

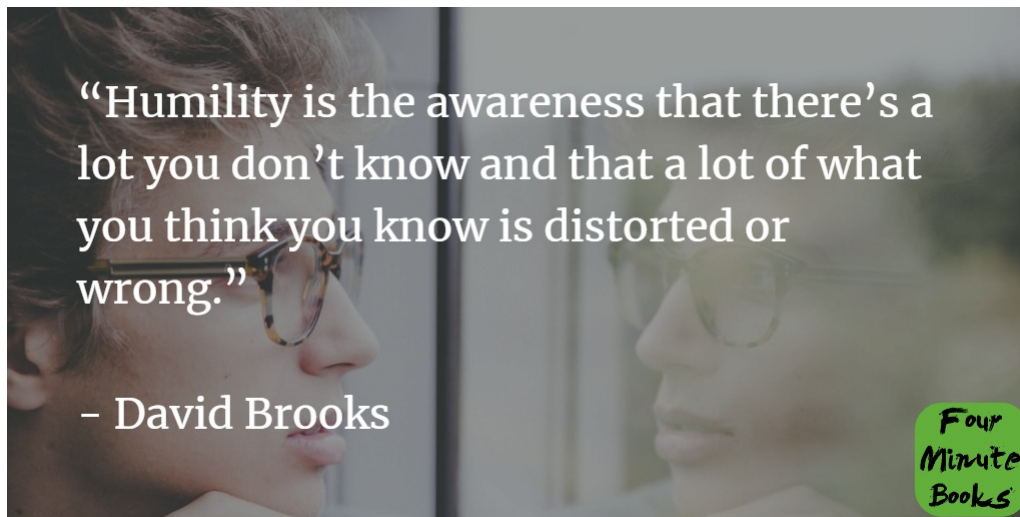
The Road to Character Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Road to Character* explains why today's ever-increasing obsession with the self is eclipsing moral virtues and building character, and it's making everyone less happy.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Have you ever scrolled through your social media feed, only to be left feeling a bit empty? Everyone else seems always to be having such a great time on vacation, graduating, or getting some amazing job. But in real life, these people are having struggles just like us. Unfortunately, social media has made a shift from a place to express ourselves to an arena for self-promotion.

It's not just social media, though. The internet itself is just a mirror of what our society has evolved into. These days we are increasingly concerned with ourselves and what we need. Living like this puts people under constant pressure to perform and compete. Because of this stress, we forget that what we really want is for people to remember us for who we were, not for what we did.

In *The Road to Character*, David Brooks reflects on how society's values have changed for worse, and shares the deeper values we should start filling our lives with instead. He encourages us to rebalance our scales between our "resume virtues," or achieving wealth and status, and our "eulogy virtues," which are those deep within us such as honesty, bravery, and kindness.

Here are the 3 most significant lessons about becoming a better person:

1. The world today emphasizes too much of the “me” extrovert inside of us, but things used to be different.
2. We have lost the connection with the moral values that bring us true happiness.
3. To find real character, acknowledge your flaws, and throw away your pride.

Are you ready to start living a more meaningful, joyful life? Let's begin learning how!

Lesson 1: Nowadays, we let the “me” extrovert in our personalities dominate too much, but it wasn't always this way.

According to Brooks, each of us is filled with two competing personality types, called Adams. Adam I is the part of us that focuses on the external. He is most comfortable in our success-driven society because he wants a career, wealth, and social status.

We've almost forgotten the Adam II personality in today's society. He is an introvert that has a strong moral compass, values, and virtues. This other self within us is what makes us human by giving us virtues like kindness, devotion, and courage. **Though we all have both, only one can dominate at the same time, and Adam I dominates in our society today.**

In the past century, Western Civilization has seen a shift from the morally concerned Adam II to the self-centered Adam I. After the Great Depression and World War II, people were ready to relax and enjoy life more. People wanted to make life easier and more fun. Consequently, consumption and mass advertising dramatically increased. In the '60's, people sought to leave behind self-restraint. Marginalized groups such as women and minorities worked toward social justice. This empowerment highlighted the shift to individualism and an emphasis on personal desire while traits like humility are almost completely gone.

Lesson 2: Modern society has nearly lost the moral values that bring us real joy and satisfaction.

Instead of using principles such as integrity, commitment, and kindness to lead our actions, nowadays, we increasingly follow our desires wherever they lead us. For example, the world now emphasizes that whatever we set our mind to, we can accomplish.

Though it might sound inspiring, this allows us to reduce everything we do into an equation of cost and opportunity. **Instead of investing time in things out of loyalty or love, we focus on whatever helps us climb the social ladder.** Unfortunately, our lives now revolve around *how* we do things instead of *why*.

Another way we see our desire to achieve overshadow moral values is in modern parenting. The days of focusing on a loving parent-child relationship are fading, while children are

increasingly becoming a tool for self-promotion. Report cards and sports victories are badges of honor more for parents than children.

Rather than investing time in making sure kids are well-rounded, parents push kids to learn skills that will look good on a resume, whether they enjoy them or not. In 1977, a poll of college freshman found that 80 percent were seeking a meaningful philosophy for life. Less than half of college kids today are looking toward that same goal.

Lesson 3: To find the real road to character, admit you have flaws and toss away your pride.

The more concerned we become with the self, the more we lose sight of our deeper morals. So what can you do about it? Be more honest about your flaws. Being open and realistic about weaknesses will help you get over your self-centeredness and make it easier to embrace moral and social values like love and compassion for others.

We don't have any problems sharing information about our lives. But we need to create less narcissistic content and instead talk more about our struggles. Brooks refers to all of us as perpetual "stumblers." **The beauty in life is in the struggles along the way to character.**

Throwing away pride is also essential to becoming humble and building good character. Pride blinds us to our weaknesses, inhibits the aid we receive from others, makes cruelty possible, and deludes us into believing we are the author of our own lives. We can rid ourselves of pride by admitting our flaws and accepting the help of others. Only by throwing away this central vice can we really balance Adam I and Adam II, thus finding fulfillment.

The Road to Character Review

I think this cultural criticism holds a lot of value for everyone. Sure, it might come off a bit extreme by saying that the world today is all bad and that people of the past were all good, but I think it's a great wake up call for all of us caught up in the "Big Me." The Road to Character will teach you the true merits in consciously building character and cultivating strong values in your life.

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Who would I recommend The Road to Character summary to?

The 49-year-old who has achieved his goals but still feels something is missing, the 22-year-old who is fed up with narcissistic posts on social media, anyone who wants to learn more about how they can live a more balanced, selfless life.