them).

Obsession with anything or anyone is a difficult situation to be caught up in. Even if they appear to be listening when you talk, an obsessed person doesn't hear you. Their mind is on an endless racetrack of compulsive thought. They are preoccupied with obsessive thoughts and nothing you say makes any difference.

A person that's obsessed with someone or something can talk about nothing else, can think of nothing else.

Telling an obsessed person to stop doesn't help. They probably would if they could. The problem is they can't (at that moment). They are bursting with the jarring energy that obsession is made of. When a person is obsessed, they can't get their mind off another person or problem.

4. Detachment is the foundation of selfcare

You cannot begin to work on yourself, to live your life, feel your feelings, and solve your problems until you have detached from the object of your obsession. From Melody Beattie's experiences (and those of others), it appears that even a higher power can't do much with you until you have detached from the things you are obsessed with.

Worries, obsessions, and our controlling nature are illusions that make us feel like we are solving our problems. Many of us react like this to situations for many reasons. It might be that we lived with serious, complicated problems that have disturbed our lives, and these would provoke anyone to become anxious, scared, in need of control, and obsessed. Also, we may have loved someone who was in trouble, someone out of control. This can make us put our guard up as well.

You may not even be aware you've been holding on so tightly. Perhaps you may have convinced yourself that you have to stay in the situation because you have no other choice. Frequently, when Melody Beattie suggests to people that they detach from a person or problem, they recoil in horror. The good news is that it may be scary at first, but it will ultimately work better for everyone involved.

Detachment is not a cold, hostile withdrawal or a Pollyanna-like ignorant bliss. It is not evidence of the absence of our love or concern. Sometimes, detaching yourself from people or situations is best. In truth, detachment is removing yourself from a person or problem we love. We can mentally, emotionally, and sometimes physically disengage ourselves from unhealthy relationships and responsibilities, and from problems we are unable to solve.

Detachment is based on the belief that each person is responsible for themselves, that we can't solve problems that aren't ours, and that worry doesn't help at all.

When you practice detachment, you adopt a policy of keeping your hands off of other people's responsibilities and tend to your own instead. If people have created an uncomfortable situation for themselves, you allow them to handle it themselves. You give people the freedom to be responsible and to grow. And you give yourself that same freedom. You live our own lives to the best of your ability. At this point, you have to ascertain what it is you can change and what you cannot change. Then you stop trying to change things you can't.

5. When you get upset by everything, you are decreasing your level of productivity

Most codependents react with anger, guilt, shame, fury, and many other emotions. They react with fear and anxiety, and this can be a painful

experience for others. It is okay to react and respond to our environment. Reacting is part of life. It's part of interacting, and it's part of being alive and human. But codependents allow themselves to get so upset, and distracted.

The problem is that codependents react without thinking about what they need to do and how they want to handle a situation. Their emotions and behaviors are being controlled, triggered by everyone and everything in their environment. They are indirectly allowing others to tell them what to do. That means they have lost control; they are being controlled.

“Codependents are reactionaries. They overreact and underreact, but rarely do they act. They react to the problems, pains, lives, and behaviors of others. They react to their own problems, pains, and behaviors.” ~ Melody Beattie

We react to situations because we're anxious and scared of what has happened, what could happen, and what is happening in the moment. Many people react like everything is an emergency because they have been in many unpleasant situations for so long that they now have the habit of reacting to everything anxiously. Sometimes, we react because others are reacting or because we think we have to react.

When you practice detachment, you will learn to react less to the things that happen around you. To facilitate your progress, learn to recognize when someone or something is getting on your nerves. Usually, when you start to feel many negative emotions, something in your environment has snagged you. Losing your sense of peace and serenity is probably the strongest indication that you are caught up in some sort of reaction. When you understand that you're in the midst of a chaotic reaction, say or do as little as possible until you can get back the appropriate level of serenity and peace. After this, examine what happened. If it's a minor incident, you may be able to sort through it yourself. If the problem is more serious or is seriously upsetting

you, you may want to discuss it with a friend or professional to help clear your thoughts and emotions.

It is important that you take responsibility for your feelings. This way, you can tell yourself the truth about what happened.

6. Resist the urge to control other people's actions and set yourself free

Codependents aren't the people who "make things happen." Codependents are the people who constantly, and with a lot of effort and energy, try to force things to happen. They can be tyrannical and dominating, and some rule with an iron fist from a self-appointed throne. Others hide behind a facade of sweetness and niceties, and secretly go about their business — other people's business. Others claim inability, proclaim their dependence, announce their overall victimization, and successfully control through weakness.

"We don't have to take other people's behaviors as reflections of our self-worth. We don't have to be embarrassed if someone we love chooses to behave inappropriately. Each person is responsible for his or her behavior."

~ Melody Beattie

Many codependents combine tricks, using a variety of methods. Despite these tricks, the intention is the same: make other people do what you want them to. They hope to force life's events to unravel and unfold in the manner and at such times as they have designated.

When we try to control people and things that we have no business controlling, we are controlled. We lose our power to think, feel, and act in accordance with our best interests. We frequently lose control of ourselves. Often, we are being controlled not just by people but by diseases such as alcoholism, eating disorders, and compulsive gambling. So, stop trying!

Control is an illusion. It doesn't work. We cannot control alcoholism. We cannot control anyone's compulsive behaviors, overeating, sexual, gambling, or any of their behaviors.

We cannot control anyone's emotions, mind, or choices. We cannot control the outcome of events. We cannot control life.

In the end, people will do what they want to do. It doesn't matter if they're wrong and we're right. It doesn't matter if they're hurting themselves. You do not have control over anyone else and you should focus on yourself.

7. In the long run, caretaking doesn't help; it only causes problems

According to Earnie Larsen, codependents are rescuers and enablers. They not only meet people's needs, but they also anticipate them. They fix, nurture, and fuss over others. They make better, solve, and attend to. And do it all so well.

Codependents rescue people from their responsibilities. They take care of people's responsibilities for them. Later, they get mad at them for what they have done. Then they feel used and sorry for themselves. That is the pattern, the triangle.

The following acts indicate that you're trying to be a rescuer or caretaker:

- Doing something you'd rather not do.
- Saying yes when you would be more comfortable saying no.
- Doing things for someone even when they are capable of and should be doing it for themselves.
- Meeting people's needs even when they did not ask for your help.

- Doing more than a fair share of work after your help is requested.

Caretaking is not as friendly as it appears to be. It requires incompetency on the part of the person being taken care of. We rescue “victims”, people who we believe are not capable of being responsible for themselves. After we rescue others, we will eventually move to the next corner of the triangle: persecution. We become angry at the person we have so kindly “helped.” We’ve done something we didn’t want to do; we’ve done something that was not our responsibility to do, we’ve ignored our own needs and wants, and we get angry about it.

Caretaking doesn't help; it causes problems. When we take care of people and do things we don't want to do, we ignore personal needs, wants, and feelings.

Caretaking breeds anger. Caretakers become angry parents, angry friends, angry lovers. You can learn to recognize a rescue, refuse to rescue, or refuse to let people rescue you. Take responsibility for yourself and let others do the same. Whether you change your attitude, circumstances, behaviors, or your mind, the kindest thing you can do is be responsible for yourself.

Conclusion

Everyone is in some sort of relationship and so it is easy to form connections with others. As beneficial as these connections can be, it is not enough to become attached to these people to the point where it breeds problems.

If you discover that you have an unhealthy attachment to someone or something, you need to take several steps back and think about the root cause of the problem. Attachment is an unhealthy experience and it does no good for you or the other person.

To be able to live a more fulfilled life, you need to learn to detach yourself from unending cycles of dependency. Focus on yourself and let other people handle

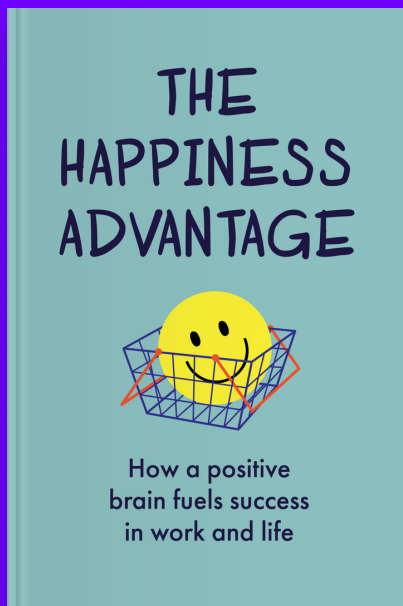
their problems. Only offer help when it is convenient for you and doesn't put you in an uncomfortable situation.

If you think someone has become dependent on you, you can convince them to see a codependency specialist. But, in all, remember that you cannot control anyone's actions. You can try to help, but you cannot have the final say over what they do.

Try this

On a sheet of paper, detail all the things you consider your responsibilities. Do this for your participation at work, with children, with friends, and with your spouse or lover. Now, list detail by detail what responsibilities belong to the other people in your life. If any responsibilities are shared, list what percentage you think is appropriate for each person. For instance, if your spouse is working and you have chosen to be a homemaker and work part-time, list what percentage of the financial responsibilities you assume, and what percentage of the household chores he or she assumes.

You may be surprised at how much inappropriate responsibility you have taken on and how little you have allowed others to assume. You may also find you have been so busy with other people's business that you have been neglecting some of your true responsibilities.



