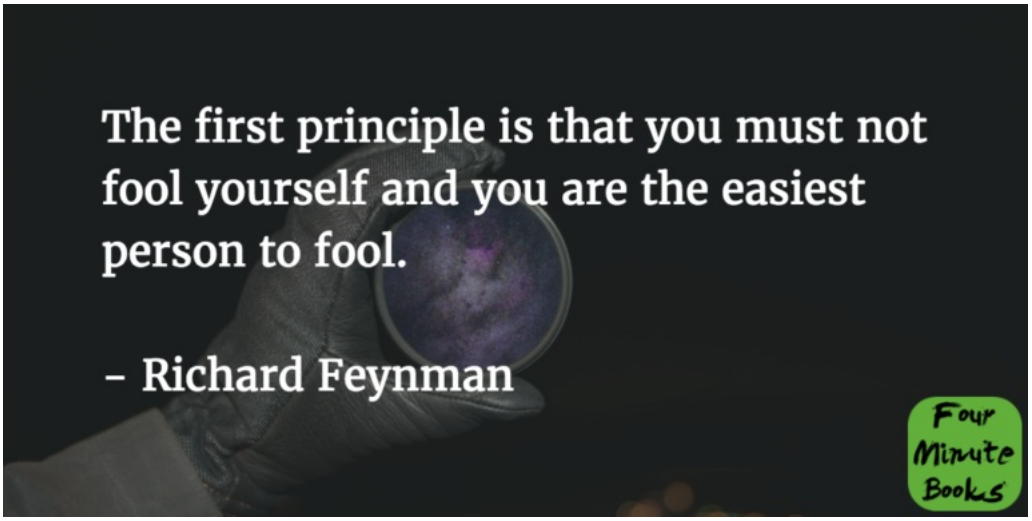
Genius: The Life And Science Of Richard Feynman Summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Genius: The Life And Science Of Richard Feynman tells the story of one the greatest minds in the history of science, all the way from his humble beginnings to changing physics as we know it and receiving the Nobel prize.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Imagine it's 3:45 AM, when suddenly, there's a knock on your door. You wake up and of course, you try to ignore it at first. But there it is again. It's so persistent that you eventually get up and open the door. Outside, an army of reporters awaits, shining bright lights into your eyes. As the cameras are flashing, one of them says: "Congrats! You've just won the Nobel prize in physics! How do you feel?"

That's exactly what happened to Richard Feynman, the genius this book by James Gleick is about, and his answer says a lot about his character. He said: "Well, I could've found out later this morning." Pressing on, the reporters tried to elicit a 1-minute description of his work in quantum electrodynamics and explanations of subatomic particles, until he said: "Listen buddy, if I could explain it in one minute, it wouldn't be worth the Nobel prize!"

Speaking of explaining, Feynman's nickname was "the great explainer," for he was one of few physicists, who could convey complex ideas in simple terms. Here are 3 ones I'm learning from his life:

1. Observe the real world and understand it by coming up with your own examples.
2. You need empathy to build intelligence.
3. Know what you're bad at so you can navigate around it.

Alright, are you ready for the Feynman technique for fine learning? Let's learn from one of the

greatest minds in history!

Lesson 1: Observation and understanding allow you to build your own analogies, which is when you learn the most.

The greatest minds are often bred by the greatest parents, which is definitely true for Richard Feynman. His father predicted that if he were to have a son, he would become a great scientist. But Melville Feynman didn't stop at visualizing, he made sure his son would be equipped with all the mental tools he needed to make this dream come true.

He taught Richard to visualize concepts by showing him tiles with geometric patterns before he could even read. Indeed, visualization would become a key tool for Feynman. For example, when he learned about the Tyrannosaurus Rex, his father told him it'd be tall enough to reach his bedroom window, but his head would be too wide to fit through, making numbers graspable.

Their focus always lay on observing and understanding, so Richard could build his own examples. So when they observed birds, Melville would tell Richard species names in Chinese, Portuguese and Italian, to emphasize that **the real knowledge lay in seeing the world as it is and understanding what really happens.** No matter what call a bird, it's what it does that matters and separates it from other birds.

Lesson 2: Empathy is the bedrock of intelligence.

In school, it quickly became clear that Richard was better in math than anyone else. He breezed through his exams and won competitions with ease, mostly thanks to his visualization abilities and empathy. In a competition, your path to the solution doesn't matter, and so Richard often got a jump on everyone else.

For example, in a problem where a hat falls off a boat into the river, drifts away unnoticed for 45 minutes and the velocity of the water and boat were given, Feynman didn't need to scribble down formulas to find the answer. He simply visualized himself as the hat and instantly realized: you don't need the numbers. It'll take 45 minutes to retrieve the hat.

This highlights another highly developed trait of Feynman: his empathy. He would continue to put himself in the shoes of atoms, molecules, and other theoretical constructs throughout his career, which would allowed him to solve complex problems very quickly.

EQ matters as much for intelligence as IQ does, if not more.

Lesson 3: Figure out what you suck at and then maneuver around it as best as you can.

Nobody's great at everything, and this sure was true for Richard Feynman too. In his studies at MIT he was confronted with many of his anti-passions, which included art history, English, philosophy and music. He claimed the last one even caused him "physical pain." The second he realized he wasn't interested in man-made constructs like language, discourse and art, he navigated around them.

By that, I mean he cheated on his exams, of course. While this might not have been the best solution, as it almost cost him his acceptance into Princeton, the lesson to take away from it is this: **once you know what you're bad at, don't waste time trying to master it**.

It takes a lot of self-awareness and a long time to get there, so don't lose more time fighting uphill battles, which could be spent on expanding the things you're great at. Navigate the world with your weaknesses as best as you can and compensate them where you can really win.

That's what geniuses do and who's to say you're not one?

Genius: The Life And Science Of Richard Feynman Review

A lot of material you can find online about Feynman is tagged with lines like: "You might never have heard of this man." It's true. I didn't know anything but his name before learning more from *Genius: The Life And Science Of Richard Feynman*. He's a fascinating, shimmering character, and I look forward to finding out more. Go team Feynman!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why Feynman hated most textbooks
- The reason he kept stopping his fellow students in the hallway at college
- Which top secret government project he led, in spite of being very young at the time
- What his biggest contribution to science was
- Why Feynman's few classes were always packed
- How you should approach solving problems, even if a solution already exists

Who would I recommend the Genius: The Life And Science Of Richard Feynman summary to?

The 16 year old math genius, who's bored to death in school, the 33 year old theoretical physicist, who feels she's right before a breakthrough, and anyone who loves science.