

# Psyched Up Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Psyched Up* is an in-depth look at the science behind mental preparation that will show you how to do your best when it counts the most based on what top performers do.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Do you remember that piano solo you spent countless hours practicing to perfection, only to make stupid mistakes at the recital because you were too nervous? Maybe for you, it wasn't playing the piano, but most of us have had brushes with performance anxiety. Also known as "stage fright," it's that gripping fear of doing something in front of an audience.

But if we all have it, how can professional athletes like Serena Williams stay focused and crush it in such high-stakes situations? And what can *you* do to up your confidence and prove yourself the next time you have to give that big presentation at work?

The minutes leading up to a significant challenge can be terrifying. In *Psyched Up*, Daniel McGinn explains how to be mentally prepared for this exact moment. He's an author and journalist who's done extensive research on the science behind mental preparation and how it can be applied in different situations.

In the book, he dives into current research and reveals how top professionals prepare for when it counts most. By relying on his research-driven strategies, you'll separate what works from urban myths and learn to psych yourself up before stepping into the spotlight.

Here are my 3 favorite lessons:

1. You can cope with performance anxiety through reappraisal and centering yourself.

2. To function better under pressure, improve your beliefs and develop rituals.
3. Having competition actually helps you do better.

Are you ready to get rid of nervousness and improve your next performance? Let's learn what McGinn has to teach us!

## Lesson 1: If you want to fend off performance anxiety, reappraise and center yourself.

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Believe it or not, the intense anxiety that comes before a big task is your body's natural response to stress, known as the fight-or-flight response. It causes an increase in adrenaline, blood pressure, and heart rate and is a good thing when it comes to survival in dangerous situations.

However, what about when you aren't in a life-or-death situation, but your body reacts as if you are? **While the flood of stress hormones can't be stopped, you can transform that anxious feeling into an excited one.**

One way you do this is by reappraising pre-performance jitters. For example, one study compared the performances of people who said, "I'm so excited" vs. those who said "I'm so nervous" and those who said nothing before going on stage. The people who said they were excited, and thus reappraised anxiety to excitement, performed the best.

Why does this help more than not saying anything at all? Because transitioning from anxious to calm is very difficult, as the two emotions are very different. Transitioning from worried to excited, however, does not take much effort at all.

Another essential technique in calming performance anxiety is centering. You can center yourself by breathing deeply and concentrating on your breath while releasing all muscle tension. Imagine all the energy in your body moving into one point, the belly button. Once it's all there, visualize releasing it. Using this technique before an important event will help you regain focus and kick anxiety to the curb.

## Lesson 2: Have rituals and beliefs to enhance your state of mind before a showdown.

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Maybe, you swing the bat a few times before stepping up to the plate. Maybe, you always wear a special necklace. Or maybe, you meditate to calm yourself down before going on stage. **Whatever you do before the big moments, research says it works – as long as you make sure you stay consistent.**

Studies have shown that athletes who have a ritual perform better than those that don't. Furthermore, those that don't have one can learn one and also benefit from it. A study found group rituals to be even more effective. When participants were divided into groups for a scavenger hunt, the ones who performed a group cheer not only completed the task much more quickly, but they also reported liking their team members more.

Beliefs play a big part in improving performance as well. In one study, golfers given clubs said to belong to professional golfers performed significantly better than those with “normal” clubs. Many people believe that objects can hold the power of those who’ve touched them. Regardless if that’s true, that belief alone can help them gain an advantage.

## Lesson 3: Competition will improve your performance.

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A little competition never hurt, right? When it comes to performance, competition and rivalries are a great thing. **Studies show that competition dramatically enhances performance.**

The feeling we get when we are racing against others and someone is right on our tail drives us to do better, to prove ourselves. Cyclists do better when competing rather than beating the clock, and the same goes for other sports as well. Furthermore, fighting against a rival, or someone you know, rather than a stranger, boosts your abilities even more.

The motivating effects of competition help not only in sports but in the business world as well. When T-Mobile was a struggling wireless carrier, a new CEO had an idea to run ads where they trash-mouthed the other, bigger cell carriers. To the surprise of many, this worked. It increased competition, and people ultimately chose to root for the underdog by giving T-Mobile a chance, essentially saving the company.

## Psyched Up Review

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This book is a life-saver for those, who choke under pressure. *Psyched Up* delivers fascinating stories of real-life performers and provides studies to back up the claims it makes. It not only proves that there is a science behind mental preparedness but also gives the average person powerful suggestions on how to prepare for their time in the spotlight.

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- Why beginning in autopilot can help you stay calm and improve performance
- Ways to give pep-talks that encourage a growth mindset
- How motivating music improves physical performance
- The reason why performance-enhancing drugs help some people, but have negative side effects too

## Who would I recommend the Psyched Up summary to?

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The 19-year-old pitcher on the college baseball team, who wants to improve his delivery during games, the 35-year-old sales manager, who needs to prep for their big presentation in front of management, and anyone who gets jittery before a public task.