

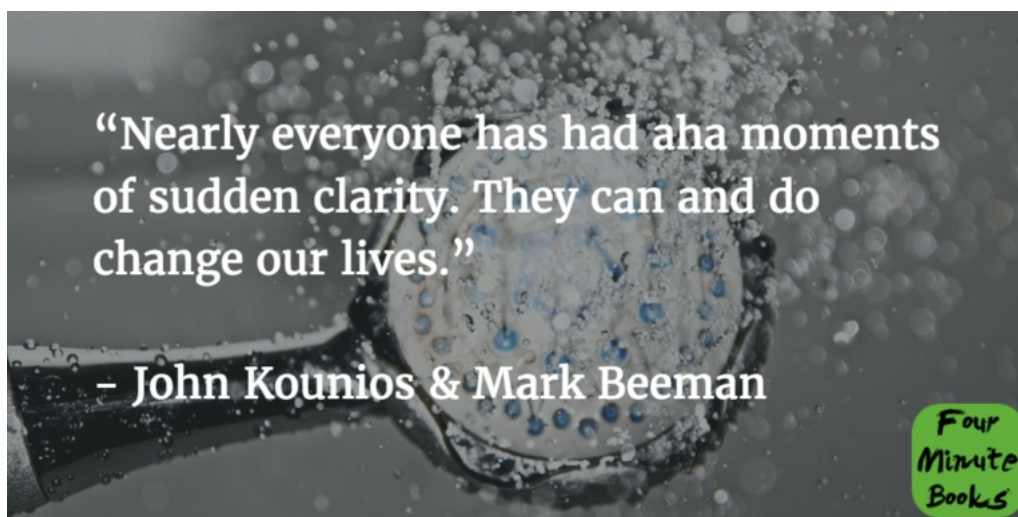
The Eureka Factor Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Eureka Factor* lays out the history of so-called “aha moments” and explains what happens in your brain as you have them, where they come from and how you can train yourself to have more flashes of genius.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



John Kounios and Mark Beeman both love creativity. So much in fact, that they both hold PhDs in psychology and have dedicated most of their lives to finding out how the right side of our brain works. *The Eureka Factor* is their 2015 book, detailing everything they've found out so far.

Ranging from Archimedes (the original eureka moment) to Columbus and Paul McCartney, it shares how many of history's most important eureka moments came about and explains what goes on in your brain every time you exclaim “Aha!” in the shower, and, more importantly, what you can do to make it happen more often.

Here are 3 lessons from *The Eureka Factor*:

1. An idea is only obvious after someone else has told you about it.
2. Your best insights only come bubbling to the surface when distractions are under control.
3. Distant-future thinking can help you come up with more brilliant ideas.

Craving a breakthrough (or two)? These lessons will make you go “Aha!” for sure!

Lesson 1: Every seemingly straightforward idea is only obvious after someone else has told you about it.

I'm sure you've uttered these six words before: "I could have thought of that!" Happens to me all the time. I look at some invention and say: "Wow, that's actually quite obvious, why didn't I think of that?" Even worse are the occasions where I *did* think of the idea, but didn't implement it, but doing the work is a whole other topic.

If you have wonderful friends like me, who try to keep you grounded on earth all the time, they'll kindly remind you: "Well, but you didn't." – and they're right.

Most of the time when we point out how obvious something is in hindsight, it's really just a mechanism for us to feel better about ourselves. In reality, **any good idea only becomes obvious *after* someone else has told you about it.**

Take Christopher Columbus, for example. After he had discovered the new world across the Atlantic and returned to Spain, many nobles claimed that it had been no great feat. In fact, if only they'd had a fleet, many of them claimed they'd have done it themselves. Instead of arguing, Columbus ordered a bunch of boiled eggs, giving the nobles one each and asked them if they could make their egg stand upright, without any tools or help. They all tried for a while, but eventually gave up.

Columbus took his egg, tapped its bottom on the table, so that it slightly broke, and set it upright on the dented end. The nobles were shocked and Columbus cunningly asked them: "If there was such a simple solution, why didn't any of you think of it?"

He'd clearly made his point.

Lesson 2: You can only have your best insights when you keep your distractions under control – like in the shower.

Whenever you live with someone, please, please don't rush them when they're in the shower. Those few extra minutes of quiet might lead them to brilliant insights. But why is that?

Why do we always seem to come up with great stuff in the shower? It's because your mind is entirely free to focus on important problems. **In the shower, all distractions are under control.** The white noise of the water takes away distracting sounds and the feel of the water keeps your entire sense of touch busy without new stimuli.

It is right then and there that all the concepts, thoughts and ideas you've had boiling in your subconscious come bubbling to the surface, combined in new ways and voilà: an entirely new perspective on a familiar problem leads to a breakthrough insight!

The only precondition to this is that you've previously given your brain some time to actually mull over everything subconsciously, for example by (literally) sleeping on it. When your mind plays with an idea while you're sleeping, this is called *sleep incubation* and it's said that this is how Paul McCartney came up with the melody of the song "Yesterday." When he woke up in the morning, it was playing in his head.

Lesson 3: A good exercise to evoke more eureka moments is to practice distant-future thinking.

Your capacity to have eureka moments is to some extent set in your genes – some peoples' right brain halves are just less inhibited as others'. But before you moan and think it's all for nothing, there are several things you can do make yourself have more flashes of genius.

One is to abandon conformist thinking. Non-conformity is an art in itself, and the more you practice it, the better. You can start by simply imagining yourself as a rebel, a status-quo-breaker, a punk even, and your right brain half will lighten up.

Another good exercise is distant-future thinking. Just like you can imagine distant events as immediate to make better decisions in the now (like thinking your paper deadline is tomorrow, instead of three months away), you can also do the opposite to give yourself more room to be creative.

Imagine I told you that you've just won a trip to Hawaii, but in one case, the trip starts tomorrow, whereas in another, it starts a year from now. Scenario A likely makes you think of things like getting your visa, what to pack, how to get to the airport and whether you'll lose your luggage. With plenty of time left in scenario B, however, chances are you'll imagine lying at the beach, finding sea shells in the sand and maybe even bumping into surfing legend Kelly Slater.

Let your thoughts drift into the far-away future and you'll be surprised at how creative you can be.

The Eureka Factor Review

Wow, so many great stories and examples to share from this book. It's really hard to contain myself to just three here. Lovely combination of storytelling and useful scientific insight, a hidden gem for sure. *The Eureka Factor* is definitely a recommended read!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What "Eureka!" actually means and why the first shower thought was actually a bathtub thought
- How a part of your brain called the frontal lobe is involved in creative breakthroughs
- Which emotions hinder your creativity, and which help it
- Why not all motivation is created equal

- What a creative environment looks like

Who would I recommend The Eureka Factor summary to?

The 25 year old marketer, who feels he's stuck and can't come up with a creative way to run his current campaign, the 52 year old PhD scientist, who thinks there's nothing new left to discover in her field, and anyone who doesn't know the story of the egg of columbus.