The Happiness Advantage:

How a Positive Brain Fuels
Success in Work and Life

Shawn Achor

Read to boost:

- Mindset
- Achievements
- Happiness
- Determination

What's in there for me?

In this summary, Shawn Achor, who spent over a decade living, researching, and lecturing at Harvard University, shows you how to adopt a more positive mindset. You will learn how to become happier and how to achieve extraordinary success in life and work. And most importantly, how to achieve the extraordinary in your life and work by adopting a more positive and happier mindset.



To be happy, you need to have a positive mood in the present and have a positive outlook for the future.



“Happiness causes success and achievement, not the other way round.”

1. Happiness gives your brain a competitive edge and sets you up for success

One common misconception in our society today is that we see happiness as the end result of being successful. The prevailing creed at companies and schools at any level is that if you become as hardworking and productive as you can, you will eventually become more successful, and therefore happier.

However, thanks to strides in positive psychology, this myth has been turned on its head. Several studies have proven that happiness precedes important outcomes and indicators of success.

Before we take a closer look at how happiness leads to success, let's define happiness and understand exactly what it's all about. According to Shawn Achor, happiness is the joy we feel striving after our potential. Happiness is essentially the experience of positive emotions — pleasure combined with deeper feelings of meaning and purpose.

To be happy, you need to have a positive mood in the present and have a positive outlook for the future.

The pioneer of positive psychology, Martin Seligman, broke down happiness into three measurable components: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. Through his studies, he confirmed that people who pursue all three routes led the fullest lives. However, those who pursue only pleasure experience only a tiny fraction of the benefits of happiness.

So, instead of moping around waiting for a big break or a huge success that will change your situation and make you happy, start by being happy regardless of your current situation and success will automatically follow.

In the following chapters of this summary, you will gain a deeper understanding of happiness, and discover how you can set yourself up for success by having a positive outlook on life no matter the situation in which you find yourself.

“Happiness functions as the cause, not just the result, of good health.”

~ Shawn Achor

2. How to improve your mood and increase your happiness baseline

When you stay positive and happy, you are giving yourself a great edge at achieving success at whatever you do in life. So to enjoy the happy and fulfilled life you crave, you will have to train your brain to always dwell on positive emotions rather than neutral or negative ones.

Happiness triggers the release of neurochemicals which help you think more quickly and creatively, and become better at solving problems.

Positive emotions flood our brains with neurochemicals like dopamine and serotonin that not only make us feel good, but also increase the capacity of the learning centers of our brains. And through a series of biochemical reactions, they boost our productivity and problem solving skills.

Obviously, we are all different in our temperaments and there are people for whom positivity comes more naturally. Fortunately, you can change your happiness baseline, regardless of whether you're a naturally happier or moody person.

While each of us has a happiness baseline that changes daily, with conscious effort, we can increase that baseline permanently. According to Shawn Achor, there are some actions that can boost both short-term emotions and permanently increase your happiness levels. This is how to improve your mood and raise your happiness throughout the day:

- Mediating
- Looking forward to something

- Being kind
- Exercising
- Infusing positivity into your surroundings
- Spending money

As you integrate these happiness activities into your daily life, you will not only start to feel better, but you'll begin to notice how your enhanced positivity makes you more efficient, motivated, productive, and also sets you up for greater achievement.

Did you know? A study by psychologist Richard Davidson showed that meditation helps grow the left prefrontal cortex — the part of our brain most responsible for feeling happy. So, take just five minutes each day to watch your breath go in and out. This will help you reduce stress, improve happiness and even your immunity over time.

3. Changing your mindset: use your fulcrum and lever to get your desired outcome

The great Greek scientist and mathematician Archimedes famously asserted that a man could single-handedly move the world with a long enough lever and the right fulcrum.

In life, our power to maximize our potential is based on 2 essential things:

- The length of our lever — how much potential power and possibility we believe we have
- The position of our fulcrum — the mindset with which we create the power to change

When you shift your fulcrum in a positive direction, the power of your lever will be magnified. So it doesn't matter if you're a student trying to get better grades, or a junior executive trying to get better pay, you don't need to try so hard to produce results and generate power. All you have to do is move your fulcrum — your mindset — to a positive direction, and the power of your lever will be magnified, ready to move everything up.

The more we move our fulcrum, the more our lever lengthens and so the more power we generate. Put simply, by changing your mindset and extending your belief of what's possible, you can enhance your ability to create what initially seemed impossible. It is your fulcrum and lever that determines what you can accomplish in life, not the circumstances around you, not even the weight of the world.

Happiness is all about aligning our mindset to always see the ways to rise above our circumstances.

Essentially, happiness is not about lying to ourselves, or neglecting the negative, but about adjusting our brain so that we always see the ways to rise above our circumstances.

By changing the way we perceive ourselves and our work, we can dramatically improve our results. The mere acceptance that we can bring about positive change in our lives is a source of motivation and enhanced job performance.

Success, in essence, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Hence, when faced with a difficult task or challenge, give yourself an instant competitive advantage by concentrating on all the reasons you will succeed, rather than fail.

4. The Tetris Effect: program your brain to capitalize on opportunities

The Tetris Effect is a cognitive phenomenon that occurs when we focus so much attention and time on something to the point that it radically changes our thoughts, mental images, and behaviors. This effect was named after the tendency for people to start seeing the world in sequences of Tetris blocks after playing the game of Tetris for a long time.

Optimism empowers you to make the best of every situation.

Naturally, the human brain is wired in such a way that we often find it difficult to see what is right in front of us if we're not focusing directly on it. In the same vein, when we are looking for something, we see it everywhere. For instance, you hear a song once, and suddenly it seems it's always on the radio. You buy a new style of jacket, and soon everyone you see on the street is wearing the exact same style.

This is why focusing on the wrong things in life will cause you to miss out on great opportunities that present themselves. If you choose to dwell on the negative and find fault in everything, you'll find it very difficult to see positivity in anything around you, no matter how excellent it is. This is known as the Negative Tetris Effect. The Negative Tetris Effect is a cognitive pattern that lowers our overall success rate.

The Positive Tetris Effect, on the other hand, is a way of seeing that constantly picks up on the positives in all situations. Having a positive outlook on things trains our brains to scan the world for the opportunities and ideas that boost our success rate.

5. Happiness, gratitude, and optimism are the three most important tools available to us

When we choose to focus on the positive, we benefit from three of the most important tools we have as humans: happiness, gratitude, and optimism.

So the more you pick up on the positive around you, the better you'll feel. And as we've established earlier, your happiness has a great influence on your performance at work.

The second mechanism of the Positive Tetris Effect is gratitude, because the more opportunities for positivity we see, the more grateful we become. It's also been proven that people who are consistently grateful are more emotionally intelligent, forgiving, energetic, and less likely to be anxious, depressed, or lonely.

Positivity yields an endless trend of optimism.

Optimism is the third driver of the Positive Tetris Effect. As your brain continues to pick up on the positive, you'll naturally expect this trend to continue, thereby making you more optimistic. And as it turns out, optimism is a tremendously powerful predictor of work performance.

Take three to five minutes each day to make a list of the good things in your job, your career, and your life.

The best way to adopt the Positive Tetris Effect is by making a daily list of the great things in your life, your job, and your career. When you write down a list of "the great things" that happened that day, you're forcing your brain to scan the whole day for potential positives. This will give you a vivid recollection of the things that brought you small or big laughs, feelings of fulfillment at work, a reinforced connection with family, a glimmer of hope for the future.

Focusing on the great things in your life helps your brain get better at noticing and focusing on possibilities for growth, and seizing opportunities to act on them.

And by training your brain to adopt a Positive Tetris Effect, you won't just be improving your chance at happiness, you'll be setting off a chain of events that will help you reap all the perks of a positive brain.

6. Falling upward — capitalizing on setbacks and adversities to become happier and more successful

One thing that is very common to each of us as a member of the human species is that we all experience adversity of one kind or another at some point in our lives. This could be mistakes, obstacles, failure, or frustration. We have many words to express the levels of hardship that can befall us at any given time in our personal or professional lives.

However, one thing the majority of us often fail to notice is that each setback we experience in life comes with some opportunity for growth that we can teach ourselves to see and take advantage of.

Essentially, we have three mental paths during crisis or adversity. The first path is the one that keeps circling around our current situation. The second is the one that leads us to start thinking about the worst-case scenarios. The third path is the one that leads us from defeat or setback to a place where we are even stronger than before the fall.

Unfortunately, finding the third path in difficult times isn't easy. In a crisis, we often get so stuck in the misery of the status quo that we forget a positive and productive path is available. The difference between those who rise above failure and those who are crippled by it is our ability to find the third path.

Rather than see failure as a stumbling block, see it as a stepping-stone to greatness.

Failures and adversities always come with great opportunities in disguise. And the way we choose to see a setback is what ultimately determines whether or not we are going to come out of it stronger than before.

So, the next time you're feeling hopeless or helpless about some setback in your career, some difficulty at your job, or some distress in your personal life, remember that a third path upwards is available — all you have to do is find it.

And most importantly, remember that success is not about never falling down or even simply about falling and rising over and over. Success is not just about simple resilience. It's about propelling ourselves upward with that downward momentum.

