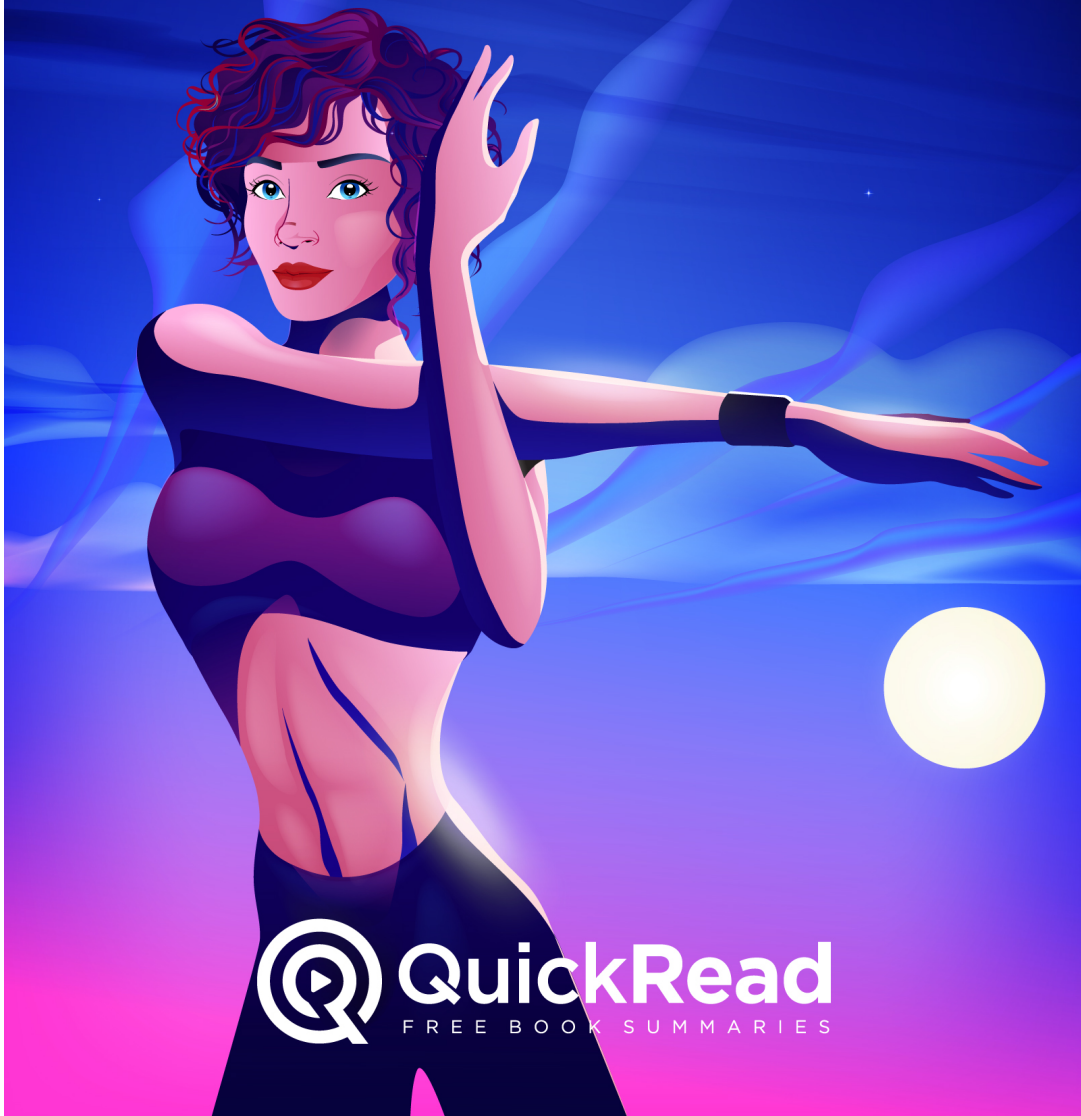


SUMMARY

THE MINDFUL ATHLETE

GEORGE MUMFORD



 **QuickRead**
FREE BOOK SUMMARIES

Summary of “The Mindful Athlete” by George Mumford

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Discover the athletic superpowers you didn't know you had.

