

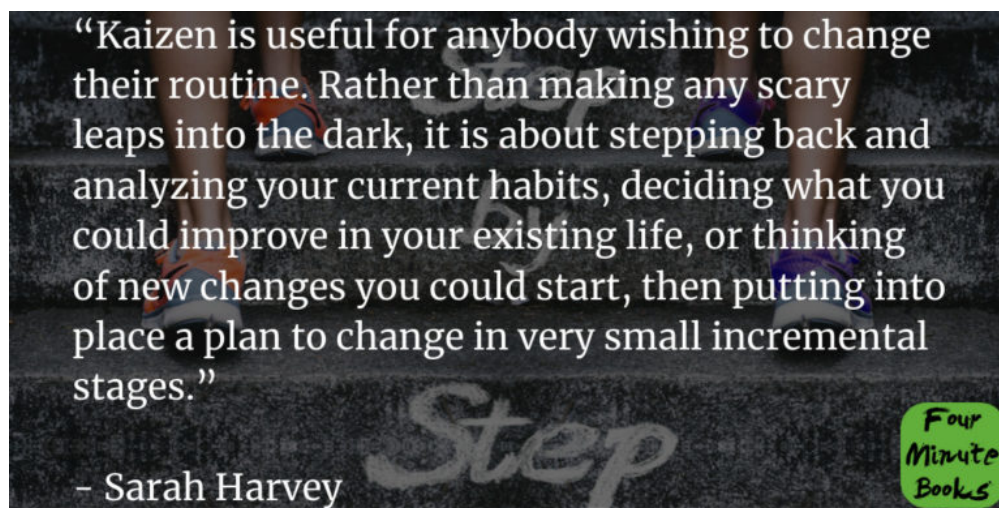
Kaizen Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Kaizen is Japanese for “change for the better” or “continuous improvement,” and is also the title of a book by Sarah Harvey which explains this business philosophy that has expanded into the personal growth arena to give a clear pathway to reaching your goals through consistent incremental changes.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Do you ever get overwhelmed by your goals? Maybe you feel like you have so much you want to change and so many big ambitions that you don't know where to start.

If you can relate to this, you're not alone. I know I feel this way all the time, and many others do too. Just think of how many people give up on their new year's resolutions by mid-January!

But the good news is that there's a better, easier way to reach your dreams.

It's known as Kaizen, and it means slow, tiny, consistent movement forward. And although it began as a management theory in Japan, this principle is now part of all areas of life.

Sarah Harvey's book *Kaizen: The Japanese Method for Transforming Habits, One Small Step at a Time* will teach you all about it. This simple, yet powerful life-changing tool just might be what you've always been looking for to finally stick to improving yourself.

These are the 3 most memorable lessons I got out of this book:

1. Kaizen is a Japanese philosophy centered around incremental growth, and it begins with evaluating your habits.
2. The best way to reach your big goals is to start with such a small step that the difference is barely noticeable.
3. Track your progress with your habits by reviewing them regularly.

Ready to discover a new philosophy for changing your life? Let's go!

Lesson 1: Incremental growth is what Kaizen is all about, and you can start using it today by analyzing your habits.

As we've already learned, Kaizen was originally a business theory. It started when the US wanted to help Japan restart its economy after World War II. It's since helped many companies, including one of the most popular car brands—Toyota.

Kaizen was so helpful to Japanese companies that it eventually came back to the US. There it made inroads into the business world and has now expanded into the personal growth sphere.

In Japanese, the word translates to many things, but the main idea is simply “change.” To take advantage of the power of change, you need to start with your habits. Which means you'll have to look hard at the habits you already have.

Your brain is always making habits as a way to save power on repeated behaviors. This preserves your mental energy for bigger, tougher tasks. But because it's so automatic, you might form unwanted habits.

This is why you start by interrogating your habits to make an inventory of your life. Get a piece of paper, divide it into the major sections of your life. Then, go through all areas of life and ask yourself if you're doing all you can to be happy in that area.

Dig deep to find out what you really seek. When you're done with that, finish by writing down your biggest aspirations in each category.

Lesson 2: Make your first step so small that you hardly notice the difference.

The story of the British cycling team is one of the most inspiring examples of how Kaizen works in the real world. The team had always done terribly in the Olympics, and they wanted to change that.

They scrutinized and improved every little component of cycling, from the bikes themselves to nutrition and more. Not a single factor was considered too insignificant.

These small “1% improvements” added up in a big way, and the team took most of the gold medals in the 2008 and 2012 Olympics.

Small changes like these aren’t usually easy to make because we don’t see the rewards immediately. In contrast, it’s easier to give in to a bad habit because they involve things that do reward us instantly.

Kaizen fixes this problem by focusing on changing things in such a tiny way that your brain hardly notices. Ask yourself “What tiny steps can I take to move me closer to my goal?” Don’t discount things that seem ridiculously easy, either. They work!

If you want to eat healthier, for instance, maybe you just add one vegetable to your plate each week to start. Once that habit has stuck, you can add more.

Experts recommend this because it keeps you going in the normally difficult early stages. You’re also more likely to stick with your goal in the long-term when you follow this method, too!

Lesson 3: Review your habits regularly to track your progress and keep yourself moving forward.

Japan’s first female journalist, Hani Motoko, is known for her unique journaling method called kakeibo. She initially created it to help women track their spending habits.

The system is simple and involves recording incoming and outgoing expenses. When you do this, Motoko taught, you get to see how your financial goals are progressing. You also get to discover which ones you need to focus on next.

Kaizen works best when you use a tracking system like Motoko’s. Doing so helps you see the barely noticeable gradual changes. **Your progress can then motivate you to keep going and show you additional areas where you can do better.**

Create your own journaling method to track your goals. Bullet journaling is one option that works really well for many people. You can also get a physical notebook and create your own by writing the days of the month and your goals and checking off which days you accomplish your goals.

Another great method of tracking is apps. These can help you stay consistent because of the reminders you can set to check in with yourself. Plus, you don’t have to create it all from scratch!

Whatever method you use, make sure it works for you. Set aside some time each day and week to review your goals and you’ll start to see the benefits of tracking, and of Kaizen!

Kaizen Review

I have to admit, I was a little disappointed in *Kaizen* but only because I've heard these ideas so many times before. I don't think this means it's a bad book though, these principles are worth repeating because they work! Definitely check it out if you want to further your understanding of habits and goal-setting.

Who would I recommend the Kaizen summary to?

The 63-year-old that wants to break their smoking habit, the 42-year-old parents who want to improve themselves for their kids, and anyone that's looking for yet another reason to utilize the power of habits and goal-setting.