

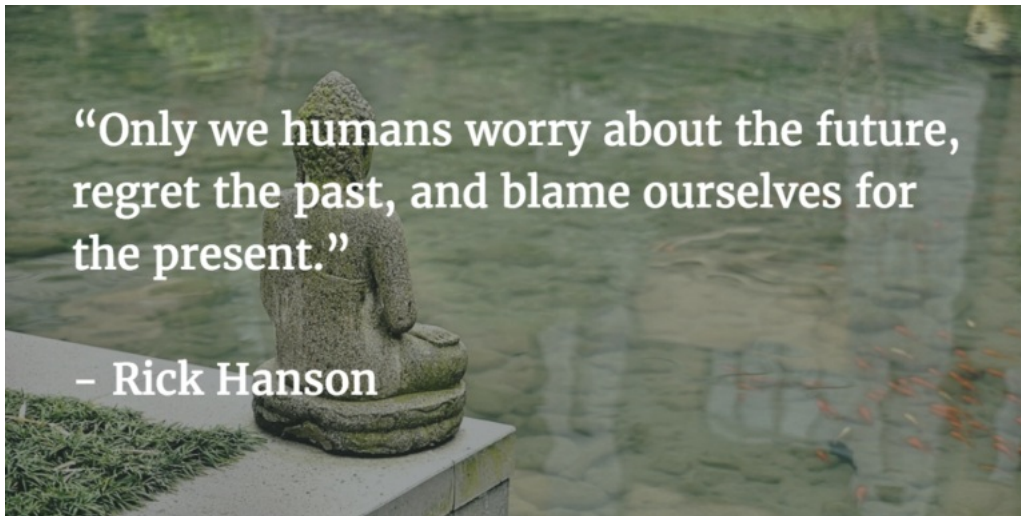
Buddha's Brain Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/buddhas-brain-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Buddha's Brain* explains how world-changing thought leaders like Moses, Mohammed, Jesus, Gandhi and the Buddha altered their brains with the power of their minds and how you can use the latest findings of neuroscience to do the same and become a more positive, resilient, mindful and happy person.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



A few months ago my friend Patrik reminded me of *Buddha's Brain*, by writing about a concept from it. While I'm not necessarily a mindfulness skeptic (I'm convinced it works, I've experienced it myself), meditating isn't really my thing. Luckily, this book shares many ways to become more mindful, not just one.

Here are 3 very practical lessons from the book to help you improve your life:

1. Stop throwing second darts by not dwelling on your pain.
2. Practice composure to not live in a state of constant desire.
3. Don't identify with so many things to reduce your suffering.

Prepared to tap into Buddha's brain? Let's neuroscience the heck out of your happiness!

Lesson 1: One dart hurts enough. Don't make your pain worse by dwelling on it.

There's a great quote you might have heard, which is often accredited to Buddha, but whose origin is actually unknown.

| "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional." ~ Anonymous

It pretty much sums up the idea Hanson describes in the book, which says that **we experience discomfort on two levels.**

The first level feels like being struck by a dart. It's a sudden rush of pain, for example from an accident (stubbing your toe, touching a hot plate, crashing with your bike), a disappointed expectation, failure or rejection. This kind of pain is normal, we all have to face it in our lives, and there's not much we can do about it.

Most of the time, however, **we make it worse by throwing a second dart at ourselves**, based on how we physically and mentally react to the first dart. For example, when you crash with your bike, you might curse at the person that blocked your view, blame the shitty tarmac, or not instantly go to the hospital because you have an important meeting. All of these *add* suffering to the pain you already have, but are entirely in your control.

You don't have to do any of these. Instead, you can just accept the pain, do what's necessary to heal your wounds, and get on with your life. 99% of the time the second darts are a lot worse than the first ones, because we keep throwing them long after the first dart has vanished, for example by obsessing for months over an ended relationship or worrying about test results.

Life throws enough darts at you as is, so stop throwing more at yourself, okay?

Lesson 2: Quit the eternal rat race for more by practicing composure every day.

Have your parents ever told you to "keep your composure" when you were a kid? What does that even mean? Most of the time, we use it in a false context. When people say it, they often expect you to not act out your feelings.

For example, when you get an email in the middle of class, telling you you've been accepted into the school you so desperately want to go to, you'll likely want to jump up and dance right then and there. If you do it, your teacher will probably tell you to "keep it together". Same goes when we're on the brink of despair, about to do something crazy.

But composure doesn't mean hiding your feelings. When you're composed **you stay with and experience your feelings just long enough to let them sink in, without developing a permanent reaction to them.** Doing your victory dance is just fine. When you instantly start to think about what's next, that's when it gets problematic.

Composure is a circuit-breaker. It allows you to cut the connection between "I feel good about this" and "I need more of it" or "I feel horrible about this" and "I must avoid this forever".

You can practice true composure by noticing when you feel particularly good or bad and then taking a short moment to just stay with the feeling for 20-30 seconds. This allows you to let it sink in, while at the same time accepting that it's okay as it is, without instantly chasing the next thing in your head.

Lesson 3: Reduce the suffering in your life by not identifying with so many things.

What do buddhist monks and death-row prison inmates have in common? They let go of their sense of self. At both ends of the spectrum, ultimate enlightenment and inevitable death, letting go replaces all suffering with peace, fulfillment and acceptance.

But then again, a strong sense of self is important. You have to assert yourself and your right to be happy. Who you think you are gives you continuity in life and helps you set yourself apart from other people. So no, leaving everything behind and living alone in the woods isn't the solution.

You simply have to tame your sense of self by not identifying with so many things. Every time you put the word "I" or "my" in a sentence with something, you make its fate your own. Since everything in the world eventually comes to an end, over-identifying with things ultimately makes you feel like you face loss a lot and can thus make you depressed.

For example, if you have a ton of clothes, electronic devices and material possessions, you'll say "my laptop", "my sweater", "my TV" and "my remote control helicopter" a lot. No matter which of these breaks next, you'll feel the pain of the first dart, so the more you have, the more darts are likely to come flying your way.

Imagine taking a weekend to unclutter and ending up with 30% less than you had before. That's a lot of less "I's" and "my's" in your vocabulary and therefore, will help you moderate your sense of self.

Note: A personal exercise I like to do is when I step out on the street, I look up to the roof of the highest building I can see, then imagine seeing myself from up there and slowly zooming out and out and out until I'm in space (like with Google Maps). Always shows me that I'm just a teeny tiny part of this great thing called the universe.

Buddha's Brain Review

I've totally run out of words, so all I'll say is that the science + practical tips + examples of results make *Buddha's Brain* a pre-mindfulness/post-mindfulness comparison with an included manual to go from A to B. Go get it!

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

[Learn more about the author](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

-
- What Hebb's Rule is and how you can use it to change your brain's physical structure
 - Why taking a lot of time to think is not selfish
 - How the role of suffering has changed throughout history
 - A new definition of wisdom
 - Why our brains are now three times bigger than they were a few million years ago
 - The difference between compassion and empathy

Who would I recommend the Buddha's Brain summary to?

The 22 year old athlete, who faces a lot of physical pain, the 41 year old housewife, who finds it hard to share feelings with her husband and anyone who has more than one phone.