

The Joy Of Movement Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Joy Of Movement* is just what you need to finally find the motivation to get out and exercise more often by teaching you the scientific reasons why it's good for you and why your body is designed to enjoy it.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



A couple of nights ago someone mentioned that they think that nobody really likes running, they just do it because they have to. I tried to let it go but I couldn't resist kindly saying that I do genuinely enjoy jogging.

After completing three half marathons and a full, I think I know a thing or two about why people put themselves through something that others hate so much.

A few days later, I pick up Kelly McGonigal's *The Joy of Movement: How Exercise Helps Us Find Happiness, Hope, Connection, and Courage* and am pleasantly surprised to find out that I was right, and science confirms it!

The truth is, exercise of any kind is enjoyable, you just need to find the kind that's right for you. I've found that all it takes is a little motivation to start, which is just what this book will give you!

Here are the 3 most exciting lessons from this book about enjoying movement:

1. The "runner's high" comes with any type of physical exertion, is a protection against anxiety and depression, and can even make you more social.

2. Exercise can give you a hit like drugs would, but with a whole lot of positive side-effects instead of the negative ones that come from substance abuse.
3. If you don't like the idea of steroids but want to enhance your performance, use music to reach your peak state while exercising.

Ready? Set? Exercise!!

Lesson 1: Physical activity makes you happy, protects against mental illness, and improves your social skills.

We now know the phenomenon of pleasure that comes from a good jog as “runners high.” But did you know that people were talking about this idea as early as 1885? A Scottish philosopher named Alexander Bain compared the blissful state to a spiritual experience. Others say it's like love or even mind-altering drugs.

In fact, when it comes to the way activity affects our brains, it's similar to what cannabis does!

Endocannabinoids are chemicals in our brain that decrease pain, improve mood, and set off positive neurotransmitters like dopamine and endorphins. Cannabis only mimics these effects. But when you exercise, the production of endocannabinoids gives you all of these benefits!

These effects also act as a defense against mental illness like depression and anxiety. One weight loss drug tried to reduce appetite by inhibiting endocannabinoid receptors. The effect was more mental illness and it eventually got banned!

Research also confirms that these chemicals improve the way you interact with other people. Participants in the study exercised for 30 minutes before playing a social game. As a result, they cooperated better and were far more generous.

And don't worry, if you hate running so much that you'd rather eat a mop, every kind of exercise produces these same effects!

Lesson 2: Drugs and exercise have a lot in common, but movement only brings positive side effects.

The addictive effect of exercise is powerful. It's so strong that when researchers in the 1960's were beginning to study it, they had a really hard time finding people who worked out regularly that would stop the habit to see what would happen! Even many of those that they could convince cheated and still kept it up.

Part of the reason physical exertion is so addictive is that it activates the brain's reward system similar to how cocaine and heroin do. It's those chemicals we talked about before that are present both in substance abuse and exercise.

People who have the habit of exercising even go through similar withdrawal symptoms of drug addicts who try to quit. They get anxious and irritable after missing only one workout and can develop insomnia and depression after several.

And when you show people who work out regularly pictures of someone working out, their brains fire up similarly to the way smoker's minds do when shown images of cigarettes.

The best news about all of this though is that with exercise, you don't get the nasty effects of substance abuse! It also takes longer for you to get addicted to running, for example, than heroin.

One study had mice run for just two weeks but the habit didn't stick. After six weeks, however, the rodents couldn't resist running, even with no external incentive to do so! In research on humans, the same effect occurs after about six weeks of exercising four times a week. So if you want to build a new healthy habit, that's how to do it!

Lesson 3: You increase your chances of reaching peak performance levels when you listen to the right music while exercising.

I sometimes track my morning runs with an app called RunKeeper. I noticed that when my favorite song came on, I ran faster than I did during most of the rest of my run. Without knowing it I stumbled onto a proven fact that exercising to music that pumps you up makes you perform better.

You could even say that one Ethiopian named Haile Gebrselassie won a US running competition because he was on a performance-enhancing drug. He convinced the event organizers to play one of his favorite motivational songs during the race and he ran faster because of it!

Recent research confirms this. Exercising to music makes people take up less oxygen. Some that had problems with high blood pressure could go an extra 51 seconds longer in a cardiovascular stress test when their favorite songs were on.

One man even turned the science of using music to improve performance into his career. Costas Karageorghis creates effective playlists for world-class athletes to use when they're training. **He recommends that your songs include words like "work," "go," or "run" and have a strong 120 to 140 beats per minute.**

A favorite of mine is Daft Punk's *Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger*. It always pumps me up with its 125 beats per minute. So gather your favorite playlist to rock out and reach your new peak levels of performance and enjoyment while exercising!

Want to get more out of everything you read?

Get our reading guide. You'll remember more, better, and longer - no matter what you read.

[Get the 20-page PDF »](#)

The Joy Of Movement Review

Wow, this book has really got me pumped up! *The Joy Of Movement* is the perfect book for me right now because I've been having a hard time exercising. I loved everything about this amazing book. Now I'm excited to get out and do it today!

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Who would I recommend The Joy Of Movement summary to?

The 25-year-old who thinks that nobody likes exercising but that people do it because they have to, The 43-year-old who sits too much at work all day and wants some inspiration to get active, and anyone who wants a whole bunch of scientifically proven reasons to start moving more!