Success is about capitalizing on setbacks and adversities to become happier, more motivated, and even more successful.

"It's not falling down, it's falling up." ~ Shawn Achor

1. Use the Zorro circle to regain control of situations and take charge of your own fate

In today's world of intense and fierce competition, one of the most prominent drivers of success is the belief that our behavior matters; that we are in charge and have control over our future.

Having the innate feeling that we are in control, that we are in charge of our own fate, whether we are at work or at home, is one of the most powerful drivers of both well-being and performance.

Unfortunately, given how essential it is to our success and well-being, we don't always feel in control. Whenever our workload and stresses seem to pile up

faster than we can keep up, feelings of control are often the first things to desert us, particularly when we try to take on too much at once. The only way we can regain control is through the Zorro Circle — our circle of control. Self-awareness is the first goal we need to conquer; the first circle we need to draw.

Cultivate self-awareness by sorting out your feelings.

To become self-aware, we need to identify our feelings during distress and put those feelings into words. Regaining control starts with verbalizing the stress and helplessness you are feeling. You can do it by writing down your feelings in a journal or talking to a trusted coworker or confidant.

Your next goal after mastering the self-awareness circle should be to pinpoint which aspects of the situation you can control and which you can't.

Accepting that some things are just beyond your control helps you focus your energy on the ones you can control.

In effect, you'll be able to recognize the stresses that you have to let go of because they're out of your hands, while at the same time identifying the aspects where your efforts will be more impactful, so that you can then focus your energy accordingly.

Taking on one small challenge at a time — a narrow circle that slowly expands outward — essentially helps you relearn that your actions do have a direct effect on your outcomes, that you are largely the master of your own fate. The more your locus of control becomes internal, and the greater your confidence in your abilities become, the more you'll be able to expand your external efforts.

Conclusion

Contrary to popular belief, happiness isn't the end result of being successful. Happiness is an essential factor that results in success and account. That is,

the happier you are, the more successful you become. Being uptight and moping around all day will get you nowhere. If you want to get ahead, you have to adopt a great outlook on life and capitalize on positivity as often as you can.

Happiness fuels productivity; the happier you are, the healthier you get physically and emotionally, and the more productive you become, which increases your chances to succeed. So, don't wait around to catch a big break or to achieve a major goal before you become happy. Start being happy now, approach each day with optimum positivity, no matter what your current circumstances say, and success will follow automatically.

You can start living a happier life by surrounding yourself with positivity. Put the pictures of your loved ones all around your workplace, make time to go for a walk on a nice day, and stay away from negative people and events. This will help you keep a positive mindset and improve your well-being. Also, try as much as possible to be nice to others and exercise regularly. Altruistic acts reduce stress and improve mental health, and physical activities trigger the release of neurochemicals like endorphins and boost motivation.

Lastly, be grateful; appreciate the things and the people you have in your life. Gratitude is a strong driver for optimism and positive outcomes. Appreciating what you have also helps you relish good life experiences and build strong, meaningful relationships.

Try this:

Increase your happiness level with meditation. Simply take five minutes out of each day to watch your breath go in and out. Here is how you can go about it:

- Find a serene place, sit or lie comfortably and close your eyes.
- Breath in and out steadily; do not try to control your breath.

- Focus on your breath and notice how your body — your chest, rib cages, and belly — move with each breath.
- Whenever you notice that your mind has started wandering, bring your focus back to your breath



How to be Alone:

If You Want to, and
Even if You Don't

Lane Moore

Read to boost:

- Relationships
- Self-embrace
- Self-love
- Personal potential

What's in there for me?

Life sometimes throws us lemons, and we are supposed to make lemonade, but it's never that easy, is it. Feeling alone — simply feeling it or literally being alone — can be extremely difficult. Humans are social beings, so what are we supposed to do if you feel alone much of the time?

Cosmopolitan's former sex & relationships editor and star of the Tinder Live show Lane Moore explains exactly how to be alone via her story of lifelong struggle.



Focus on spending time with yourself, learning about your potential, and enjoying the things you've always wanted to try.



“Being alone is not a life sentence. I know it feels like it at the time, but I promise you, you will not be alone for the rest of your life.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. The necessity to learn how to be alone often begins in childhood

Lane Moore had a difficult childhood. She remembers calling herself “the asexual offspring of a tree” at one point because, although her parents were there in person, they were not available emotionally. Her father was emotionally abusive to her mother to the point where her mother completely shut down. This left Moore feeling abandoned, scared, and broken by the chain of abuse occurring in her childhood home.

Moore recalls a recent visit to the doctor’s where she was asked to fill in a form with an emergency contact. She thought about this for a while and left it blank. It made her emotional to think that she couldn’t automatically identify who to write on that form. She felt she belonged to no one at that moment.

Feeling alone often feels like you don’t belong to anyone. You might have a phone full of contacts, but you don’t feel emotionally close to any of them.

Many people feel this way, and while you always have others around you saying, “I’m here for you if you need me,” how many of them actually mean it? How many truly would be there if they were needed, or would there be a limit to what they could or would do for you?

When this happens on a regular basis, it’s easy to become disillusioned and shut yourself off from the world. People haven’t been there for you, so you become untrusting that anyone ever will be. For most people, this begins in early life.

It is easy to become disillusioned when you’re let down time and time again. Avoid becoming untrusting; not everyone is the same.

2. Desperately trying to find belonging in friendships does not fill the loneliness void

Most people who struggle to find belonging or love in their home environment desperately try to create close friendships to make up for that void. It almost becomes an obsession. Lane Moore suggests that children who grew up in a stable home tend to make friends in an easier and more stable way; however, those who had the opposite experience tend to cling on a little too tightly.

People who experienced an unstable upbringing often cling to friendships, sometimes suffocating the life out of them before they have the chance to develop.

In junior high school, Lane Moore made a friend named Sam. Sam was cool, and they clicked almost instantly. They were inseparable, but Lane Moore always felt that she was somehow overshadowed.

“She was family in the only way I knew it. She made me feel like I belonged somewhere, to someone.” ~ Lane Moore

Over time, the friendship stuttered and then ended abruptly. This proved Lane Moore’s worst fears to be a truth — that she was just too much for other people to handle. This theme continued, spending most of her time in relationships and friendships, fearing that the other person would leave or hurt her. She constantly questioned whether they meant what they said to her or not.

It’s easy to become scared that someone close to you will leave you or hurt you. All you need to do is go with the flow.

Childhood friendships have the power to scar you for a long time, especially female friendships. We begin to assume that we have to compete with others when all we need to do is spend quality time together.

Did you know? Most experts now agree that the end of a friendship can be just as painful, if not more so, than the end of a romantic relationship.

3. Do soul mates really exist?

Once you realize that you don't have a traditional family, it's easy to become obsessed with searching for your soul mate. However, do soul mates really exist? Are we "meant" for just one person?

This search is fueled by a need to belong, to want to feel normal, and to have all of this as quickly as is humanly possible. You believe that finding this person is going to fix everything.

Many people who feel alone are desperate to find their soulmate. They believe this person will give them a true sense of belonging and fix everything.

Lane Moore experienced this very thing and set out to find a romantic and everlasting love. She even imagined this person and began talking to them in her head. This person didn't actually have a face or look like anyone; it was more of a feeling than anything else. This imaginary person helped her through her childhood as she was bullied by her peers and felt abandoned by her parents.

This feeling of loneliness pushed her to try online dating, even though she was underage. In the end, she met Adam on a school trip to Germany. Adam was innocent and nervous, perfect for her in so many ways. They shared their first kiss and talked for hours. However, Adam was just like Lane Moore, desperate to attach and find someone to "save" him. In the end, she felt smothered, and they parted ways.

A little later, Lane Moore realized that this was down to having opposite attachment styles. There are 3 main attachment styles — secure, avoidant,

and anxious. Lane Moore then realized that anxious attachment was her style, explaining why she was keen to spend time initially with Adam.

There are 3 attachment styles: secure, avoidant, anxious.

This avoidant attachment style leads you toward wanting to be close, but not as close as the other person wants to be because you're scared they're going to leave. This style is also characterized by a need for high levels of intimacy and responsiveness. They can also become very dependent and only feel safe when they're around that person. All of this is too much for many people to handle, and Lane Moore accepts this is why she has often struggled in love.

Did you know? 73% of Americans believe in soul mates.

4. When love languages don't match, the relationship is doomed

Aside from attachment styles, there are also love languages we need to learn about when a romantic match. Lane Moore learned about these when she was set up by a friend with a guy called Everett.

There are 5 love languages: words of affirmation (compliments), acts of service, receiving/giving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. Our languages need to be compatible for a relationship to work.

Everett was a former Saturday Night Live writer and seemed perfect for Lane Moore. For a while, they dated and were happy, but there were always road bumps and misunderstandings along the way. Lane Moore often felt to blame whenever anything went wrong or as though she needed to apologize. She often felt misunderstood or needy.

The relationship was nearly doomed before it began. Lane Moore's anxious attachment style pushed her towards acting aloof and unattainable. She assumed that if he were the right person, he would push through the wall she

had built up around herself and win her heart. Of course, it didn't happen that way because Everett wasn't a mind-reader. He quickly became annoyed that she didn't trust him and simply didn't understand her.

