

SUMMARY

BY ALYSSA BURNETTE

59

SECONDS

BY RICHARD WISEMAN



Summary of 59 Seconds by Richard Wiseman

Written by Alyssa Burnette

A creative approach to changing your life in under a
minute.

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Introduction

How many things do you think you can do in one minute or less? When you think about it, one minute seems like an infinitesimally small amount of time! You might think that there is nothing you can do in one minute that would make a difference in your life. But you might be surprised to know that, actually, there are 40 tasks which take only one minute and which can have a significant impact on your quality of life. For example, in one minute, you can make your bed. You can clean your bathroom mirror. You can trim your toe nails. You can microwave rice, popcorn, or an instant cupcake in a mug. You can plug up your phone to charge. You can pick up your dirty shoes, underwear, or dishes, and put them where they belong. You can take your vitamins, water your plants, or replace the toilet paper in your bathroom. All of these tasks are incredibly small but they can make you happier and tick off a few necessary items on your to-do list that human beings often avoid.

But this book actually isn't about any of these tasks! This little list is just some free advice. Instead, this book is about some deeper psychological concepts that can change your life. Because it might take years of time and study-- not to mention thousands of dollars-- to pursue a degree in psychology and learn these things in a classroom. But it takes a lot less time to benefit from the author's personal experience in studying and practicing psychology. Thanks to his years of time and study, you can absorb some quick and practical lessons that can be implemented in one minute. Don't believe me? Just keep reading! Because over the course of this summary, you'll learn how most of the challenges in our lives aren't as deep or complicated as we think. In reality, they're rooted in simple psychological concepts that can be quickly understood and put into practice.



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If You Want to Get That Job, You Need to Make People Like You

Getting a job is a big priority for pretty much everyone in the world. We gobble up self-help books about nailing the interview. We take classes designed to help us improve our resume, improve our interview skills, or help us stand out from the crowd. We bulk up on extra curriculars and extra credit classes in the hopes that they will help us appear competent and qualified to the interviewer. But the author observes that all of these things aren't quite as helpful as we think!

While it's definitely important to have the right tools and education for the job, nailing the interview usually depends more on the interviewer's impression of you than on your qualifications. So, if you really want to be successful in an interview and get the job you want, it's important to make the interviewer like you. And doing that requires you to learn about likability. So, what makes a person likable? And how do you make a good first impression? The author observes that positive body language is key to giving someone a positive first impression of you. If you haven't thought about positive body language before, we'll break it down by considering the difference between "open" and "closed" body language. You might not be familiar with the names of these categories, but you definitely know them when you see them! For example, let's say you're confronting your teenage son about the amount of time he wastes in his room playing video games. If he stands with his arms folded across his chest and rolls his eyes at everything you say, you get the message loud and clear: he's closing himself off from you and putting emotional distance between the two of you.

Similarly, if you're meeting your best friend for lunch and she stands up to greet you with open arms and a big smile, you can tell that her response is open and warm. So, keep these principles in mind when you're meeting someone new for the first time! Don't be like your grouchy teenager; use your body to communicate openness. This might mean standing with your arms hanging loosely at your sides-- a position that suggests you're at ease with

yourself and others-- and with your body turned towards the other person in an open and inviting manner. By leaning towards the other person slightly, you indicate that you're interested in them and what they have to say. This creates a friendly atmosphere and invites the other person to feel at ease in your presence.

Maintaining direct eye contact is the next step. Obviously, you don't want to stare them down; too much unblinking eye contact and they may start to wonder if you have a creepy hidden dungeon in your basement. So, instead, initiate a few seconds of direct eye contact while smiling. This says simply that you see them and you're positive and willing to engage. And as an added bonus, this behavior will also help boost their impression of your IQ! We know that because in 2007, researchers at Loyola Marymount University conducted a study to measure the effect of eye contact on first impressions of intelligence. Nora A. Murphy, the lead researcher, described her findings as follows: "Looking while speaking was a key behavior. It significantly correlated with IQ, was successfully manipulated by impression-managing targets, and contributed to higher perceived intelligence ratings." Unsurprisingly, Murphy also found that wearing glasses enhanced a first impression of intelligence. So, while it's not necessary to wear glasses if you don't already need them, good eye contact is a must!

Keep in mind that all of these nonverbal factors set the tone before you and the other person ever speak a word. So, now that you've established a positive vibe through your nonverbal communication, it's time to turn your attention to the spoken portion of your interaction. This is where a lot of people start to falter, so the most important thing to remember is: don't panic! Many people shoot themselves in the foot from the get-go because they worry that they're going to say the wrong thing; as a result, they make themselves look unnecessarily awkward. So, wherever possible, try to avoid overthinking and other anxiety-inducing behaviors. Just go for the basics: smile, introduce yourself with a simple, "Hi! How are you?" and tell them your first name. This is an instant ice-breaker that invites the other person to respond in kind. And if, like a lot of people, you're worried about forgetting their name, you can just repeat their name immediately afterwards in a natural way like

saying, “Allison. Great to meet you, Allison!” You can even compliment their name if it feels natural to you or include an anecdote like, “Oh, my sister’s name is Allison!”

