

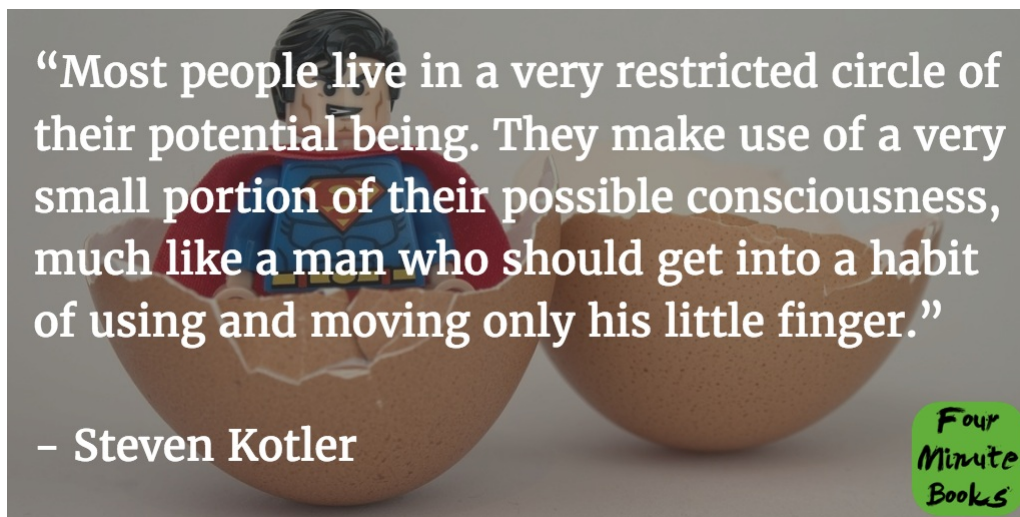
The Rise Of Superman Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Rise Of Superman* decodes the science of ultimate, human performance by examining how top athletes enter and stay in a state of flow, while achieving their greatest feats, and how you can do the same.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Steven Kotler is a very multi-faceted author, with his books ranging across a wide variety of disciplines and topics. However, most of them connect science with culture somehow, like *Abundance* and *Bold*. This one also combines the two, but is more focused on the individual.

You might know the state called “flow,” in which we are one with our surroundings, completely in the zone, do a great job and are 100% focused on our work. In this book, Steven takes it apart and looks at how you can achieve it more often. He even runs an entire research project dedicated to decoding the genome of flow by 2020, called The Flow Research Collective.

Until they pull that off, here are 3 lessons from *The Rise Of Superman*, to help you perform better:

1. When you’re in flow, five neurochemicals are released simultaneously.
2. For flow to happen, some parts of your brain must be switched off, not on.
3. What we think is possible changes every time we see a new achievement, which is why flow is so important.

Do you want to up your game, whichever one it is you’re playing? Then let’s find flow!

Lesson 1: Five powerful hormones work together to create the flow state in your body.

When you're in flow, you feel like you're on a "high," you can do almost no wrong and your performance is supercharged. While this is often a spiritual experience, there sure is a lot going on in your body as it happens as well. In fact, five strong chemicals are released, all at once, when you're in flow, and that's what makes it so powerful:

1. **Dopamine**, which gets you excited about new ideas, while helping you filter what's important from the noise, and thus sharpens your focus.
2. **Norepinephrine**, which increases your heartbeat, blood sugar and breathing speed, to give you energy and attention to the task at hand.
3. **Anandamide**, which works a little bit like cannabis, thus getting your brain to make more new connections and be creative.
4. **Endorphins**, which absolves you from physical pain, because it's 100 times stronger than morphine.
5. **Serotonin**, which causes the glowing feeling after you achieve a goal and keeps you coming back for more.

As you can see, that's quite a mighty chemical cocktail that keeps you buzzing. But for flow to happen, something else must occur. In fact, some parts of your brain have to stop buzzing altogether for a while.

Lesson 2: Some parts of your brain have to be turned off, not on, in order for flow to be possible.

Another factor, which is part of the flow experience, is something called *transient hypofrontality*. What this complicated expression means is simply that for a short time (transient) your preFRONTAL cortex is less (hypo) active.

The prefrontal cortex is part of the neocortex, which, in turn, is the "youngest" part of our brain, evolutionary speaking. This is where all complex thinking happens (like you crunching numbers to decide which house you want to buy), and it's what allows us to think rationally about our feelings and be self-aware.

Why does this part shut off? **Because in flow, you don't have time to second-guess your own decisions.** When your self-awareness monitor shuts down, you'll go with your gut, make split-second decisions and try new approaches exactly as needed – because the part of your brain in charge of doubting is turned off.

Another part that slows down during flow is your *orientation adjustment area*, the part of the brain that lets you assess your position in the world, relative to other objects around you. This is what causes surfers to feel “as if they’re one with the wave” or writers to just “think their words onto the paper.”

Lesson 3: The reason flow is so important is that with each new, major achievement, what we think is possible changes entirely.

Flow is what gets a mountaineer up the last part of Mt. Everest, it’s what makes the snowboarder land the 1080 and allows the writer to finish her novel. It is the source of grand achievements, and achievements are the source of inspiration.

Kotler calls this the Roger Bannister effect. Bannister was the first man to run a mile in under 4 minutes. Before he accomplished this in 1954, for decades people had thought a 4 minute mile simply wasn’t possible. However, once he did, someone else did it **just two months after him**. His record was broken again twice within the next five years and ten years later a high school student ran a 4 minute mile.

Every time someone accomplishes something we think is impossible, our definition of that word changes. Great achievements inspire us to go beyond them and achieve even more, and that’s what makes flow so important. Without it, humans would stop pushing the boundaries of performance.

And the day we do that is the day our species starts to decline.

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The Rise Of Superman Review

This was probably the most scientific assessment of flow I’ve ever seen. When Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term, he described it in his own words and had no way to actually measure the biological side of it. But now we have access to the right tools and Kotler does a great job of laying out the results. Especially recommended if you’re an athlete or do extreme sports, but *The Rise Of Superman* is really a good read for any creative.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Three core characteristics of flow, which have saved many athletes from death
- Exactly how much more difficult than your current skill level a task needs to be to create flow
- What a growth mindset is and why it's the only one that works to trigger flow
- Why it's really important to have a community that shares what you are passionate about
- The reason the mind is more important for optimal performance than the body
- How a 12-year old beat Tony Hawk at skateboarding

Who would I recommend The Rise Of Superman summary to?

The 15 year old surfer or snowboarder, who thinks about taking his career pro some day, the 33 year old writer, who often struggles with writer's block, and anyone who thinks they've been put on this earth to achieve something great.