Lane Moore also realized that the problems they were having were down to love language incompatibilities. Everett's love language was gift-giving and service. She was drawn to this, but it didn't make her feel seen or valued. Lane Moore's love language was also gift-giving and service but also compliments. She wasn't getting the compliments she needed to give her the sense of security she craved.

In hindsight, Lane Moore recognizes that if she had been able to sit down and talk about this openly, the problem could have been solved, but at the time, she didn't know how.

"When you don't have a support system, being patient whilst waiting for a soulmate is impossible. So, if you have someone in the ring at all, even one stick of gum that gives you a stomach ache, it still feels so much better than nothing." ~ Lane Moore

5. What are you supposed to do when your upbringing dictates the quality of your love life?

Many people agree that we often attract someone like our parents because we're looking for the love they gave us, or we're trying to solve the problem of them not giving us the love we wanted in the first place. That means that if you had great parents, you win at the game of love, but if you had a bad upbringing, you're doomed to suffer. How is that fair?

We often attract someone who can give us what our parents did or what we wish they had, which can be problematic when you had a rough childhood.

Lane Moore puts this point across but argues that it doesn't have to be that way. You've suffered enough through a poor childhood; you deserve more. Lane Moore now understands what she needs in a partner and focuses her search with that in mind. However, that doesn't mean it's always been easy.

"We are not born knowing how to love anyone, either ourselves or somebody else. However, we are born able to respond to care ... whether we learn how to love ourselves and others will depend on the presence of a loving environment." ~ Bell Hooks, All About Love

Once you understand what you need and you start to have success in life and love, people start to notice. In the case of a child who has grown up with absent or abusive parents, this can often mean that when the child begins to do well in later life, they become proud parents and want to wipe everything away. This isn't fair because it wipes away the pain and suffering, rendering it meaningless.

Be proud of what you have achieved despite what you have had to suffer.

Lane Moore admits that she has struggled in many areas of her life, but she is proud of where she came from because of what she had to endure. It taught her to be strong and helped her realize her capabilities. However, when people tell her that she "turned out well," she would much prefer that they told her they were proud of her for turning out well despite everything. That would make it feel like an achievement.

In the end, you have to pat yourself on the back because you raised yourself, and you did it well.

6. Loving without fear is the only way

After her relationship with Everett ended, Lane Moore started having casual sex because she thought that's what she was supposed to do. She assumed

that she could shake off her feelings of loneliness by hooking up with people she didn't care about to avoid getting hurt. She quickly realized that's not how it works and felt even more alone without the close connection of emotions and love. The experience taught her that finding love when you really want it can be extremely difficult.

One thing she was told time and time again was not to look. It seems ridiculous to tell someone not to look for love in order to find it when it's what they want most. In essence, it's a tactic for looking for love!

Telling someone not to look for love is pointless. Be yourself and go all-in when it comes to love.

People who often feel alone also feel that they need to change themselves to find someone, but this isn't the case. If you do this, how can you be sure that the person who does fall for you loves the genuine you? It's like living a lie.

In the end, Lane Moore suggests you should just go for it. Love fearlessly, accept the fact that pain may come your way, and go all in. However, that doesn't mean that when you're in a relationship, you should accept pain as the norm. Genuine Relationships aren't painful, and if you're feeling that, you need to change your partner.

If you're always in pain or feeling unsure when you're with your partner, the relationship is wrong for you.

7. "What are you doing for the holidays?"

Part and parcel of being alone in life, whether that's not having parents around or being single, is being constantly asked what you're doing for the holidays. It's been a constant thorn in Lane Moore's side for years.

While everyone deserves to spend the holidays with their family, this isn't always possible or isn't always the case. Admit to yourself that you don't deserve the situation you're in, but make the most of it anyway. If you hate this time of year, that doesn't make you a bad person either. You're allowed to celebrate or perhaps not celebrate at all; it's your choice.

Being alone for the holidays is difficult, but you can choose to celebrate however you want or not celebrate at all.

Many people feel depressed around the holidays, and you're not alone if this is the case for you. It's important to understand that you can hold your parents accountable for what they have done or not done, and you're allowed to do whatever you want with that information. You can forgive, not talk to them anymore, be indifferent; it's your choice, and it's all fine.

Holding your parents accountable for negative events in your childhood is your right.

Lane Moore has spent many holidays alone, and she recommends planning ahead, choosing to do whatever you want to do, and avoiding social media.

Did you know? The holidays are often a trigger for exacerbating mental health conditions due to the extra stress the time of year causes.

8. It's time to focus on number one

Throughout Lane Moore's journey, she has come to realize many things, but the most important being that time alone can be refreshing and nourishing, and in the end, it can teach you about your strength and capabilities. That doesn't mean it's not hard occasionally, but it's unlikely that you're as alone as you think you are.

Spend this time focusing on yourself. Do whatever you want to do, all the things you've always wanted to try, and enjoy the pride and enjoyment you get out of it.

“Being alone is not a life sentence. I know it feels like it at the time, but I promise you, you will not be alone for the rest of your life.” ~ Lane Moore

Sometimes it's better to be alone than to be around people. If you're not surrounded by good and positive people, everyone else will simply drain you. Sometimes you just need to hang out with yourself, and that's not a weird or unusual thing to do. See yourself as your own ally and love who you are. It takes time to feel this way, but the more you embrace being alone, the more you will benefit from the experience.

Focus on spending time with yourself, learning about your potential, and enjoying the things you've always wanted to try.

Lane Moore also suggests you look at the positives — you don't have to do anyone else's laundry; you don't have to run anything by someone else. You're free to do whatever you want to do! Don't allow the world to force you to shut down; you're worth more than that.

Conclusion

Being alone is often viewed as something negative or even strange. But spending time in your own company has a huge number of positives. That's not to say that it's not hard; humans are hard-wired to want to spend time with others and seek out social interactions, but there is no point in being around the wrong people.

Spending time alone and not seeing it as a potential positive can force you into situations that demean who you are. You may push friendships a little too much or accept less than you deserve in a relationship. When you understand that

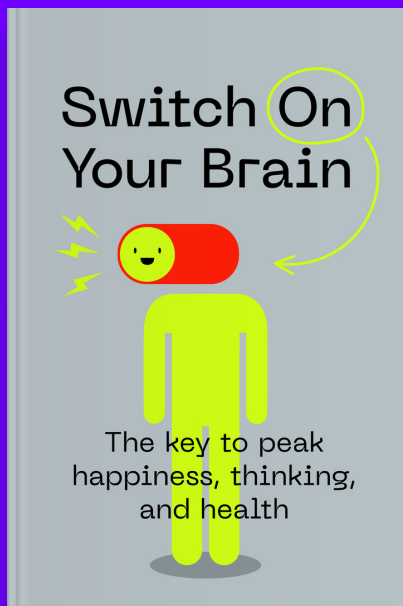
being alone can be a blessing and that it will certainly not last forever, you can take yourself out of these negative situations and realize what you truly deserve. Then, you can work towards getting it.

Try this:

Forgive yourself for any mistakes you may have made in the past and any time you may have accepted less than you deserve.

Determine your love language so you can develop stronger relationships with the right people.

If the holidays are coming your way, write a list of all the self-care things you want to do during that time. Dedicate the holidays to nourishing your mind, body, and soul.



Switch on Your Brain:

The Key to Peak Happiness, Thinking, and Health

Dr. Caroline Leaf

Read to boost:

- Fulfillment
- Self-belief
- Positive outlook
- Focus

What's in there for me?

If you're interested in understanding how to renew your mind and get rid of negative and toxic thoughts, this summary will change your life. Dr. Caroline Leaf is an award-winning communication pathologist and cognitive neuroscientist. In her book, you will learn how science and scripture from the Bible can help you renew your mind, overcome learning disabilities, and live a happy and more fulfilling life.



If you're patient and committed, you can completely change your thinking systems by replacing them with new thoughts.



"If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought."

1. The mind controls matter; it's not the other way around

There are two scientific schools of thought regarding issues of the brain and the mind. The materialists believe that the brain is the most important and that the mind is created through chemicals and neurons that the brain releases. In other words, the mind is the result of what the brain does. Revered scientists have held this view for many, many years, and it has impacted the approach medical professionals use when treating mental ailments. For instance, depression is viewed as a “chemical imbalance problem of a machine-like brain” and treated as such.

This approach to mental treatment hasn't been so helpful. And thankfully, modern scientific studies are beginning to realize that the materialist view of the brain is incorrect.

The mind governs the brain and determines its functions, not the other way around.

The other argument says, “the brain is what the mind does,” and this one has been proven to be correct. You’re a thinking being, and you have the power to choose what thoughts to focus on and which ideas to discard. Contrary to material science, the brain doesn't automatically determine your thoughts.

Here's something even more powerful: your thoughts shape your brain; they determine the size of your brain as well as the functions of your brain that would be active per time. It gets more interesting to know that there is a relationship between your thoughts and your DNA — your thoughts often affect the genetic information you pass down to your children.

“Beliefs control human biology rather than DNA and inheritance.”

~ Dr. Bruce Lipton

As we proceed in this summary, you will learn about your mind and how it's possible for you to renew it. You will see why it isn't so difficult to purge your

mind of bad habits, forgive more easily, overcome those learning challenges, rewire your mind against toxic thoughts, and learn to be happy with who you are.