If you implement these simple steps, anyone who meets you will be left with a positive first impression. And the best part is that all of these tips can be implemented in under one minute!



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Cultivate Positive Relations With Others Through Vulnerability

No one likes being criticized-- that's simply a fact for every human being! But sometimes, well-intentioned feedback can help us grow and learn. That's because there's a difference between somebody saying, "You suck!" (which is designed to cut us down) and constructive criticism that is designed to help us grow. It's never fun to hear that we're in the wrong or that we should have done something better, even if it's true. But if we never acknowledge our inadequacies and failures, we'll never grow! So, even when it's painful, we have to be open to constructive criticism from people who have our best interest at heart. The author observes that this is a crucial skill for any person, but it's especially important if you're in a leadership position at school or at work.

We often associate positions of power with immovable strength and emotional security. And as a result, it's easy to assume that leaders don't need constructive criticism, especially not from others. But in reality, everybody needs advice and emotional support, no matter where you are in life! That's why it's important for us to never feel as though we're above taking advice and support from people who care about us. In fact, the author observes that our relationships with others are the most important things in our lives. Our personal and professional relationships keep us grounded, keep us connected, and keep us happy. Put simply, we need other people! So, don't be afraid to open up and be vulnerable with those around you.

Many people in positions of leadership feel that they shouldn't be vulnerable or admit that they are human too. But this actually strengthens your relationships with others and encourages them to like and trust you! Above all, people value sincerity and authenticity. So don't try to appear powerful or confident or infallible. Just focus on being real. Because when you're real and honest with yourself, you communicate a few things to others. For one thing, you show that you're open and relatable. This will make people like you more because they will feel like they can identify with you. This also

opens the door for new friendships and healthy communication because someone else can respond to your vulnerability by saying, “Hey, don’t worry about it! We’ve all been there, and it takes courage to admit when you’re wrong.” So, this is one positive outcome that arises from vulnerability. Another benefit is that being open about your own struggles communicates to others that it’s okay to struggle with things and it’s okay to be honest about it. So, when you lead by this example, you advance a culture of sincerity and honesty that encourages other people to be emotionally healthy too. And when you encourage other people to be their best, healthiest selves, you know you’re succeeding as a leader!

So, when you find yourself in a leadership position, don’t make a few of the common mistakes that typically beset people. Don’t assume that you have to be anything you aren’t. If you’re nervous or new at something, it’s okay to say that! And don’t assume that a position of power automatically grants you emotional stability. Leaders struggle too and no one is perfect. And lastly, don’t ever feel as though you’re too important to acknowledge that other people may have good insights about how you can improve. Being a leader doesn’t make you better than everybody else; it simply means that you have an opportunity to guide and encourage others. So, be vulnerable, be honest, and be open to constructive criticism. Accepting feedback with grace is part of our “never stop learning” philosophy because you can’t grow if you never learn anything new! And all growth starts with admitting that you have room to improve.



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Think About the Positive

If you're like most people, you've already encountered a few life events that have left you battered, bruised, and a little worse for wear-- physically, emotionally, or both! And no matter what other differences divide us, everyone in the world can agree that being hurt, offended, or betrayed is no fun. It doesn't help that the human brain has a tendency to fixate on negative experiences instead of the positive ones. 9 times out of 10, if our brains are faced with a happy moment or a sad moment, our brains will store a memory of the sad moment because pain naturally lingers with us. So, when those negative circumstances pile up throughout our lives, it's no surprise that people become cynical, depressed, and unforgiving. It's also unsurprising that we struggle to focus on the positive. However, the author's research indicates that a quick and subtle shift in your mentality can make all the difference in the world. Just start by trying this simple exercise!

Start by thinking about a memory that's painful for you. Maybe you failed a test that really mattered to you or your romantic partner dumped you. No doubt about it: both of those things are sad and disappointing! But when you think about that event, don't opt for a solution that temporarily relieves your stress and anxiety. Drowning your sorrows in a pint of Ben and Jerry's might be helpful in the moment-- and there's nothing wrong with that!-- but you can't pursue these options as genuine solutions to your problems. Instead of being distracted from your pain, you want to be able to cope with it in a healthy way. So, when you think about that painful memory, ask yourself one simple question: how did this experience help me to grow? If necessary, you can even tweak the question to say something like, "What did I learn from this experience?" or "How did this experience make me a better person?"

If you ask yourself one of these three questions, you can always find an answer for anything you've experienced. And because these questions

focus on character building and growth, they will help you to be better prepared and more emotionally stable as you navigate life's challenges. Asking yourself any of these questions takes less than one minute. That's all you need to alter your mindset and put yourself on the path to healthy habits.



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Final Summary

When we think about self-improvement, we often envision a gargantuan task that will take months or years of dedication. And, unfortunately, many self-help books perpetuate this vision. This leaves many people feeling as though the effort to improve their lives is more than they can handle, so people often remain stuck in situations that are unhealthy and unnecessary.

The author's research challenges these negative assumptions by providing a faster alternative. His research proves that many of life's most common challenges can be overcome by practicing some simple life hacks that take less than a minute. In under one minute, you can improve your future prospects by making people like you, cultivating positive relations through vulnerability, and altering your mindset.



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