

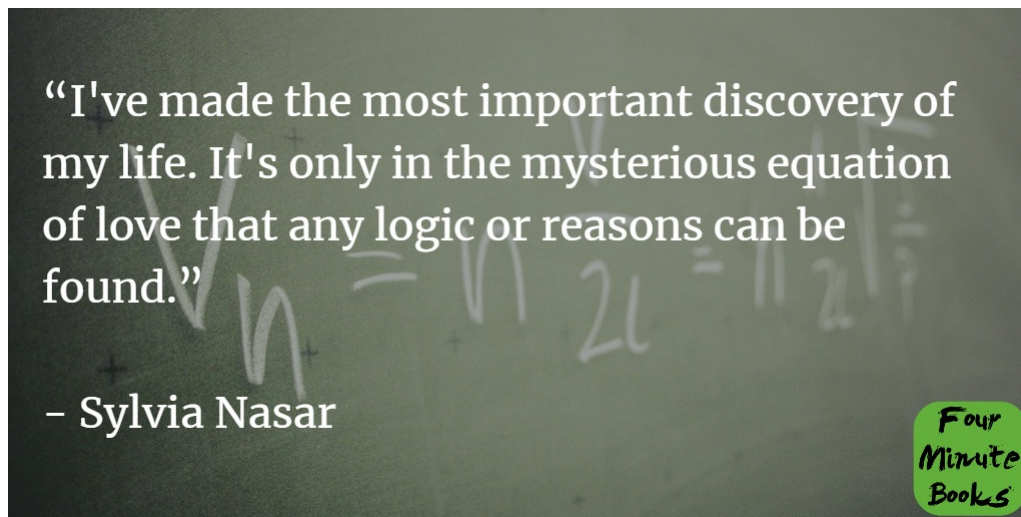
A Beautiful Mind Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *A Beautiful Mind* tells the fascinating story of the mathematical genius, mental illness, and miraculous recovery and success of John Nash Jr.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Like many people, my first encounter with the fascinating story of John Nash Jr. was when I saw *A Beautiful Mind*. The movie was very well done, but the story itself was what I found most compelling.

John Nash was brilliant but his antisocial behavior was off-putting to some. Even the colleagues who found him annoying couldn't deny he was going to make a name for himself, though. Tragically, just as his career was taking off, his behavior became more erratic and obsessive. His world came crashing down after his diagnosis with paranoid schizophrenia.

The novel *A Beautiful Mind* chronicles John Nash's decades-long battle with disease and his recovery. Author Sylvia Nasar brings us into the mind of a brilliant man tortured by his inability to distinguish paranoia from reality.

Here are the 3 most interesting lessons from this book:

1. John Nash's mathematical brilliance began at a young age and his graduate work made him a promising up-and-coming academic.
2. Immense stress contributed to his diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia that derailed his career and personal life for decades.
3. Nash's story ends happily with his recovery and career success.

Are you excited to learn about one of the most influential and intelligent minds of our time? Let's begin!

Lesson 1: The world began to see John Nash's brilliance when he was in graduate school making mathematical breakthroughs.

Like many geniuses, John Nash had some eccentric and reclusive tendencies. But though his parents worried about him socially, he had a gift for thinking about math problems in new and unorthodox ways. Surprisingly, he didn't show glowing grades in high school math because he would neglect to show his work and just write an answer that he had solved in his head. But in college, his professors were astounded by his methods for solving difficult math problems with ease, and he was accepted to graduate school at Princeton University.

Graduate students formed cliques under different mentoring professors, but Nash preferred to stay a loner, making him not particularly well-liked. But he found his place working under John Neumann, who fathered game theory.

Game theory is a way to explain human decision making among competing players through mathematical models. Nash expanded Neumann's theory in his thesis to include games involving more than two players and allowing for cooperation. This crucial step in the development of the theory allowed it to be relevant in real-world situations, particularly in economics. **Most importantly, his additions to the theory allowed the possibility of mathematically determining human behavior with the possibility of mutual gain.** This became known as the Nash equilibrium, which would win him the Nobel Prize, but not until half a century later.

His thesis gave him huge recognition in the mathematics field and landed him a job at MIT. It was there that he met his wife Alicia, and things were looking very promising for the young family.

Lesson 2: Nash's diagnosis of schizophrenia came after a stressful time in his career and life.

When Nash approached the age of 30, he began to be increasingly anxious about not yet receiving tenure and a lack of new mathematical breakthroughs. His anxieties led him to decide to take on Reimann's hypothesis, a famously hard unsolved math problem. It was when he was putting all of his energy into this that he found out his wife was pregnant. This was when people noticed his increasingly strange behavior.

Accusing his colleagues of looking through his trash to see his work on the hypothesis became common for Nash. **He began to believe aliens were trying to ruin his career and they were sending secret messages through the paper.** Turning down a professorship at the University of Chicago because he was “Emperor of Antarctica,” it was obvious that Nash was in deep.

The tipping point for Alicia came when he went to Washington, DC, in the middle of the night to give letters to embassies explaining there was an imminent world government. She had him committed to a psychiatric hospital, where he was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Nash was treated and given the clear, but it was soon apparent he fabricated this to leave. He wandered to Europe to convince the embassies of his world government but eventually was deported.

Nash saw things get worse with his income source gone and Alicia filing for divorce. Living with his family for only a short time, he soon went back to an institution.

Lesson 3: His tragic story turned around when he made a seemingly unbelievable recovery and he finally was able to have success.

To most everyone around him, all seemed lost. But in a miraculous turn of events, he began to recover.

It happened slowly, but the schizophrenia began to subside. By the late 1980's, people at Princeton saw his research was real math rather than incomprehensible equations. Nash himself said that he began to realize that though his paranoid thoughts were still tormenting him, he could reject them now.

More wonderful for Nash still, he was finally getting recognition for his contribution to game theory by receiving the Nobel Prize in Economics. After around 30 years away from academia, the invitation came for him to be a professor at Princeton.

He spent his remaining years reconnecting with family and friends he had estranged and reacquainted himself with Alicia. They remarried in 2001, and they lived out their lives together.

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A Beautiful Mind Review

What a story! *A Beautiful Mind* is a great read, especially if you've seen the movie. I enjoy math and it's fascinating to learn more about Nash's contributions to the field and the struggles with mental illness he had along the way.

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Who would I recommend the A Beautiful Mind summary to?

The 25-year-old student of economics who would like some inspiration, the 47-year-old who is curious about schizophrenia and other mental illnesses, and anyone who wants to learn more about an incredible man who contributed much to the world of mathematics.