“If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought.” ~ Dr. Caroline Leaf

2. You can use your thoughts to deal with genetic predispositions

The choices our ancestors made were indeed passed down to us through our DNA, even before we were born, which is why it's often common for you to see habits like smoking and drunkenness passed from one generation to another. But as negative habits are inherited, positive traits such as intelligence, sleeping style, and healthy eating habits are also transmitted from parent to offspring.

Pause for a moment and examine your life. Are there any traits that you can link to your ancestors? Sometimes, these traits are painfully obvious, and in other cases, they are so subtle that you have to think carefully before identifying them. But we all have at least one of those traits.

However, many people don't know that genetic traits aren't their destinies. They are simply predispositions, and you can choose to avoid them, no matter how strong they are. Of course, we aren't referring to physical traits like hair colors, height, eye color, and the rest — there is little you can do about those. What we're talking about here are character traits gotten from parents. That your father is a drunkard, and you have that gene in you doesn't mean you must be a drunkard all your life. You can change because it's a predisposition, not a destiny.

Renewing your mind helps you overcome negative traits.

The Bible instructs Christians to be transformed by the renewal of their minds (Romans 12:2) instead of conforming to the ways of the world, and science has proven this to be possible.

The character traits we inherit from our ancestors are similar to what the Bible says about visiting the sins of the fathers on the children right up to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5). But the Bible also said it's possible to transform so that you won't carry on your ancestors' sinful and negative traits. The way to do this is to turn to the Bible, study it, and meditate on it regularly. As you begin to do that, your mind enters a renewal phase, and you will start having a flow of positive thoughts that would change your brain and make it favor positivity.

3. Selective thinking can help you overcome trauma

Part of Dr. Leaf's job is to help traumatized patients regain themselves, and she has been doing this for many years. Throughout her practice, she has realized that traumatized patients could recover very quickly if they focused on renewing their minds.

The mind is the most affected by trauma, but you can cure trauma by being selective about what enters your mind.

What she does is help trauma patients shift their focus from the traumatic event to something else. Once they are able to do this consistently, they would gradually heal themselves of the trauma.

“You are not a victim. You can control your reactions. You do have a choice.”

~ Dr. Caroline Leaf

This is the science of it: as we think, we are activating neurons in our brains, and making the brain fire in different patterns and combinations, based on the kinds of thoughts we're entertaining. Neurons (elements of thoughts) that do

not get enough attention would soon begin to fire apart and destroy the emotions attached to the trauma. While this is going on, the brain releases chemicals like oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin to weaken the traumatic thoughts even further. So here is what you can do: identify the emotions, thoughts, and imagery associated with the traumatic event you had in the past. Now, understand that they are doing you no good; you will only keep hurting yourself if you keep replaying them in your mind. Instead, focus on thoughts and imaginations that are positive.

Did you know? According to American nutrition researcher W. C. Willett, only 5% of cancer and cardiovascular patients can attribute their disease to hereditary factors. In other words, you can avoid these diseases if you're careful about the lifestyle you live.

4. Don't allow social and news media to affect your focus

Social media is a double-edged sword: we use it to improve our personal lives, businesses, and society at large. But it can also ruin us, depending on how we use it.

Several scientific researchers have likened social media addiction to drugs, porn, and alcohol addictions — they all have similar effects on the brain. Many so-called social media experts tell us that it's essential for information to be bite-sized and that it's always great to stay updated with happenings around the world, and there is nothing wrong with that. A problem only emerges when we become social media addicts. Addiction to social media reduces our focus and self-control — two very important traits we need to live successful lives.

The busy world we live in makes it difficult for people to sit down and get work done. Multitasking has fast become the norm, but people don't seem to realize it's really just a myth. You can't be productive doing multiple things at a time.

You have to pay the price of focus and attention to produce a real masterpiece. It doesn't matter what you're doing; delivering your best takes time and insane focus. Don't let anyone lie to you.

Make it a point to always focus on just one activity and get it done to the best of your ability before moving on to the next.

Another thing too much social media does is keep us from deep thinking. Most people don't think deeply anymore, and our thoughts are now shallow because there is so much information out there, and we could easily get any information we desire.

Just decades ago, when information wasn't so accessible, and distractions were lesser, people easily took out time for soul searching or simply meditated on things important to them. But that's very rare today. Meditation and deep-thinking help improve the vitality of your brain and increase focus, making you happier and more productive.

One more benefit of meditation is that it helps you see your thoughts objectively so that you would be able to differentiate between your actual self and the thoughts you entertain.

You don't have to meditate all day long as Buddhist monks do. Science shows that dedicating 5 to 16 minutes daily to meditating and observing your thoughts is enough.

5. You can use the 21-day detox program to renew your mind and live a better life

In her years of study on how thoughts alter the brain, Dr. Leaf discovered that it was possible to completely renew the mind and eliminate identified negative thoughts and emotions. It would take at least 21 days of repeated deep-thinking

exercise to effect this change. After discovering this, she drafted out a step-by-step process that anyone could use.

If you're patient and committed, you can completely change your thinking systems by replacing them with new thoughts.

Dr. Leaf has been using this program on her patients for several years now, and the results have been explosive. This chapter discusses the first two steps of the 21-day detox program, and the subsequent chapter outlines the last three steps.

Gather

This is the first step. Here, your task is to be still and examine the information your mind is absorbing from its environment. Regularly repeating this step would make you effective at observing the details entering your mind. That way, you can be selective on the information you entertain in your subconscious.

So, observe your environment and become aware of the factors influencing your thoughts. For example, suppose you're eating fruit while reading this, and your favorite music is playing in the background. In that case, all five senses — touch, sight, smell, taste, and hearing — are not only actively working, but they are also transmitting information to your mind. That information shapes your thoughts and determines your emotional state.

Focused reflection

This is also called meditation or deep thinking. The practice of focused reflection helps you concentrate on specific thought patterns to build them up or destroy them.

Don't forget that the thoughts you focus on would grow and have deeper roots in your being, while the ones you discard would soon disappear. By meditating on specific thought patterns or principles, you're able to mold your conscious and subconscious thoughts into those thought patterns.

Sometimes, negative or toxic thoughts seem hard to get rid of. If you experience this, entertain those thoughts in your subconscious mind for a while. During the reflection process, your primary task is to examine the toxic thoughts and change them through repentance and forgiveness.

“The sins of parents create a predisposition, not a destiny.”

~ Dr. Caroline Leaf

6. Writing, meditating, and taking action steps will help renew your mind more quickly

The previous chapter discussed two steps in the 21-day detox program; this chapter treats the remaining three steps: write, revisit, and active reach.

Write

Writing is the way the brain does genetic encoding. By writing on paper or your electronic device, you're mirroring a function of the brain. The art of writing down what you learned from reflection is so vital because it helps store your lessons in your long-term memory.

When writing down your thoughts, you're free to get as creative as you want — the more creative you get, the better it is for your memory.

The human brain tends to remember creative patterns more than the typical writing patterns we learned in school.

Feel free to use graphs, diagrams, and any other illustrations you find helpful.

Revisit

After going through the first three stages, the thought you're focusing on is in the form where it can be redesigned or maintained, depending on your choice. If it's a negative thought, you certainly want to disempower it. The way to

disempower negative or toxic thoughts is by replacing them with positive thoughts and imaginations. For instance, if you're dealing with worrying, you may consider meditating on Matthew 6:25.

It makes sense to use God's Word rather than worldly psychological tricks because God's Word is more foolproof than any other material you may find.

Active reach

This is the final step in the process. Active reach involves taking action towards the renewal of your mind. You have used your imagination and thoughts to rewire your brain, so now is the time to sum up the process by taking action. Active reach is not just the decision to lose weight; it's picking up a weight loss program and acting on it. It's not the decision to forgive; it's actual forgiveness. It's not just confessing what you want; it's believing that you truly deserve it.

All five steps in the program are important, and no step is to be skipped. For maximum results, try to engage each step daily for the next 21 days. Don't rush it; remember you have 21 days (and you can increase it if you want, but don't go less than 21 days).

Conclusion

Contrary to materialist thinking, the mind is not a product of the brain, neither are thoughts automatic functions of the brain. It's the other way around: the brain does the bidding of the mind, and we all have free will and absolute control over what we think and how we act.

Let this information sink in because it would transform your life in no small way. By the time you begin to see the brain as an organ in your body that does the bidding of your mind, it would dawn on you that you are in charge of your life — you may not be able to control the events that happen to you, but you have total control over how you react, and that's all that matters.

You don't have to live with the toxic character traits you inherit from your ancestors, nor do you have to deal with trauma and learning disabilities all your life. You can renew your mind in five easy steps:

- Step 1: Take some time to observe your thoughts.
- Step 2: Practice focused reflection.
- Step 3: Write down the things you learned from reflecting.
- Step 4: Use the word of God to change your thinking.
- Step 5: Take actions towards change. An example might be going to church weekly to learn more about God.

