

# Aware Summary

---

 fourminutebooks.com

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Aware is a comprehensive overview of the far-reaching benefits of meditation, rooted in both science and practice, enriched with actionable advice on how to practice mindfulness.*

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



We've all heard it before: meditation is good for us. It will make us healthier, happier, more mindful, better. But how exactly?

Daniel J. Siegel wrote *Aware: The Science and Practice of Presence* to demystify mindfulness meditation for those who haven't tried it yet but feel compelled to. If you often find yourself curious about what this yoga-inclined friend of yours means when she talks about "awareness" or "mind-body connection," this is a book for you.

The author is both an avid meditator and practicing psychiatrist. This combination makes his way of presenting meditation really unique. He blends insights from his own contemplative experience with scientific findings. Additionally, he has a talent for explaining complicated neuropsychological processes in an accessible manner.

As a result, this meditation guidebook is not merely an exhaustive how-to with numerous steps to follow. It also works as a map, explaining what you should watch out for as you move through your self-discovery journey. This gives you a sense of security and guidance, once you commit to explore the truly magnificent landscape of your own mind.

There are plenty of lessons to be found in *Aware*. Here 3 that stuck with me the most:

1. Mindfulness stands on three main pillars: attention, open awareness and intention.
2. Being mindless is more of a problem than we think.
3. Meditation can be a great help in fighting addictions.

Ready to discover the benefits of meditation for yourself? Get ready for a fascinating, life-long journey – and let's go!

## Lesson 1: Mindfulness results from optimal interaction between attention, open awareness and intention.

---

Mindfulness became such a tossed-around concept that we hardly ever question its meaning. What do we think of when we speak of mindfulness?

Siegel deconstructs mindfulness in a plain, comprehensible way. First of all, he refers to it as a *modus operandi* which is profoundly different from the ordinary functioning of the mind.

**Further, he explains that mindfulness builds on three major mental faculties, or the “three pillars” of mindfulness:**

1. **Attention**, or the ability to focus on one task or object. It works like a laser, concentrating on one point while ignoring the rest. You may have experienced focused attention last time you were totally immersed in your work or read an awesome book.
2. **Open awareness** is the second pillar of mindfulness. This is the ability that allows you to be receptive to your surroundings and read the context. The faculty of open awareness allows a football player to maintain a sense of how the rest of his team is spread on a pitch, as he's dribbling the ball.
3. **Intention**, which, if used correctly, allows you to maintain a positive and compassionate attitude towards yourself and the world.

Mindfulness arises when these three elements interact with one another in an optimal way. This allows you to perceive the events of life as they unfold, without judgment or excessive rumination. But once you get a grasp of what mindfulness means, a question may pop into your head – why should you cultivate it? Is this actually important?

## Lesson 2: Being mindless is virtually never good for you.

---

In her flagship book about the benefits of mindfulness for health *Counterclockwise*, Ellen Langer claims that “*virtually all the world's ills boil down to mindlessness.*” If this is an exaggeration, it's only a minor one. **Siegel also gives many examples of how the lack of mindfulness harms your physical and mental well-being.**

Mindlessness is common when you go through your daily chores – for example, brushing your teeth, taking shower, making breakfast and eating it while thinking of something else. You may even say that the autopilot is useful in those instances. It allows you not to waste your conscious mental power on repetitive, mundane activities. And that's true – our brains evolved an “automatic mode” to economize on energy.

The problem begins when you take the same attitude to less predictable situations, which demand you to engage with them. Such situations are your relationships, challenges at work and even driving through the city traffic. Then, it is obviously in your best interest to make decisions based on what is right in front of your eyes – rather than trusting your autopilot.

One study has demonstrated that being mindless in everyday situations may harm our long-term well-being, due to lapses of attention and memory failures it causes. There surely are good reasons to practice mindfulness!

## Lesson 3: Cultivating mindfulness is useful when fighting addictions.

---

The body of research showing how mindfulness impacts various aspects of well-being is already huge – and growing. Siegel emphasizes that the benefits of mindfulness encompass both your mental and physical health. The most-researched examples include improved immunity, slowed aging process, sharpened problem-solving skills and much more.

But there is one very tangible benefit that may be mentioned a bit less frequently: mindfulness can help us tackle all kinds of addictions. **That's because by becoming more aware, we are empowered to see the cycle of addictive behavior for what it really is.** This in itself is often enough to break out of that cycle.

As Siegel explains it, any addiction is fuelled by dopamine releases in the body. Dopamine is a substance that makes us feel happy and rewarded. Any addiction is simply an over-attachment to a specific external trigger (like substance ingestion) that causes its releases. The problem is that, with time, the effect of the “dopamine hit” wears off. As we want more of it, we continue addictive behaviors.

With mindfulness training, you become empowered to cease these behaviors. Some studies have shown that that's due to our increased ability to discern between what we *need*, as opposed to what we *would like to have*. This differentiation makes the addictive behavior less appealing, which is likely to result in dropping the addiction over time!

## Aware Review

---

*Aware* is an insightful and very complete introduction to mindfulness meditation. As a meditator of three years, I've run into a lot of information, including scientific findings, that are definitely in line with my personal experience. An additional big perk of this book is that it presents difficult-to-grasp concepts in a very digestible and engaging way.

[Read full summary on Blinkist >>](#)

[Free Preview >>](#)

[Learn more about the author >>](#)

## **Who would I recommend the *Aware* summary to?**

---

The 33-year old who always listens to her friend's self-discoveries but doesn't know how to relate, the 54-year old rationalist who "has seen it all" but is still curious to have his beliefs challenged, and anybody who always wanted to try meditation, but doesn't know how.