

The Chimp Paradox Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Chimp Paradox* uses a simple analogy to help you take control of your emotions and act in your own, best interest, whether it's in making decisions, communicating with others, or your health and happiness.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



With even some of the world's most renowned companies no longer requiring a college degree, it seems the concept of the classic CV gets more outdated by the day. But that doesn't mean you can't end up with an interesting career, even after starting on what most would think is a conventional path.

Steve Peters first studied and taught mathematics, before returning to university to attain a medical degree. Later, he added a psychiatrist's training and was well on his way to become a distinguished doctor. Until, in 2001, one of his former students recommended him to the British cycling team. He eventually went to consult with them full-time and is now a performance coach, advisor to Olympians, and elite athlete himself.

And yet, despite completely changing careers, his success is still rooted in his conventional education. *The Chimp Paradox* is a simple analogy describing our brains he uses to help athletes deliver their absolute best. But it's a universal tool, so it can help you live a better life too.

Here are 3 lessons that will help you exercise control over your emotions:

1. Your brain has two major parts, which often collide, so it's important to observe them.
2. Humans have four modes of communication and knowing which one you're in will help get your message across.
3. The chimp's sneakiest trick is wanting more.

Ready to chase the monkey inside your brain? Let's see if we can get it up the next tree!

Lesson 1: There are two competing forces in your brain, so learn to recognize them.

One of the easiest ways for us to learn is through analogy. That's why, when Steve replaced two complex sounding names for parts of our brain with simpler images, he made a brilliant move as a teacher. He describes our prefrontal cortex as the human part of our brain and our limbic system as our inner chimp. The human acts rationally, based on facts, but the chimp only decides using emotions.

As you can imagine, this leads to problems whenever the two clash or the wrong one ends up in charge. Let's say you got cut off in traffic and almost suffered a crash. You come home to your partner and share this disturbing event. Trying to calm you down, they tell you that, luckily, it all turned out fine.

If you're still in monkey mode, you might take that as criticism and start an argument. Only if the human's in charge can you see this fact clearly, calm down, and move on without harping on the situation.

Therefore, the most important thing is to start observing your own state of mind. When you start stressing out, ask yourself: "Who's in charge here? Do I want to feel and act this way? Or is the chimp taking over?" Learning to observe this is the first, big step in mastering your inner monkey.

Lesson 2: We communicate in four distinct modes, which determine how to best say what you want to say.

In the scenario above, your partner can't know what mental state you're in before making a comment. It's hard to guess sometimes, so it's normal that you will often be wrong about others too. As a result, **there are four communication scenarios**:

1. You're using your human brain and so is your conversation partner.
2. You are in human mode, but the person you're talking to behaves like a chimp.
3. You're the chimp, while the other person's human is in charge.
4. Both of you behave like monkeys.

The first scenario is ideal, two and three are tough to figure out, but can be handled once you know what you're dealing with. It's the fourth scenario that's to be avoided, because it most often ends in an ugly fight. Besides making an effort to recognize the modes of all participants, you should address problems immediately and directly.

Explaining your reasoning in an assertive, but respectful manner is the best way to avoid emotional responses and bring back others to the rational plane of thinking.

Lesson 3: Since the chimp always wants more, it can become a fundamental obstacle to your long-term happiness.

This is something I struggle with: We should celebrate and appreciate our achievements as they come. I always have goals, but when I achieve them, I tend to gloss over, not really take much of a break, and immediately dig in to the next challenge. That's not healthy.

It's also the chimp's sneakiest trick. **By always wanting more, he gets you to chase an illusionary, perfect state in which you can finally be happy – but only once you have the next thing.** Of course, there's *always* a next thing and that feeling of relief never comes. This is how people end up winning Olympic gold medals without being any happier for it.

So remember: Your inner monkey will always dangle the next reward in front of you. Don't let it ruin your long-term happiness. When you achieve something you're proud of, take a break, celebrate, and learn to appreciate what you have.

My personal take-aways

What academics often struggle with is communicating their vast knowledge in ways people enjoy, like, and understand. But not Steve Peters. *The Chimp Paradox* is a brilliant, simple metaphor that will help you assess your own behavior, focus on the long-term, and communicate better with others.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- How to tame your inner chimp by letting him vent
- What the third part inside your brain is
- Why goblins are at the root of self-sabotage
- How to get along with people who are very different from you
- Why focusing on your health issues only makes the chimp stronger

Who would I recommend The Chimp Paradox summary to?

The 25 year old med student, who's really tired of the long path she's been on to become a doctor, but wants to hang in there and pull through, the 38 year old athlete, who's starting to hit his limits more and more, and anyone who often wonders how they got into an argument with their partner in the first place.