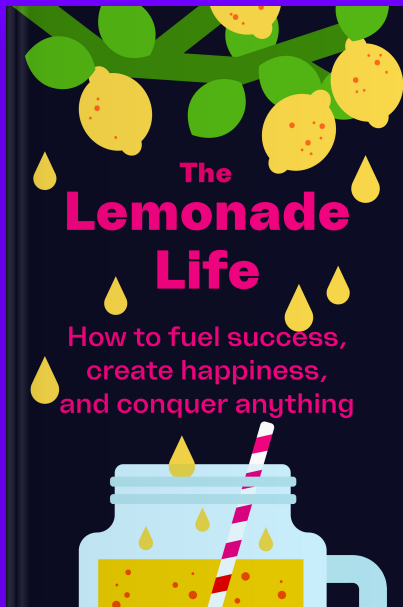
Write these steps somewhere and repeat them each time you feel there's a need for change in your life.

“Multitasking is a persistent myth. Paying deep, focused attention to one task at a time is the correct way.” ~ Dr. Caroline Leaf

Try this:

Create time daily to reflect and journal the new thoughts you get from reflecting. It will help you learn faster.

Use the word of God or any book you believe in to change your thinking. Study the book daily to influence your thoughts for good.



The Lemonade Life:

How to Fuel Success, Create Happiness, and Conquer Anything

Zack Friedman

Read to boost:

- Productivity
- Inner power
- Success
- Self-growth

What's in there for me?

Many of us are confused about the kind of life we are living. We find ourselves making efforts, yet we don't seem to progress. Zack Friedman offers to change it immediately! He is the founder and CEO of Make Lemonade, a personal finance company that empowers people to live a better financial life. In this tidbit, we'll learn the difference between trying to be successful (living a Lemon Life) and taking the right steps to be successful (living a Lemonade Life).



By asking questions and taking responsibility, we know where we have failed and what to do to correct our mistakes.



“Your life today is the result of choices. Some choices you made, while others were made for you. What about your life tomorrow?”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. It's easy to get carried away by life's excuses when it comes to making the best of any situation

We are easily defined by annual milestones such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc. To the majority of us, these achievements present us with a new opportunity to make new resolutions. The problem with making these resolutions, however, is that we fail to take advantage of them. We make them and then forget their importance to our lives. In one way or another, we choose excuses for ourselves while ignoring the possibility of making the best out of our situations.

We can all choose between two lives: the Lemon Life or the Lemonade Life. We live the Lemon Life when we settle for something that isn't our full potential. It's the place we stay when we fail to actively control our life path and journey, and we allow others to shape our destiny.

To succeed, we need to accept ourselves and understand that we cannot build our existence on excuses and a sense of entitlement.

On the other hand, the Lemonade Life is one where we are actively involved in our lives, and we are leading life on our terms, with clear purpose and possibility. Those who live a life with purpose and potential can proactively overcome any circumstances.

This bite-sized summary will show us how to flip on each switch — necessary steps we need to take to change our lives for good — so we can start achieving success, unleashing our greatness, and creating unlimited potential.

2. The best time to decide to change from the Lemon life to the Lemonade Life is now

According to Zack Friedman, there are five switches available to all of us. These switches are for those who want to move from the Lemon Life to the Lemonade Life.

When we flip on these five switches, our outlooks and perspectives will change, and we'll become better decision-makers, giving us the power and freedom to control our lives.

The switches are a P- R- I- S- M, which is an acronym for:

- P = Perspective
- R = Risk
- I = Independence
- S= Self-Awareness
- M = Motion

The importance of these switches is that they will establish and nurture purpose and possibility in our lives when brought together.

Perspective

We have to change our perspectives to change our possibilities. Our perspective — how we view life — influences what's possible in our lives. When we adopt positive perspectives, we get to see clearer opportunities.

Risk

To make better decisions, we need to understand the rewards of risk. We create barriers for ourselves that limit our creativity and opportunities. When

we remove the limiting factors and better understand the connection between risk and reward, we will take more calculated risks and make better decisions.

Independence

Independence means we have to avoid following the crowd and make decisions on our own. Even though independence is a great character trait, only a few people embrace it. It means doing away with common wisdom and standing on our own.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is needed to master our lives, self-reflect, and view life based on what we need to see instead of what we want to see. Self-awareness involves honest feedback, which provides an accurate description of any situation and forces us to focus on the necessary things in our lives.

Motion

Motion is about doing things to create the life we want effectively. We're all equipped with the right tools to establish a positive change. But we have to use these tools correctly, maximize our potential, and never settle for less.

Yesterday is gone; tomorrow might be too late. We have to make a decision now so that we can enjoy our lives later.

3. Change comes to those who take risks; not to those who wait for it

People who live the Lemon life are known as Lemon Lifers, and they are easy to spot because they are everywhere. Lemon Lifers can be categorized into three main types. They are:

- Eternal Excuses

- Steady Settlers
- Change Chasers

These three groups of people dominate the world, and that is why it is easy to copy them because they are who we see every day.

The Eternal Excusers have many reasons why they can't switch to the Lemonade Life. They give excuses such as the Lemonade Life consumes too much time and is only available for rich people. Their minds stay focused on the negative side of any situation. They spend more time worrying about doing something than actually doing it. These people complain all the time and do nothing to improve their situation, especially when they fail to meet their expectations. They only magnify negativity in their life, unable to transform their way of thinking.

It's never too late to change as long as we acknowledge our current situation and make up our minds to switch for good.

The Steady Settlers are those who lack independence. They are conformists and cannot do things without external influence, living someone else's dream and forgetting theirs. Steady Settlers mostly appear action-oriented, but they do not make any meaningful progress towards the life they want to live. They play it safe and are always scared of failing. Steady Settlers who want to make a change have to look inwards and accept that they're not doing enough to make their lives better.

The Change Chasers are those who are unwilling to fight for the kind of life they want. They love the beautiful things of life, but they would do nothing to make it a possibility. They only admire things from afar and solely focus on the end and not the means to an end.

To live a Lemonade Life, we cannot afford to be any of these three types of Lemon Lifers. We must overcome settling for less by being creative, proactive, and hardworking.

Did you know? According to Forbes, only 8% of people stick to their New Year's resolutions.

4. The best alternative to living the Lemon life is to be a Daring Disruptor

Daring Disruptors are those who change their lives with creativity, innovation, and positive transformation, all of this on their terms, and they are original thinkers who take calculated risks to maximize their potential.

Lemonade Lifers are always successful because they're bold, open-minded, and ready to take risks to seize opportunities. They don't follow the same routines. They accept the positives, and they don't focus on the negative aspects of life. This dynamic set of people defines the best routine for themselves to redevelop their spirits and prepare for the day ahead.

One of the best ways to become a Daring Disruptor is to embrace the spirit of gratitude. We must find what we are grateful for, proceed to write down what these good things are, and appreciate that we have them in our lives. Doing this can improve our moods, establish happiness, and trigger positive emotions in our lives. When we start our day with gratitude, we experience more positive energy.

"Excuses are barriers between dreams and actions." ~ Zack Friedman

To live the Lemonade Life, we need to be creative, proactive, and unconventional. Daring Disruptors are independent and do not rely on external influence to achieve their goals.

Happiness comes from within, and the power to determine how happy we'll be comes from our decisions.

Daring Disruptors are concerned with their growth, and they're happy all the time. The difference between the Lemonade Lifer and the Lemon lifer is the former's unrelenting determination to use the five switches to navigate every aspect of their lives.

5. The difference between Lemon Lifers and Daring Disruptors is in their approach toward risk and rewards

Change Chasers are primarily focused on the rewards, so they often overlook the risks. Eternal Excusers focus more on the risks and miss the rewards, while Daring Disruptors approach risks and focus on rewards in three ways:

- Applying the risk-reward ratio
- Protecting the downside
- Embracing the rewards of risk

The best way to access a reward ratio is to find more information upfront. This helps us to plan and know what to do to get to our destination.

Applying the risk-reward ratio

Through the risk-reward ratio, Daring Disruptors don't make blind decisions. Instead, they focus on the connection between risk and reward and use it to make better decisions. A risk-reward ratio is a tool that determines the amount of risk we are willing to take in connection to the potential reward we can earn. It's about understanding the implications of the decisions we make so we make fully informed choices that lead to better results.

The risk-reward factor implies that for every situation where we could lose, our potential reward should be greater than the potential loss.

Protecting the downside

While it's normal to concentrate on how much money we can make, we should be more focused on how much money we could lose. Protecting the downside simply means mitigating our risks. When a business opportunity shows up, we shouldn't let the excitement of the potential reward stop us from paying attention to the potential loss.

Embracing the rewards of risk

This helps us to find the right risks to take. We need to avoid following the crowd when making business decisions. For example, it's easy to get tempted by the prospect of going to Silicon Valley, but tech is not the only way we can make good money. It can look odd when we take a different direction from others, but it makes us stand out and gives room for more creativity.

6. Negativity can overwhelm us if we fail to control the influence of the people around us

When we lack independence, the negative people around us call the shots, limit our possibilities, control us, and in most cases, define us. They form boundaries, impede our progress, and reduce our productivity. Negativity is the major driving force in the life of Lemon Lifers, and it is why they make avoidable excuses, settle for less, and find it difficult to live a Lemonade Life.

Negativity triggers the fear of risk and allows us to choose other people's perspectives over ours.

Negative behavior interferes with our ability to realize our full potential and makes it difficult to make positive changes in life.

