

SUMMARY

BY ALYSSA BURNETTE

The In-Between

By Jeff Goins



Summary of The In-Between by Jeff Goins

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Learning how to live in limbo.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Be Present in the Moment.....	6
Be Grateful for the Little Things	8
Final Summary	12



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Introduction

This is a story about a normal guy who discovered profound insights in his normal, everyday life. Jeff Goins' story is powerful because his story applies to everyone. The lessons he learned are the lessons we all need to learn. They're lessons that will empower us to find freedom, joy, happiness, and beauty in the every day. So, over the course of this summary, we'll learn about the small, radical moments that changed Jeff Goins' life. And we'll learn how his simply profound insights can change your life too.



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Be Present in the Moment

Has anyone ever given you that advice before? If so, it might have sounded like a bit of a non-sequitur; after all, it's physically impossible to be present in two places at the same time! But we all know that it's very possible to be physically present in one place while your mind is engaged with something else. In fact, you can be so lost in your own head that you might feel as though you're a million miles away. And when you do that, you can miss a lot of the precious moments that are happening right in front of you. Whether we want to admit it or not, we've all been there. We've all been guilty of checking our phones when we should be doing something else. We've all wished we were somewhere else or doing something more exciting.

And the author was no different. When his son was a baby, the author and his wife would take turns putting him to sleep and getting up with him when he woke up in the middle of the night. And one night, the baby just would not go back to sleep. Understandably, the author (Jeff) was exhausted; he just wanted his son to fall asleep so he could go back to sleep himself! So, he wasn't really focused on the present moment or on spending time with his son. In his mind, this moment with his son was just an "in-between" moment-- the time between being awoken by a crying baby and the moment when he could go back to bed. But while he was rocking his son and waiting for him to finally fall asleep, he realized that the baby just wasn't going to go back to sleep tonight.

So, instead of getting more and more frustrated, he just took his son downstairs to the playroom and together, they played with the baby's toys. And as they played together, his son's face lit up. He started laughing and attempting to talk, trying out new words that Jeff had never heard him use before. It was a beautiful bonding moment between father and son, but it was also a transformative experience for Jeff. As he sat there with his son in the middle of the night, Jeff realized that his perspective almost caused him to miss this. If his focus had remained on one objective-- getting the baby back to sleep-- he would have stayed angry and frustrated, resenting his son for

keeping him awake. He also would have missed out on this beautiful bonding moment.

Bonding with his baby in the middle of the night wasn't his ideal moment, but it taught Jeff a powerful lesson. If you're present in the moment, amazing things can happen. So, from that day on, he made a commitment to himself. He promised himself that, wherever he was, he would try to be all there. He would be open to the beautiful things that can happen if you're only looking for them. And the same is true for all of us. It's easy to feel like the "in between" moments are useless, like they're holding us back from what we really want in life. But if we're willing to change our perspective just a little, we can see that sometimes the "in between" moments aren't just the space between the bigger or better things. Sometimes, those "in between" moments are the big things.



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Be Grateful for the Little Things

This advice probably sounds just as cliché as the previous chapter's suggestion to "be present in the moment." But the author's first-hand experience has shown him that both of these lessons are vital for a happy and healthy life. Just as his moment with his son taught him to be present in the moment, other "in between" times in his life have taught him to be grateful for the little things. A few moments from his time in college stand out to him more than others. For example, at one point in his college career, Jeff had the opportunity to study abroad in Spain. While he was in Spain, he would live with a host family who had opened their home to exchange students. In Jeff's case, his host family was just one older woman named Loli who had taken in Jeff and another exchange student named Daniel.

Jeff was excited about the opportunity to immerse himself in a new culture and he wanted to try as many new things as possible. Awash with a sense of excitement and adventure, Jeff went out every night, hoping to collect new experiences and crazy stories he could tell his friends back home. But while Jeff went out every night, Daniel stayed at home with Loli, and the two of them watched Loli's Spanish soap operas on TV. Although Jeff didn't openly make fun of Daniel, he secretly thought Daniel was a loser. After all, the soap operas were all in Spanish and neither Daniel nor Jeff could speak the language well enough to really understand what the characters were saying. So, in Jeff's mind, Daniel was missing out on lots of adventures just so he could stay home and watch TV in a language he didn't understand. And Jeff thought that was pretty boring.

