

SUMMARY

THE

CHARGE

BRENDON BURCHARD



Summary of “The Charge” by Brendon Burchard

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Learn how to recharge and access your full potential.

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Introduction

Do you ever feel like you're sleep-walking through your life? It's easy to go through the motions of waking up, going to work, eating, and sleeping, only to find yourself wondering where all the time went and what you did with your day. And the worst part is that for most of us, this cycle repeats on a seemingly endless loop forever. Are you tired of that? Do you ever find yourself wondering what it would be like if your life had turned out differently? If you had a job that you enjoy? If any of these feelings sound like something you've experienced, then it's time for a radical change! It's time to feel the way you do when your iPhone is at 100%: like you're fully charged and ready to go! That's why, through the course of this summary, we're going to explore the common human drives that are vital for success and you can unlock their power in your life.

What Type of Life Do You Have?

You might start to answer this question with adjectives like “busy,” “stressed,” “successful,” or “happy,” but the author posits that there are actually only three life categories. By this definition, your life can feel caged, comfortable, or charged. So, let’s dive in and take a closer look at what that really means, starting with the definition of a caged life. To think about what this looks like in practice, let’s consider a quote from Virginia Woolf. The famous author and feminist once wrote that, “The eyes of others our prisons; their thoughts our cages.” This is pretty much the definition of a caged life because under this life model, you might find yourself subscribing to preconceived standards of success that don’t fit what you really want for yourself. You might feel pressured to get married, get a good job, have 2.5 kids, and a house with a cute picket fence. By the conventional standards of society, you would have a great and successful life!

But what if your dream was to be an artist-- untethered, childless, nomadic, and creative? In this case, you would feel caged by the expectations of others and you wouldn’t feel that your life was truly fulfilling or successful. Because sadly, that’s exactly what happens when we live a life that’s been prescribed for us by social conventions. But what if your experience isn’t quite so extreme? What if the life you’re living isn’t the complete opposite of what you would find fulfilling, but rather something that’s vaguely unfulfilling? What if, for example, you’re just happy enough? You like your job, but you don’t love it. You like where you live but it’s not your dream house or even your dream town. And even though your life isn’t bad, you find yourself wondering what life would be like if it was more than just “not bad.” What if, instead, your life was awesome? This is the sad reality of a comfortable life, one which feels as though it will never transcend “not bad” to become amazing.

But what about the charged life? Put simply, this is the phase of life that embodies what our caged or comfortable counterparts are longing for. This is the life that dares to stop accepting limitations. This is the life that really

does become awesome. Those who are feeling the power of a charged life approach their days with positivity and confidence, awash in the knowledge that they have the power to change their circumstances. So, as you read over the descriptions of the three types of lives in this chapter, I challenge you to take a moment and consider two things: what type of life are you living? And what kind do you want to have?

Reclaim Control

No matter what type of life you have, all human beings have one thing in common. And it's not the need for basic human rights like food, water, or shelter-- in fact, it's something far simpler and purer. It's the desire for happiness. Because no matter who you are or what goals you have in life, every single person in the world wants to be happy. What makes people with charged lives (or "chargers") different is that they've learned how to find happiness. So, how did they do that? Well, according to the author, that's because they've connected with the necessary human drives. So, over the course of the next few chapters, we're going to learn what these drives are and why we need them in our lives.

Let's start with a little bit of background. Unlike basic human rights such as food, water, and shelter, these human drives aren't vital for survival. You can go through life without them-- but not very well. Without these drives in your life, you can exist, but you won't truly live. That's because each of the ten drives are connected to an integral aspect of human success and happiness. They can be divided neatly between two categories: there are baseline drives and forward drives. So, let's start by unpacking the baseline drives. The five drives in this category are called control, competence, congruence, caring, and connection. We'll start by taking a look at control.

Control is pretty much exactly what it sounds like: it encompasses our relationship with the elements in life that are within and beyond our control. And as with most aspects of life, the key to success lies in how we handle them. What makes the difference for a charger is that they understand we cannot control an overwhelming portion of the things that happen to us in life. For example, we can't control how long our food takes to be delivered to us, how long we have to wait for a college acceptance letter, or whether our partners simply fall out of love with us. But we can control how we react to our life circumstances and that makes all the difference in the world.

To illustrate this, the author provides an example of his father's battle with leukemia. When living under a diagnosis that feels like a death sentence, it's easy to get discouraged and despondent or be dragged down by despair. But instead, the author's father found empowerment in the knowledge that the one thing he could control was his attitude toward the situation. So, he concentrated on living the last weeks of his life with grace and positivity and he brought joy to his friends, family, and the hospital staff who worked with him. This example serves as a shining reminder of the fact that we too can reclaim control by taking ownership of our life and attitude.

Cultivating Competence

Competence can best be described as the ability to utilize or apply a certain skill-set to perform a task. As such, competence is a diverse and multi-faceted skill which can translate to pretty much any job in any situation. Although you might be especially gifted with one type of task over another, competence is simply the ability to understand information and translate it into skillful action. And unfortunately, it's a rare skill. Due to a lack of emphasis on critical thinking in schools and an overwhelming pressure to multitask in the workforce, few people have the opportunity to cultivate their natural competence.

As a result, people often get stuck in what the author calls the “competence/confidence loop.” If you struggle with a task or feel like you're not competent, you won't feel confident about yourself or your ability to do your job. This in turn creates a cycle that prevents you from exploring new opportunities or taking on new challenges because you don't feel comfortable with the basics. Unfortunately, however, that won't solve your problem, because there will still be moments when new tasks are thrown at you or your competence is required. Continuing to feel insecure in these moments will perpetuate the cycle and from there, it's a very slippery slope towards living a caged and unfulfilling life.