The reality of life is that people will always tell us “no,” trying to influence us with their negativity. Negative influence can feel suffocating and extremely limiting. So, we need to realize that when people project their negativity on us, it doesn't mean that we are powerless; it means that we're letting them take control of our lives. The best way to avoid this is to make sure that others don't push their insecurities onto us. Although there are some things that we can't do no matter how determined we are, it doesn't mean we should give in to negative vibes all the time. There are no prerequisites to becoming a successful person. In today's competitive market, the best ideas win, and years of experience are not necessary for success.

To avoid the power of negativity, we can do three things:

- **Check our Wolfpack**, which involves repositioning our inner circle. We should only surround ourselves with people who will give us positive energy.
- **Write the Millionaire's** check to have the right foundation before we act. If we act before building the right foundation, we always find it difficult to do things right.
- **Learn the inventor's secret** to live in a world of possibility and redefine what is possible. This requires unconventional thoughts and living a life without limitation. By studying successful investors such as Steve Jobs and Jack Ma, we can learn more about being a Daring Disruptor.

7. We shouldn't just focus on a job; we have to focus on performing well on the job

People who go for jobs because of good compensation end up being unhappy because they do not have the talent for the position. This is why it's vital to understand the "beta" of our jobs and realize that the "alpha" also matters. The alpha is all about us, and it deals with how we can perform compared to everyone else, while the beta focuses only on a job and its rewards.

It's not enough to choose an exciting job or the job our friends like; we have to choose a job that matches our unique talents and skills.

Eternal Excusers, Steady Settlers, and Change Chasers are all focused on the beta. They are mostly interested in the job itself without finding out if they are good for it. They believe that a particular job will carry them towards success without paying attention to what they have to do to achieve that success. On the other hand, Daring Disruptors focus more on the alpha, which allows them to excel, boost productivity, and outperform their colleagues. This is not to say that they are not tempted with good jobs with good compensation, but for them, it's always about finding the right job first.

"Your life today is the result of choices. Some choices you made, while others were made for you. What about your life tomorrow?" ~ Zack Friedman

Lack of independence makes people very miserable at work. Many people are unmotivated, underpaid, and work in bad work environments, yet they fail to leave. These people are Lemon Lifers, and they will always remain miserable at work until they decide to be Daring Disruptors. Lemonade Lifers don't worry about how much time they spend at work because they love their job. They are good at doing the job, and they feel happy doing it. To move

from being miserable at work to loving what we do, we need a work culture. The right work culture is where we should expect to work hard in a place where we love what we do. Daring Disruptors are not lazy, but they enjoy every bit of it no matter how much time they spend working.

8. Self-awareness requires feedback and open-mindedness to thrive

Knowledge shared is knowledge gained, so we cannot get the information we need when we hold back the things we know. Feedback is essential to the growth of any organization, and it's equally important for our progress. When we fail to use feedback in our places of work, the boss might assume everything is okay. For example, if there's mutual agreement on an output, and the manager expects a completed task, we may fail to deliver because we didn't ask when the work should be delivered. The idea is to ask questions, solicit feedback, and request help if need be.

Some lies we tell ourselves at work are:

- I don't have any questions.
- I can do this all by myself.
- Yes, we have a game plan.
- The business is doing great.
- We work well together.
- It wasn't my fault.
- Yes, I can get it done by Monday.
- I'd love to help, but I'm swamped.
- I'd be happy to work late tonight.

- Those instructions were super clear.

These lies are easy to tell because they disguise as good excuses, but in reality, they are not. As long as we believe these lies, we will lose touch with self-awareness.

Self-awareness is important, and it can be nurtured by making powerful statements. When we replace the lies we tell ourselves with powerful statements, we'll better understand what to do. The statements we can make are:

- I need help.
- I don't understand.
- I made a mistake.
- I don't know how to fix this.
- It's my fault.
- Blame me, not them.
- How can I help you?
- I'm sorry.
- I need to do better.
- Teach me.

Compared to lies, these powerful statements make us question ourselves to be better at what we do.

By asking questions and taking responsibility, we know where we have failed and what to do to correct our mistakes.

While it's critical to be self-aware and open to feedback, it's also important to have the ability to identify the information that's useful for us to reach our

potential. This process of self-realization and self-improvement can create a more effective and efficient emotional intelligence.

9. Having backup plans can be tricky because when we have a Plan A, we don't fully invest in Plan B

In most life lessons, we are taught to have backup plans to save us when things don't work out. However, if we want to be Daring Disruptors, we do not need a backup plan. But, not having a backup plan doesn't mean we can be lazy or nonchalant about our plans. It doesn't mean quitting our jobs when we have nothing to fall back on. It's normal and essential to plan and have something to help us out when things don't go our way. However, if we want to achieve our maximum potential without looking back, we have to do away with our backup plan. If we are truly interested in living the Lemonade Life, we must stick with Plan A because Plan A is where determination, creativity, and drive to progress exist.

Plan B is where we keep our worries, doubts, and other things that will stop us from maximizing our potential. It is all about compromise and settling for less. When we have two plans, it means we've convinced ourselves that we can always settle for less. However, if we don't have a Plan B, we know that we can't afford to fail, as Plan A is all we've got.

Winners don't quit when things don't go their way; they restrategize till they get it right.

In many cases, Plan B makes us weak and less prepared. It fails to set us in motion and hinders our progress.

The fact that we do not have a second plan doesn't mean we can't adapt if the first plan doesn't work out the way we want. One of the perks of being a Daring Disruptor is that we can easily adapt and change with our

environment. If the first plan fails, it doesn't mean we have to ditch it. We can easily go back to it, make some adjustments and try again. It is possible that our initial plan would not work out the first or second time we try it, and that is why we must never give up.

Conclusion

If we can't influence who we are, we can always decide who we'll be. We all need to find the best route to reach our goals, and that's the point of being proactive. Now that we understand the difference between a Lemon Life and a Lemonade Life, we can decipher where we belong and what to do. If we are still stuck in the former, we must find a way to switch to the latter using the five switches discussed in this summary.

The switches mentioned in this tidbit have all it takes to turn our lives around for good. As the popular saying goes, when life throws you a Lemon, make Lemonade. This means that even if we find ourselves in situations that are not favorable due to circumstances beyond our control, we can still make meaning of our lives.

Our current situation shouldn't determine our future because we have the ability and the opportunity to change things for good. Copying the steps taken by our friends and family members can be exciting, but it's not always the best. We are all dynamic and different, so we need to find our uniqueness. Things won't always come easy for us, and we might have to take longer paths, but sometimes, these paths lead to breakthrough discoveries. That's why we must ensure that we become Daring Disruptors.

The path to glory is often neither straight nor simple. However, that shouldn't stop us from trying. We must always remember that, after the struggle, there's greatness on the other side.

Try this:

Start your day with gratitude. Make a list of the people in your life who make you happy, appreciate them, and hold on to the sweet memories you share with them.



The Art of Happiness:

A Handbook for Living

Dalai Lama

Read to boost:

- Wellness
- Spirituality
- Inner peace
- Meditation

What's in there for me?

We base our happiness on the material things we acquire or are unable to. Our superficial lifestyle has made it increasingly difficult to find happiness, let alone keep it. Despite this, Dalai Lama teaches that happiness is something we can only create from within. The Art of Happiness introduces us to a refreshingly new approach to getting out of our destructive habits and coming into much healthier ones that guarantee lasting happiness.



Self-deceit is a dangerous ally to seek shelter with, you must accept your strengths and weaknesses.



“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.”

GO!
and get it
in 15-min!

1. Happiness is a natural and mutual goal for all people regardless of their beliefs, it is a product of our core instincts of gentleness and compassion and can be achieved by meditation

Happiness is a mutual goal for humans, regardless of religion. It can be achieved through training the mind; this includes identifying the habits or things that cause sadness and reducing them whilst cultivating those that bring happiness. Happiness is not a self-centered goal, in fact, happy people are more sociable, effectively spreading the happiness around unlike unhappy people who brood and sulk. Happy people are also more forgiving and loving.

Happiness seeks to be shared with others, happy people are more willing to share their happiness.

They are more likely to lend a helping hand to a stranger and they are better at relating with people. A motorist is more likely to let another get in front of him if the traffic jam finally eases up and is no longer stuck. A good mood equals a good person. But where does happiness come from? And how do we get it?

The path to happiness is one that involves learning to identify negative and positive emotions and their respective effects on our minds. After which, you must commit to a willful cultivation of a kind and compassionate mindset, this way, you are psychologically healthy which translates to a state of happiness. It is often thought that at our core, we are selfish and aggressive but in truth, we are innately compassionate and kind.

Happiness comes firstly from attaining emotional intelligence and showing compassion to others.

If ever you feel unsure about how to interact with people due to their mean or violent demeanor, remember that as humans, we have at our core, the need to be gentle, compassionate and kind. Once you remember that, you'll find it much easier to see past their actions. The author claims that although violence

and aggression are real emotions, they do not stem from our innate instincts. Instead, they are a product of intelligence, a need to survive as we evolved. Anger and aggression are a response to danger or threat, you must approach people armed with the knowledge that their outbursts aren't their fault but the result of frustration or sensed danger. A better understanding of people and why they feel these dark emotions will make it easier to interact with them without stirring up further frustration.