Introduction	5
What Does Enlightenment Look Like For You?	6
What Does Mindfulness Really Mean?	9
Just Breathe	11
Cultivate Your Insight	13
Final Summary	15

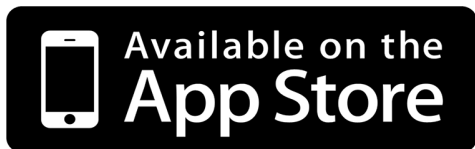


QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

Go to QuickRead.com/App now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.

Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.



Introduction

What does meditation have to do with being an athlete? Your first instinct might be to say, “Nothing!” but in fact, that couldn’t be further from the truth. Although meditation is often mistakenly identified as a form of New Age pseudoscience, it’s really just about training your mind for the purpose of achieving clarity and accessing your potential. And that’s precisely why it’s so beneficial to athletes! Because as an athlete, you not only know the power and necessity of training, you also understand how much your mindset influences your success. You know, for example, that you have to train yourself to focus, to block out self-doubt, and to think like a winner. Wouldn’t it be great to maximize the power of your mind and reach untapped levels of potential?

George Mumford thinks so and that’s why this book examines his theories of mindfulness along with his key strategies for enhancing your performance. So, through the course of this summary, we’re going to learn how harnessing the power of mindfulness can help you to discover the “superpowers” you never knew you had.

What Does Enlightenment Look Like For You?

Every success story, fictional or real, has that moment: the critical point where something changes and the heroine becomes aware of her own strength. That moment of enlightenment looks different for everybody though. Some of us find it through adversity, for example, when we've hit rock bottom or been pushed beyond our limits and we find out what we're really made of. These moments of tribulation also help us discover the things that mean the most to us like our motivation to keep fighting or the reason we get out of bed every morning. And chances are, your personal relationship with your love for sports has developed in a similar fashion.

Maybe you felt like you weren't good at anything or you internalized the words of your high-school bullies until you started running track. Maybe playing football gave you an escape from the struggles you faced at home. Or maybe you simply picked up a ball one day and realized that, until this moment, you'd never felt alive. No matter what that journey looks like for you, adversity is a common denominator in almost everybody's stories. And the author can certainly relate. For Mumford, playing basketball was all he ever wanted to do. He got his start on his middle-school team and cherished dreams of playing for the NBA. It was what he worked for, what he hoped for. It was the defining focus of his life. And it seemed like his dreams were really paying off! He got a basketball scholarship to the University of Massachusetts. He was being noticed by professional recruiters. If anything in his life seemed certain, it was the promise of a career in professional basketball.

But, as in the case of every good success story, one day he encountered the major conflict that would bring his life to a crossroads: he was injured during a training session. Now, as any athlete knows, an injury is devastating because it defines your new reality for a while. Whether that means your future in sports is over or that you simply have to sit out this season, there's no doubt that being injured is a crushing blow. But many successful athletes come back from their injuries and their career is more

vibrant than ever! And perhaps it could have been exactly the same for the author. But Mumford was so crushed by his sudden inability to play that he let it fuel the wrong kind of motivation.

Because, unfortunately, he was so desperate to recover as fast as possible and get back out there that he went about it the wrong way. Of course, wisdom and maturity would tell you that even if it's unpleasant, waiting and letting your body heal-- even if it takes a long time-- is the only way to ensure a healthy recovery. But Mumford was angry about his injury and wanted to train himself to be better, so he pushed himself to keep playing against the orders of his doctors and long before his body was physically able to handle the strain. Tragically, his efforts backfired; although he might have been able to come back from his initial injury and go on to a professional career, the new wear and tear on his body almost crippled him and ensured he would never play again.

He was still able to attend college and get an education, but this had never been as important to him as his dreams of a career in basketball. Feeling that he had been robbed of his life's only purpose, Mumford drifted through his time in college lost, directionless, and self-medicating his depression with alcohol. Unfortunately, however, he soon grew numb to this coping mechanism and needed something more intense to take away the pain, which is how he found himself turning to heroin. This in turn exacerbated his injuries, leaving him with a severe staph infection in 1984. Fortunately, however, that moment was a wake-up call.