To stop the cycle in its tracks, the author advises that you reclaim control by cultivating your competence. You can start by giving yourself challenges to complete. However, your challenges have to adhere to three key standards: they need to be real (that means ‘real’ in the sense that they're difficult for you), they need to be time-sensitive, and they need to be observable. So, to put this into practice, you should set a goal for yourself to complete a specific thing in a certain amount of time. And when you've completed it, you should be able to point to observable results, like the fact that you can now speak a new language or perform a new skill. And that's how you'll increase your competence!

Activate Congruence

Congruence might be a term we most commonly hear in math, but it's not just for angles! Congruence is actually vital for achieving personal and professional success because it helps you find a compatible balance between the conflicting areas of your life. For example, if you frequently find yourself rescheduling plans with your partner because you forgot an important work deadline or you always miss your daughter's ballet recitals because you double-booked yourself for her performance and a follow-up meeting after work, congruence is what you're missing in your life. That's because, according to the author, congruence is what helps you align your reality (who you are right now) with your aspirations (who you hope to become).

As a result, the author posits that there can be three levels of congruence: positive, negative, or no congruence at all. The difference between the three can be easily observed in your behavior. If the way you behave and the way you hope to behave match up pretty well, then that's positive congruence. Likewise, if you have negative congruence, you feel bad about yourself and your behavior reflects it. And if you have no congruence whatsoever, then your behavior doesn't align with your aspirations. Under these circumstances, you want to do better-- perhaps you even know that you can do better-- and you're constantly frustrated by your failure to meet your own expectations.

So, how can we cultivate positive congruence? The author contends that the first step is to identify standards or core values and work to meet them. And if that sounds like it's more easily said than done, you're right! Making your real life align with your perception of yourself is hard work, but it's worth it if you want to stop the cycle of disappointment and frustration. To ensure success, the author recommends that you set standards which are both achievable and realistic. Remember that, even if something is difficult, as long as it can be realistically accomplished, it's still achievable, so these instructions are mutually beneficial. The author also recommends that you

take a moment of reflection to consider the core values that are most important to you and write down six key words. Three of these words should describe the person you want to become while the next three should reflect how you want to treat the people in your life. You may find that writing this on a card and carrying it with you will help you develop your congruence!

Embrace Challenge

Now that we've examined a few of the crucial baseline desires, it's time to turn our attention towards the forward drives. As you might infer from their name, forward drives are exactly what they sound like; where baseline drives encourage you to master the basic concepts required for a healthy, stable existence, forward drives help you to move into the future. And the desire for a challenge is one of the most important forward drives. Although you might think you don't really crave challenges all that much, the truth is that every human being grows frustrated and complacent when everything comes easily. That's why we need a challenge. We need the feeling of knowing that we tried something difficult and conquered it. We need that sense of pride and accomplishment.

However, as we consider the importance of challenges, it's equally vital to acknowledge the distinction between a challenge and a goal. A goal is more like something you check off on a to-do list. Your goals for the day might include paying your power bill or taking the cat to the vet for her checkup. As you can see, a goal isn't necessarily characterized by being hard; it's more of an ordinary task that you want to accomplish. By contrast, a challenge is something that is hard by its very nature, like beating your personal time as a runner or bench-pressing 50 pounds more than you normally do. Challenges can also expand to personal, spiritual, or intellectual tasks like breaking out of your social comfort zone or studying more aggressively than usual.

Distinguishing between goals and challenges is important because without this acknowledgement, we might simply assign ourselves goals to complete and think we're breezing through life's "challenges." So, once you've considered your personal lists of challenges and goals, the author recommends setting yourself a new challenge every month for next year. To help visualize your challenge, you can get a large wall calendar or even a big planner and plan out your year of challenges in twelve little boxes, with each one listing something new to accomplish. And once you've identified

your challenges, the author cautions readers to guard themselves against one final pitfall: being held back by others' judgments.

This can be a big challenge on its own because it's difficult to resist the pressure to conform. It can be even harder to avoid getting discouraged by others' unkind remarks. But don't let the pressure keep you from committing! If, for example, your goal is to lose weight, don't be dissuaded by people who give you funny looks at the gym. Instead, concentrate on the positivity you'll be getting from all the people who are rooting for you! Negative emotions can linger in your brain, meaning that it's easy to focus on our negative experiences instead of the positive ones, but the author recommends learning to redirect your focus to the positive.

Because after conducting multiple surveys of hundreds of people, the author learned that his respondents had, on average, experienced deep and painful rejection seven times over the course of their lives. But when he asked how many times they'd experienced support and encouragement from others, the response was overwhelming: each person could think of over a thousand times! So, focus on the positive and don't let others' judgments get you down!

Final Summary

As human beings, it's easy to concentrate on the differences that divide us. But no matter how different we are, every person on earth has one thing in common: we all want to be happy. We all want a life that's meaningful and fulfilling. And that's why the author advises us to examine the differences between a caged, comfortable, and charged life to identify the one we really want. Do you want to be a charger?

Discovering your charged life can be hard work, but it's worth it! All you have to do is tap into the human drives that characterize our conceptualization of happiness and fulfillment. As you incorporate these principles into your life, you'll find that your life is neither caged nor comfortable, but infused with purpose. You will not only feel competent, challenged, congruent, and in control, you will also feel more alive than ever before.



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