2. A happy soul is one who is ready to open up to loved ones and friends and shows utmost compassion in his/her dealings with them

As humans, we tend to feel lonely, because we expect a certain level of openness and warmth before we show it to them. Loneliness, according to The Dalai Lama, is a product of our negligence of the importance of the many people we come across. The Dalai Lama believes that to fight loneliness is to approach people from a standpoint of openness and warmth, even if they turn down your offer of a gentle exchange, you leave the scene feeling no regret because you acted in your good nature. We are all interdependent, each one of us is part of a large wheel that runs perpetually, if you can recognize this system and yours and everyone else's place in it, you will move a step closer to feeling less lonely.

If we let regret and the pain of rejection linger, we risk sinking into loneliness.

Intimacy, as a tool for ultimate mental wellbeing and happiness, should also be used effectively. As such, there is a need to deepen our intimacy with others, this is achieved by first establishing empathy. Empathy is the act of juxtaposing oneself in the stead of the next person and attempting to feel the things they feel. It is a profound gesture and a surefire way to deepen intimacy with people.

To be truly happy is to be wholly compassionate with your fellow man/woman, and to have compassion is to breed empathy. Empathy and compassion find roots in our need for intimacy, forming close relationships.

With empathy, we can hope to find and sustain happiness through compassion.

This kind of relationship takes a lot of compassion, but compassion can be misconstrued and twisted. The Dalai Lama says there are two kinds of compassion— one labored with forceful attachment to a person, the other is pure and selfless without a desire to imprison the person in our lives. This compassion seeks to understand and appreciate the struggle of the next person, that way, you are able to even help them through it. What is the place of compassion and what are the benefits?

Compassion is woven into our DNA. It is increasingly beneficial to cultivate compassion because it is responsible for overall good mental health. A compassionate individual is one who doesn't seek conflict, and as such, he's easier to talk to. In being compassionate and finding happiness, you have been able to water compassion in the next person, this interconnectivity of souls is a highly enlightening and beneficial experience.

3. Suffering is an inevitable part of our existence and until we come to terms with its inevitable nature, we will continue to be tossed to and fro by whatever bout of suffering we experience

Suffering, although a great discomfort, is a part of our lives. It signifies the sum of bad things that can happen to us at a particular time or over a period of time. The author believes that we are often overwhelmed by our suffering because we fail to see its relevance. The whole world is going through suffering and will continue to do so perpetually, you must recognize that it is in fact inevitable.

Suffering and Joy are two sides of a coin and you must approach each day with the expectation for either.

Suffering isn't a punishment for some crime you committed but an essential part of existence.

As much as suffering is a part of human existence, there are also various forms, one of note, is the one we create and feed ourselves. Oftentimes, when we experience suffering as a result of either an encounter with other people or circumstances beyond our control, we tend to drag the memory long after the day it occurred. This is often because we haven't forgiven the person[s] who wronged us or we haven't forgiven ourselves. We must learn to let go of past grievances and forgive whoever had offended us in the past and move on from the memories, it is the only way to truly attain happiness.

We must forgive those who offend us and seek only to live peaceably.

It can be difficult to forgive someone who wronged us, someone whom we have tagged as an enemy, but the author believes that there is a way to do so without much effort. To truly forgive an enemy, you must view the enemy from a different viewpoint, and instead of plotting revenge, forgive them.

Is there a meaning to all this suffering? In some religious beliefs, suffering is a way to bring us closer to a higher spiritual meaning. So, when one suffers, it should be seen as a tool for spiritual upliftment, a chance to be vulnerable enough to receive spiritual recourse. Suffering can either make us stronger and ready to face whatever else is thrown at us but it can also make us vulnerable, appreciative of our own place in the universe. Humans can endure a great amount of suffering if they know it was for a greater purpose or meaning, so when we suffer, instead of rejecting it altogether, think of it as a chance to either be a stronger individual or a more compassionate, open soul.

Did you know? The Dalai Lama has a knack for repairing wristwatches.

4. To truly change your state of mind into one of real compassion, peace and happiness, you must be determined to take the right action to effect a lasting change

It can be difficult to change the way we think, feel, and see the world in general because many experiences we might have had in the past or are having right now. The author has outlined a few ways to change just how we think and how that can lead to happiness.

If we change how we see the world, we can change the world.

It requires a strong determination to take matters into your own hands and start on a path to change. It can be hard to generate enough enthusiasm to kick the old, familiar habits to the curb. If you wish to learn a new healthy but unfamiliar habit, you must first start to consciously practice it until it becomes a part of your routine. Only then can you accept the positive change it brings with it.

It is easy to get distracted, discouraged and derailed from your path to happiness and when you do get these feelings, it pays to respond with a positive outlook. This isn't to say you should deny reality but that you accept it and identify the positive aspects of it.

It is important to let go of injurious thoughts that spring up in our times of stress.

Now, we must address the chief emotions responsible for the negative thoughts and mindset we are trying to rid ourselves of; anger and hatred. As humans, we are very prone to anger and hatred because of our vindictive nature. Anger and hatred, although strong emotions, can be put under control, tamed and ultimately reduced to the barest minimum.

The problem with anger and hatred is that they are an enemy, but unlike other enemies, these emotions reside within us, feed off us and continue to grow. But this is an advantage because unlike any other enemy, you have control of

this enemy and can determine just how much influence it has on you and your general mood.

Patience and tolerance are the keys to a healthier life, when you are patient and tolerant, a lot of things no longer have a dire effect on your wellbeing. A patient and tolerant mind will forgive past wrongs and let go of the hurtful memories, this in turn, translates into a kind of peace and happiness that is difficult to lose.

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.” ~ The Dalai Lama

5. Anxiety is an enemy to us reaching our true potential and can be a hindrance to a truly happy existence and only with intentional positive action and thought can we rid ourselves of its harmful effects

Anxiety is one of humanity's greatest chinks in our proverbial armor. It is an illogical yet logical assumptive reaction that can manifest in the strangest of ways. Some liken it to fear, since it operates along the same lines, so we will discuss them together; fear and anxiety.

Anxiety is a more potent enemy than fear, it feeds on our willingness to think outside of logic.

First, anxiety and fear can be good. There are scenarios where fear is healthy and a needed cautionary prompt. But other times, it can be a crippling factor that causes you to malfunction as a person; socially and otherwise. It can be a real bother, especially since it makes it difficult to properly navigate our daily lives. This is why we need to rid or reduce the effects of anxiety.

Anxiety must be put under submission and fast before it wrecks irreparable damage.

One way to do that is by cognitive intervention, this involves challenging the anxiety and the thoughts it generates with positive thoughts instead. So, when you are confronted by a negative thought, you respond with a positive one. For example, anxiety says you'll screw up a presentation but instead of believing it, you respond with, "I don't aim to impress but to touch lives with my words", and you'll feel a weight lift off your shoulders.

6. Finding lasting solutions to the plague of anxiety

Another method is identifying the motives behind every action you feel anxious about. This is tied into the determination and enthusiasm discussed earlier, when you discover the motives behind your intended action, all becomes clearer and easier for you. When you are worried about a performance, instead of focusing on your own competence, focus on the joy you are about to share with the audience and you'll find it easier to do it.

Focus on the satisfaction you'll get when you complete the task and watch the anxiety fade away.

Anxiety sometimes stems from a low self-esteem and this might arguably be the worst kind. This kind of anxiety isn't suggesting that you are afraid to do something, it tells you that you cannot and will not be able to. An inferiority complex is a real issue in our world today and it affects quite a number of people, maybe even you. So how do you build up self-esteem?

By first being honest with yourself. Anxiety and low self-esteem will always flood your mind with lies that might be believable but are lies regardless. Being honest with oneself is accepting our strengths and weaknesses and working with them as they are.

Self-deceit is a dangerous ally to seek shelter with, you must accept your strengths and weaknesses.

The inferiority complex is wrong but it keeps you under because you believe it, you must find the truth for yourself. You are capable of a lot of greatness and you have the potential to do great things.

Conclusion

Every human is created equal in their search for happiness, and as such, it is a mutual goal regardless of race, faith, or background. The path to happiness is simple and clear, it is made easier by mental practices that calm the mind and deepen compassion. But of all the many ways to find and sustain happiness, the best one is developing a healthy spiritual life. Surprisingly, it encompasses all the many ways to ascend to a healthier mindset; faith teaches compassion, kindness, confidence and much more. Each human is daily seeking to be happy, you too can lend a helping hand by being patient and tolerant, in that way, teaching them to do the same to you.

Compassion and empathy are two pivotal parts of attaining true happiness. A compassionate heart will always see cause to reach out and help as many as they can, spreading joy and happiness as they go. Empathy is also an important aspect, without it, it would be impossible to truly feel the pain of those we wish to help. Empathy puts us in their shoes so we feel what they feel and understand just what they need to be happy. Empathy and compassion go hand in hand, but without patience and tolerance it might be a trying venture to spread happiness, especially to those reluctant to receive it in the first place. The art of happiness is attaining happiness and seeking to spread it.

Try this

Take out time, maybe 20 – 30 minutes a day, to practice meditation or prayers before you head out, then do the same when you get back to your home.



Yay! You have boosted:

#

self-esteem

empathy

mindfulness

positive thinking



stress management

self-awareness

self-care

relationships

wellness

fulfillment

setting boundaries

emotional intelligence|



**YOU JUST TOOK A GREAT
STEP AND MADE YOURSELF
STRONGER. WE ARE SO
PROUD OF YOU!**