Today, Mumford refers to those days as his "AOF Situation," which stands for "Ass on Fire." Realizing that he was effectively destroying himself from the inside out, he realized that he had to get a grip and make a change if he wanted to even survive. That initial push for self-improvement motivated him to join Alcoholics Anonymous and that's where he learned about some alternative coping mechanisms. And as you've probably already guessed, one of them was mindfulness. Because he was able to reclaim his life through the power of yoga and meditation, Mumford was so inspired that, years after he had gotten on a sober and successful track, he quit his job as

a financial analyst to help others encounter the same life-changing power that had helped him.

In fact, not only did he dedicate his life to helping others, he pursued his study of mindfulness with such passion that he developed a new concept which he calls “the five superpowers!” So, now that we’ve learned about Mumford’s personal journey and how it’s changed his life, we’re going to take an in-depth look at the mindfulness practices he swears by.

What Does Mindfulness Really Mean?

Before you accept that something works, you probably want to get all the facts, right? Fortunately, that's what this chapter is all about! Put simply, mindfulness is the practice of achieving mental clarity that helps you tune out conflicting distractions. There's nothing mystical or magical about it; you don't have to throw salt over your shoulder or spin around three times in order to be blessed with some kind of superpower. Instead, mindfulness is simply about training your mind like you would exercise any other muscle to develop it and make it stronger. That's why it's so appealing to athletes, entrepreneurs, and everyone else whose career already requires them to prioritize training and discipline.

So, how do you exercise your mind? Well, according to the inventor of modern mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, the key is to live in the moment. At first, that might sound overly simplistic-- like a tacky piece of advice you find stitched on a gas station key chain-- but if you really think about it, living in the moment is hard work! Because whether we're being pressured by our own anxieties, our nagging to-do list, or the millions of advertisements that are clamoring for our attention all day long, it can be impossible to focus on only one thing at a time. The Buddhists understood this long before mindfulness went mainstream.

They called our daily state of distraction "the monkey mind" because our thoughts ping-pong back and forth without direction, like a monkey swinging from a branch. Controlling our monkey mind might feel impossible, but mindfulness is proof that it can be done. (We'll learn more about how to do so in the next chapter). And once you have your thoughts safely under control, your mind will be free from distractions, allowing you to enter the Zone. That might sound like a silly, made-up name, but really, "the Zone" is just our state of peak performance. It's what we're always trying to find-- especially as athletes-- even if we don't use that specific terminology.

Because the Zone is that state that we achieve when we're engaged in an activity that is intensely pleasurable enough to keep us interested and difficult enough that we keep working. We want this exact balance because if something is too easy, we lose interest and if it's too challenging, we get discouraged and fed up. So, the Zone can be defined as that perfect sweet spot in the middle of two extremes. When we're in the Zone, we feel motivated and alive. But we can't reach that place while we're being controlled by the monkey mind. So, in the next chapter, we're going to take a look at some practical steps we can take to get in the Zone.

Just Breathe

We hear this advice a lot-- when we're being told to relax, to calm down, to focus. But have you ever noticed how hard it is to really concentrate on your breathing? This is one of the core tenets of mindfulness and it's important because when you concentrate on your breathing, it's really not about simply reminding yourself that, yes, your lungs can still process air. Rather, it's about redirecting your attention away from your monkey mind by listening to your body. As you focus on breathing in and out, and really feeling each inhale and exhale, you're gently telling your body to calm down and enter a haven of relaxation. You're also controlling your thoughts and reminding yourself that you have the power to stop the chaos in your head with some dedicated effort.

Mumford argues that this works because it helps you create an "AOB moment" or "Awareness of Breath." And when your awareness is concentrated on the sensation of breathing, you have no choice but to live in the present moment. This, in turn, can help you calm down and enter the Zone. So, if you want to practice some mindful breathing exercises, you can start by sitting in a comfortable position. Try to find a posture that isn't too slouchy or too stiff; just a stance where you feel relaxed and at ease. Once you're comfy, close your eyes and try to keep your thoughts centered on the feeling of air coming and going through your lungs. It may not feel natural at first, but as you practice, it's important to remember two things: don't give up and don't force it.