But one night, he was exhausted-- and a little hungover-- from all of his adventures. After going out every night, Jeff had finally reached a point where he needed a break. So, on one rare occasion, he decided to stay home with Daniel and Loli. As Jeff had predicted, it was pretty boring; he didn't understand the show and his evening was far from exciting. But then something magical happened. Loli started laughing at something on television and her laughter was so infectious that Jeff and Daniel started laughing with her! They didn't get the joke, but they appreciated her

laughter, so the three of them were able to share a moment of joy together. While the three of them bonded in an unlikely moment, Jeff learned another valuable lesson: who you're with is more important than what you're doing. Although he thought he needed to be doing something cool and exciting all the time, he realized he had been wrong. What he wanted was to immerse himself in Spanish culture, to meet new people and try new things. And all this time, he had missed out on the people who were right beside him: Daniel and Loli! Once he adjusted his perspective, Jeff soon realized that he could learn a lot-- and have a lot of fun-- just by spending time with his host family.

This was only one of the valuable lessons Jeff learned in college. Another special moment stood out to him as well. On his way home from his semester in Spain, Jeff had the opportunity to travel by train. Despite the lessons he had just learned in Spain, his perspective on this train ride was very similar to his perspective when he arrived for his semester abroad. Because Jeff wasn't looking forward to going home. Although he loved his parents and he loved his home, he felt that Illinois was boring when you compared it to Spain, so he was reluctant to go back. And as he boarded the train home, he wasn't in a very good mood. As he stared out the window at the bland scenery and empty cornfields, his mood got even worse. So, he was shocked when a fellow passenger turned to him and said, "It's beautiful, isn't it?" Jeff didn't see anything beautiful about the scenery and he told his fellow passenger that. But his perspective changed completely when the other traveler told him why he thought it was beautiful.

It turned out that the other man on the train had recently lost his wife. He was going home to put flowers on his wife's grave. And even though he had lost his wife, going home was still special to him because it reminded him of his wife and all the beautiful memories they shared. The man's perspective inspired Jeff to see his journey in a whole new light. He began to think about the concept of "home" differently too. And as he thought, he realized that "home" isn't just a physical location. It's not just a house or the town where you're from. Home is found in the hearts of the people who give your life meaning. And if you're lucky enough to create a life with the people you love, you should cherish your home and your time with them. You should never

think of your home as boring or mundane because one day, it might be gone, and you'll realize just how special it really was. This was a tremendous wakeup call for Jeff and it forever changed his perspective.

It also inspired him to believe that everyone should view home and family through this lens too. So, whether you're going to Spain or not, whether your hometown is boring or not, it's important to treasure your family and be grateful for the little things. And if you're naturally a "glass half empty" person who struggles to look on the bright side of things, the author has a few tips to help you revamp your perspective. 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 2021, 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!



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Final Summary

Life is full of “in between” moments where we feel like we’re waiting for something. We might be waiting for the baby to fall asleep so we can go back to sleep ourselves. We might be on a long train ride home or waiting for our next big adventure. No matter what your “in between” moments look like, everybody has a few. And although it’s easy to wish those moments away, Jeff Goins has learned some valuable lessons from multiple “in between” moments of his own. He has learned that sometimes, those “in between” moments aren’t just the space between now and the next big thing. Sometimes, those moments are the big things because they teach you important life lessons and bring you closer to the people you love.

So, no matter what your “in between” moments look like, you can learn something valuable from them. Just like Jeff, you can learn to be grateful for the little things and that it’s important to always be present in the moment. You can also learn that what you’re doing isn’t as important as who you’re doing it with. These life lessons can benefit each and every one of us because they will help us to be kind, thankful, and open to new experiences that will make us better people. So, keep an open mind when you’re faced with “in between” moments. You never know what you’ll learn!



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