

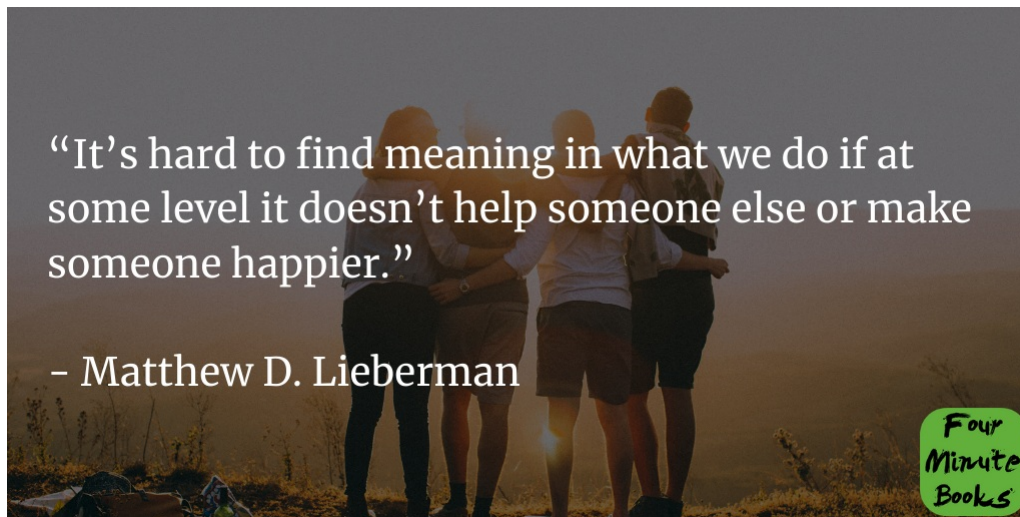
Social Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Social explains how our innate drive to build social connections is the primary driver behind our behavior and explores ways we can use this knowledge to our advantage.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Do you ever feel like you are socially clueless? Or do you sometimes feel socially awkward? Well, you can rest at ease because each and every one of us, even you, is considered a social *expert*.

At rest, your brain defaults to what scientists call the “default network.” Here it automatically dwells on social interactions and our relationships with other people. Because of this, we spend a remarkable amount of our time every day contemplating about human interaction. This time adds up. Even conservative estimates say that by the time you’re 10, you’ve already put in about 10,000 hours of your life being social. According to Malcolm Gladwell’s *Outliers*, which says to be an expert at anything you need to spend 10,000 hours practicing, this would make you a social expert at the age of just 10!

For a long time, people have thought that pain and pleasure drive our behaviors. But new research suggests this might not be the case. In *Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect*, psychologist Matthew Lieberman uses the latest research to argue that our need to connect with others is the primary driver behind our behavior.

Here are 3 intriguing takeaways from this book:

1. We were programmed to connect socially, which is why social pain hurts so much.
2. The ability to understand the feelings and thoughts of others helps us succeed in life.
3. Kindness, not money, will buy you happiness and health.

Ready to go? Let's get learning!

Lesson 1: Social pain is as real as physical pain because our brains are wired to make social connections.

Do you remember the first time someone rejected you? Maybe it was your first crush or someone you *thought* you were best friends with on the playground. Whatever the situation was, you probably remember how crushed you were.

Rejection hurts. Breakups are really hard to move past. Why is this? It's because our brains naturally encourage us to be social. And the pain that rejection causes actually causes pain as real as physical pain.

In a study, Lieberman was actually able to prove that this pain is physically real.

He had participants play a virtual game while hooked up to an fMRI where they would pass a ball around to two other players. What they didn't know is that the other two people were avatars. Their programming made them stop passing it to the participant after a certain point. Surprisingly, this generated a strong emotional response. **When they compared the fMRI to the scan of someone in physical pain, it was remarkably similar.**

Social pain can be so physically real that it is, in fact, possible to die of a broken heart.

Lesson 2: Understanding what other people think and feel help us in our social endeavors.

Being able to cooperate with other people is all but essential to our success as humans. While some people may do better at this than others, most humans have the capability to work together, and to a certain point read each other's minds.

No, I don't mean psychic readings. **We have a unique ability to discern what other people are feeling or thinking based on what we perceive. This helps us better understand each other and figure out the thoughts behind why people do things.** This act is called mentalizing.

An example of this is when we wave our hand up to let a bus driver know it's time for us to get out. It helps the driver understand, without you telling them, that you are thinking you need to get out.

Interestingly, this trait is such a big part of our wiring that we even apply it to things that aren't human.

In a study, participants were shown a clip of a circle and two triangles moving around for a short period. When they were asked to talk about what they watched, the people came up with emotional storylines— for a few moving shapes. Some things that they said were that one triangle was flirting with the circle, or that the triangle was being a bully!

This goes to show that the tendency to mentalize is very powerful.

Lesson 3: **If you want to be happy and productive, be kind, not rich.**

What is the key to happiness? Surprise, or maybe not so surprising, it's not money. Science shows that social factors contribute significantly to not just our happiness but our well-being too. Numerous studies have shown the connection between marriage and charity work to overall happiness. **One study showed that people who volunteer once a week had as significant of an increase in well-being as those whose salary grew from \$20,000 to \$75,000 a year.**

The real-world implications to this are that money may not give us as much fulfillment as social rewards.

This was proven in a study called "Paying \$30,000 for a gold star." In the study, the company's best software salesmen of the year were given a gold star on their stationery and business cards. Employees had so much motivation to receive the gold star that 68 percent closed sales prematurely to get better figures. Their closing early cost them \$27,000 on average, which they did happily for the prospect of the gold star.

To them, social recognition was worth more than the extra money. Because sociality is so important to us, we have a huge unused potential to use it for incentives and to boost well-being and productivity.

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Social Review

Social was eye-opening for me because it pointed out how so much of what we do is just to make social connections. And this drive for social connections isn't just for continuing the species, it is essential to our success, well-being, and happiness. Impressively, it's full of current studies not just from scientists in the field but studies conducted by Lieberman himself. If you want a convincing and fascinating explanation of how and why we are such social creatures, look no further.

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Who would I recommend the **Social** summary to?

The 22-year-old studying psychology, the 54-year-old manager trying to find ways to motivate employees, anyone curious about the origins and reasons for our sociality.

What do you need help with at the moment?

Something else. I want to live a happier life. ☺ I want to form better habits. 🏠 I want to get rich. 🏠

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