

# SUMMARY

## THE ENERGY BUS

JON GORDON



# **Summary of “The Energy Bus” by Jon Gordan**

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Learn how to supercharge your life.

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# Introduction

Do you ever ride the bus or the train to get to work in the mornings? Did you ever take the school bus as a child? If you answered yes to either of these questions, it's unlikely that you've ever been super excited about boarding a bus to either of these destinations. You probably don't find yourself cheering, "Yay! The work bus!" or "Woo-hoo! I'm on my way to school!" And at the end of the bus ride, you probably don't feel especially energized or enthusiastic. But what if you could hop on an energy bus? What if that bus charged you the way you charge your phone? And what if, at the end of your journey, you felt excited and ready to face your day? Well, that's why the author wants you to imagine that this book is like a bus: an energy bus. And as you read this book, you'll embark on a journey that recharges you and fuels you with power and energy!



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## Why we Lack Energy

Have you ever heard the phrase “toxic positivity?” It sounds like an oxymoron, but it’s actually very prevalent in modern society. Toxic positivity can best be defined as the unhealthy expectation that we should be happy all the time. As a result of this expectation, many people minimize or invalidate the genuine depression, trauma, and anxiety experienced by others by saying things like, “Just get over it!” or “Try to think happy thoughts!” or “Other people have it worse.” When people are suffering and their cries for help are met with such responses, they naturally begin to hide their feelings and mask them under a facade of fake happiness. Sadly, this energy-draining phenomenon afflicts an overwhelming portion of the world’s population. It may even have affected you.

For example, you might have experienced toxic positivity if you’re struggling with a job you hate, but you feel pressured to pretend you enjoy it. Maybe you’re afraid of burdening other people with your feelings. Maybe you don’t want your partner or your kids to worry about you. Or maybe you simply don’t want to admit you’re struggling, even if it’s only to yourself. All of these reasons can motivate someone to suppress their feelings and engage in performative toxic positivity. And, unsurprisingly, it’s a pretty draining routine to keep up!

The author observes that if you struggle with a lingering sense of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, or lack of control over your life, it’s easy to feel drained at the end of each day. At the very least, you probably don’t feel motivated or enthusiastic about getting up to face another day! And when you struggle with these feelings, it’s unlikely that you’ll do your best at anything. This in turn becomes a self-fulfilling cycle of stress, pain, and frustration. From there, it’s easy to give in to the feeling that nothing ever works out for us or that our lives will be this way forever. This is especially detrimental because what you tell yourself matters. For example, if you feed

yourself a narrative like, “I’m a winner! I may not get what I want all the time, but I’m a winner because I do my best and I keep going!” you’ll be motivated and encouraged. By contrast, if you tell yourself, “I’m a loser. Nothing ever works out for me. I don’t know why I even bother,” then you’ll live in to that narrative too



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## Drive Your Own Bus

If you think about the literal concept of taking the bus to work or school, it's not necessarily an action that imbues you with control or personal autonomy. Sure, you got on the bus of your own volition, but you're not at the helm, you're being driven. And the same principle is true for the direction of our personal and professional lives. Sure, we keep showing up to work or to school each day, and we make a lot of choices that are technically our own. But often, we feel as though we're not in control of our own decisions. Maybe that's because you hate your job and you really don't want to be there. Maybe that's because you feel pressured to keep working to support your family. Maybe you feel like your life is just one series of failures after one another. Maybe you feel trapped by someone else's expectations of you. Whatever the reason, it's easy to feel as though your life is being driven by forces outside of your control. But what if all of that could change? What if you could take back control and drive your own bus?

The author believes that this is absolutely possible and this principle is at the core of his philosophy. So, how can you drive your own bus? Well, for starters, the author recommends visualizing the direction you want your life to take. For example, do you want to be out of that dead-end job? Do you want to go back to school and get your degree? Do you want to feel better about yourself or improve your self-esteem? Everyone's goals will look different, but no matter what, they all start with visualizing what you want. So, spend a few minutes imagining the future you want to have ahead of you. Get a really clear picture in your mind. How do you want to feel in that future? What do you want to accomplish? Once you have a crystal clear vision of you being your most amazing self, it's time to take the next step. You may have heard the phrase that "a goal is a dream with legs," so let's think about it that way and give legs to your dreams!

You can start by identifying clear and specific goals for every area of your life that you want to work on. For example, most people might set goals for their personal life, their professional life, and/or their family life. So, think about what you want in each of the areas of life that are important to you. Imagine how your life would change if you accomplished each of those things. Now, it's time to move on to the next step: identifying concrete steps you can take to make those goals reality. Because we sometimes seek to fix big or imposing areas of our lives, it's easy to come up with a daunting step that seems impossible. But don't get stuck in that pattern! Instead, break your big, scary goal into small, actionable chunks that you can accomplish little by little. And then go after it!



