

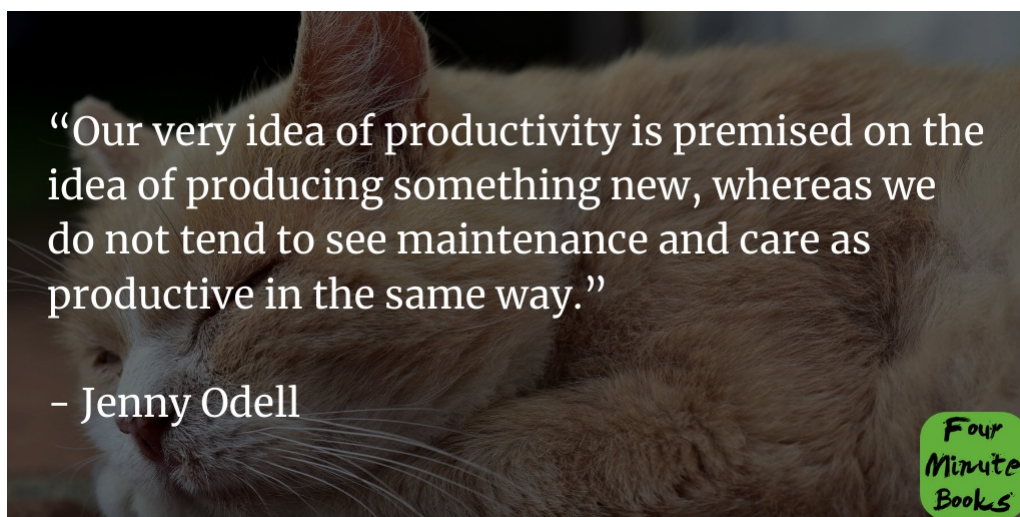
How To Do Nothing Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *How To Do Nothing* makes you more productive and helps you have more peace by identifying the problems with our current 24/7 work culture, where it came from, and how pausing to reflect helps you overcome it.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



My favorite day of the week is Sunday. I take it as a time to sharpen the saw by reflecting on the previous week and preparing for the week ahead. Most of all though, I pause everything going on in my life to focus only on what's most important.

It feels amazing to talk less and avoid the internet and devices as much as possible. I also enjoy a break from travel, shopping, and all forms of work. You could say that I love doing nothing.

That's why I really loved reading Jenny Odell's *How to do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. It's got everything you need to know about why always being connected is bad for you and where the habit came from. Most importantly though, you'll get some valuable tips for beating busyness so you can have more peace.

These are just 3 of the many lessons in this book that have helped me relax more:

1. We think doing nothing is a waste of our time because of the ever-diminishing line between work and leisure.
2. There is a lot of beauty in the world to notice if you start the habit of pausing.

3. Think more carefully about what other people's motives are for their actions and you'll have an easier time dealing with minor inconveniences.

Ready to discover the power of doing nothing? Let's get to it so we can try it out ourselves!

Lesson 1: It's constantly getting harder to see the difference between work and leisure, which is making us feel like doing nothing is a waste of time.

In the late 1800s, workers in America wanted 8-hour workdays. In the words of a popular trade union song they desired "eight hours of work, eight hours of rest, and eight hours of what we will."

Essentially, they needed time outside of work to do nothing. In the 20th century, their effort paid off and the 8-hour workday became the norm.

It seemed like all was well until recent events have confused us all as to the real difference between work and leisure.

People used to consider economic risk as something that only businesses needed to worry about. **Society got used to the idea that if you got a job and worked hard, they'd take care of you.** But these days the typical job isn't so secure anymore.

That's because labor movements that protected workers' rights lost power in the 1980s. Now, you have to take your financial freedom into your own hands.

Combine this with the beginning of the information age and you get people competing against one another for gigs. Freelancing is on the rise as a popular way to gain the financial security that a job no longer can. But the problem is, we've been conditioned to believe that the best way to thrive in this economy is to never stop working. It's easy to see why we think that doing nothing is so terrible!

Lesson 2: Pause more frequently and reflect and you'll begin to notice the wealth of beauty around you.

Imagine this. The sun is about to set over the Pacific ocean. A greeter checks you in and directs you to sit in a folding chair as he reminds you not to take pictures. You sit in silence with the other guests, watch the sunset, clap, then enjoy refreshments together.

Sounds a little weird, right? Well, this is a new form of art by Scott Polach called *Applause Encouraged*. It perfectly summarizes what it means to do nothing. This innovative art also lets us see how important noticing the world around us is.

Rather than creating beautiful scenes for people to enjoy, Polach's work simply directs attention to it. The author calls this attention-holding architecture. **It's anything that encourages being present and contemplating that our busy lives usually prevent.**

I got to experience the power of this myself one afternoon while dealing with some anxiety during college. A friend's mom, upon seeing how worked up I was, directed me to go into their backyard and just sit.

She told me to consider the details of everything I could see and just be curious about it all. After sitting down on a bench near the river behind their home, I saw things I'd never noticed before.

As I directed my attention through doing nothing, I felt peace where there was once turmoil.

Lesson 3: Minor inconveniences are easier to deal with when you take a second to consider that everybody's just human.

I don't honk at people that are rude while driving. If I get cut off, I sit back and relax, just enjoying driving and being with my family.

For one, I know the math, and cutting people off never amounts to getting anywhere faster. But more importantly, I realize that the other person could just be having a bad day that I have no idea about.

And that's no different than any of my actions on my bad days either. So what's the point in getting frustrated with someone for being human? The truth is, you can never know what people are really going through.

As David Foster put it in a commencement speech he once gave, we have two choices when presented with the frustrations and inconveniences of adult life.

We can see things from our point of view, focusing on our own hunger and pain. When we do this, other people are only an annoyance, mere obstacles in our way of getting what we want. This is an easy way to live constantly irritable and miserable.

The other option, however, is a recipe for freedom and peace. It involves pausing to consider that other people have motivations for their actions just like you do. Their lives are just as complicated as yours.

Once you realize this, it doesn't matter what other people do. You know that sometimes life

is just hard and people aren't strong enough to handle it well.

How To Do Nothing Review

How To Do Nothing is such an important book for the fast-paced world we live in today. I can't tell you how relieving it is to get some advice that I should stop hustling and listen and observe more so I can have peace. I've tried some of these tips already and I can say that they make a huge difference immediately!

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Who would I recommend the How To Do Nothing summary to?

The 61-year-old grandmother who is too involved on social media and in politics to relax, the 35-year-old entrepreneur who is tired and needs a good reason to take a break, and anyone that wants more calmness and clarity in their life.