You don't have to strain and force yourself to focus on your breathing, but you should try to eliminate as many distractions as possible. So, keep your eyes closed and try not to think about the overflowing laundry basket in the corner or your to-do list or when you have to take the dog for a walk. Just try to get comfortable in your own skin. It might take some time because most of us are used to rushing through our days without really acknowledging our bodies and how they feel. So, if you can't concentrate

after a while or it's starting to feel forced, give yourself the freedom to take a break and try again. Mindfulness, like any other skill, has to be practiced.

Cultivate Your Insight

Are you performing at your peak potential? Whether you're an athlete or an executive, for most of us, the answer is probably not. But why is that? If the ability to unlock our full potential and be our best selves is fully within our grasp (and it is!), why don't we just do it? The author posits that, for pretty much everybody, self-doubt is the culprit. Whether it's because we believe we lack the skills and talents to succeed, because we're clinging to a fatalistic worldview, or because we're not giving it our best shot, most of us don't believe in ourselves enough to really take the plunge.

However, we might not always be aware of the impact our doubts can have on our lives. Sometimes, we simply internalize negative ideas that we encounter in our early childhood-- like a teacher's careless criticism or a classmate telling us we're fat and stupid-- and, without realizing it, incorporate this into our worldview as fact. Years later, although we might not consciously think, "I can't do that, I'm too stupid," we might avoid trying something new or turn down a potential opportunity as a result of that belief.

That's why the author recommends investigating what he refers to as "the emotional blueprints" of your life. If you think of your thoughts, doubts, and self-perception as a blueprint-- exactly like the sort you'd draw for a house-- you can get an idea of why your life has turned out a certain way. After all, if an architect drafts a blueprint for a building and follows it exactly, the house is going to become a perfect model of the blueprint. So, start by asking yourself what emotional blueprints have designed your life. However, it's important to remember that your blueprints aren't just thoughts-- they form your long-standing worldview and impression of yourself, so you'll need to identify key moments in your life.

Once you've identified the moments that shaped you, you can learn to stay on top of them and prevent the negative outbursts that often erupt as a result of suppressed insecurities. For example, the author cites the moment

when soccer player Zinedine Zidane made headlines by headbutting Marco Materazzi during the 2006 World Cup. Although the attack seemed to come out of nowhere-- and resulted in Zidane being kicked off the field-- future interviews between the opponents revealed that Materazzi made a crude jibe about Zidane's sister which tapped into some long-standing insecurities of Zidane's. Unable to repress his emotions, he lashed out in violence. And though the moment seemed to shock the world, the truth is that it's an all-too-human occurrence. Any one of us could lash out if someone pushed the right buttons and we hadn't perfected our self-control. And that's why the author believes it's vital that we employ mindfulness to help us master our emotions.

Mindfulness, he argues, is the art of letting go of who we believe we are. It's about surrendering our insecurities and misconceptions in exchange for peace. So, instead of trying to repress negative emotions, bullying yourself for feeling that way, or-- worse-- buying into them, use mindfulness to help you cope. As you concentrate on the simple act of breathing in and out, let your thoughts flow without judgment. When you notice a negative emotion, acknowledge it with a simple and accepting thought like, "I feel angry because my best friend betrayed my trust." Allow yourself to think about it for a while, giving yourself permission to feel what you're feeling, then simply let it go. Remember that negative emotions and failures alike are simply temporary distractions. They don't define you and they don't have to control you. So don't let them steal from your true purpose.

Final Summary

Athletes like Mumford know all about training their bodies. They understand endurance and discipline and the importance of hard work. But sometimes, whether you're an athlete or not, we forget that we also need to train our minds. And we definitely forget that our mental state often determines our success in life. The author knows this firsthand and that's why he advocates for practicing mindfulness in your everyday life.

When you learn to focus on the present moment and relinquish your distractions, negative emotions, and self-doubt, you can enter the Zone. In the Zone, you will be at your most productive and successful and you'll unlock the potential that we often leave untapped. And as you cultivate a mindful life, you'll discover that the ability to keep your mind clear and stay calm is the superpower you never knew you possessed. In fact, it will change your life.



QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

Go to QuickRead.com/App now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.

Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.



Available on the
App Store



ANDROID APP ON

Google play