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# The Formula For Positivity

So, now you've learned about the energy bus. You've visualized your goals and identified the steps you can take to get there. But now what? How do you stay motivated? How can you stick with your goals long enough to accomplish them? After all, if you're reading this book because you want to get on the energy bus, there's a strong possibility that you didn't have a lot of energy in the first place. And if you're lacking energy, it's tough to maintain enough motivation to change the entire course of your life. So, what can you do? Well, fortunately, this is where the formula for positivity comes in. That's right-- the author literally coined a positivity formula to fuel your energy bus!

Here's how it works: the formula is  $E + P = O$ . That stands for Events + Perception/ Positive Energy = Outcome. Put simply, this means that you can't control the events or circumstances you encounter, but you can control your perception of them. So, if you try to think about events in a positive light and refuse to let them get you down, you can facilitate a positive outcome! That doesn't mean that your life will always be sunshine and rainbows, but it does mean that you can fuel your journey towards a positive future. As we said in the previous chapter, what you tell yourself matters! So, if you tell yourself to look at your life through a positive lens and give yourself frequent reminders that you're doing your best, you will always find the bright side.

And therein lies the secret to fueling your energy bus! Because your energy bus runs on positivity, it needs a full tank of positive energy to successfully run each day. On the surface, that might sound great; after all, everybody can think happy thoughts for a little while. But this poses a new question: where do you get all that positive fuel? And how can you generate enough to create a consistently full tank? If you're naturally a "glass half empty" sort of person, maintaining that amount of positivity might sound daunting. But don't worry! The author has learned that there are a variety of different ways to keep our positivity tanks topped up; we just have to give them a try.

For starters, you can play the “glad game!” You might remember this strategy if you ever watched the children’s movie Pollyanna (although, if you’re like most people, you probably haven’t). Pollyanna is something of a vintage classic; this beloved Disney flick was released in 1960. But although it’s unlikely to grace the shelves of many homes in 2020, its heartwarming message is timeless. You see, Pollyanna follows the story of a cheerful orphan girl who is sent to live with her pessimistic aunt. Although the circumstances of Pollyanna’s young life are hardly ideal-- losing your parents as a child tends to put a damper on things-- Pollyanna remains steadfast in her optimistic worldview. Rather than engaging with toxic positivity, Pollyanna acknowledges that the world is full of loss and sadness. But that’s exactly why she believes that it’s important to look on the bright side. So, to keep herself from succumbing to depression, little Pollyanna invents a game that she calls the “glad game,” challenging herself and others to find things to be glad about.

Sadly, however, most of us don’t play this game. So far from challenging ourselves to find things we can enjoy, we often allow our bad days and trifling inconveniences to ruin our moods and our outlook on life. So, if you frequently find yourself arriving at the office in a huff about your burnt Egg McMuffin or the fact that your coffee has cream in it (when you specifically said no cream!), it might be time to play the glad game. Okay, so your breakfast didn’t turn out the way you wanted. Maybe you can’t even eat breakfast at all. That’s a bummer for sure. But you can be glad that you can afford breakfast when so many people can’t afford food at all. You can be glad that you arrived at work safely and that you weren’t injured in a terrible crash. You can be glad that you have a steady income or a pleasant office in which to work. You can be grateful for your family, for your friends, and for the fact that you’re in good health. You can be glad that you’ll enjoy a nice dinner when you go home tonight.

All of these things are simple blessings, but imagine where your life would be without them! And imagine how much better your life will be because you took time to appreciate the little things! It might sound a little corny,

but appreciating these small pleasures can radically improve your day-- and your outlook on life! And as you go through the day playing the glad game, you might find that you're so full of energy and enthusiasm that you can't wait to share the good news with others! When this happens, the author observes that it's kind of like giving yourself a promotion. Now, you're not just a passenger on a bus, or even the driver of your own bus. Now, you can think of yourself as a CEO or Chief Energy Officer! And as a CEO, it's your job to set a positive example that will encourage others to keep up the good work and fill their energy tanks!

So, don't be afraid to make the glad game a part of your daily routine. In fact, you might even find it beneficial to spend the first ten or fifteen minutes of your workday in a moment of grateful contemplation. You might not feel like trying it some days, but really, what do you have to lose? The worst case scenario is that you might feel a little silly. But in the best case, your day will get better, your mood will improve, and you'll form a life-changing positive habit!



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## Final Summary

If you find yourself feeling deflated at the start and end of each day, you're not alone! Many people feel trapped under the weight of dead-end jobs, struggling relationships, and days that never seem to go right. But by hopping on the energy bus and learning to drive your own bus, you can reclaim control of your future! By applying the formula  $E + P = O$  and playing the glad game, you can keep your energy bus topped up with the fuel of positivity and steer your life in an enthusiastic new direction.



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