

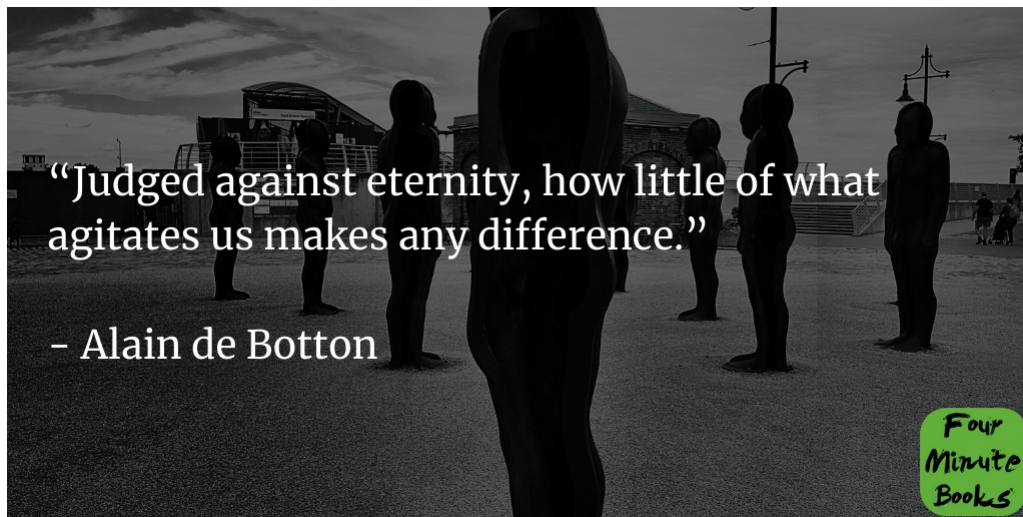
Status Anxiety Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Status Anxiety* identifies the ways that your desire to be seen as someone successful makes you mentally unhealthy and also shows ways that you can combat the disease of trying to climb the never-ending social ladder.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Every once in a while I get a little freaked out wondering what would happen if I were suddenly transported to the past. As shallow as it sounds, I am terrified of having to deal without the luxuries I have today. I just can't imagine going back to those horrible times compared to ours.

At the same time, however, there are some things about the past that may have been better. These days it's a lot more common to be stressed out by our place in society. We're constantly afraid of not accomplishing what's expected of us, and it wears us down. Is this part of life truly better than things were for our ancestors?

You can find the answer in Alain de Botton's *Status Anxiety*. And what's even more important, this book will teach you how to let go of the false expectations that you're trying to live up to so that you can be happier.

Here are 3 of the best lessons to help you stop trying to "keep up with the Joneses:"

1. Seeking to be "somebody" comes from wanting to be loved and only brings pain, but looking inside to see the depth of your self-worth will alleviate this.

2. When society's expectations of you are too high and you fall short of them, you become anxious.
3. Take a more philosophical approach to life by constantly asking yourself if what you think you want will actually make your life better or if it's just for status.

Ready to have your dissatisfaction with your life finally put to rest? Here we go!

Lesson 1: Grow your self-esteem to combat the desire to be “somebody” that is currently making you anxious.

It's obvious that the rich try to get richer just because they're greedy, right? But it makes no sense that someone would keep trying to build wealth even after they've acquired an amount that they could never reasonably spend.

If materialism really was people's only reason for wanting more money, sooner or later they'd run out of stuff to purchase and they'd stop. But that doesn't happen, which means that something else is going on.

To understand this, we need to look at how it feels to be in positions of high and low statuses. Even just the terminology we use, referring to people low on the totem pole as “nobodies” is degrading. **We all want to be “somebody” instead, so we seek status so others don't ignore us.**

Another way of looking at it is that we all want to feel like people respect and love us. We want to matter to at least someone in the world.

The problem with status-seeking is that it completely overlooks our own self-worth. If we don't know our own value, it's only natural that we'll base our identity on what others think of us. This is part of why seeking prominence stresses us out so much.

Instead of basing your self-worth on whether or not you're a “somebody,” try looking inward. What do you like about yourself? What do your loved ones like about you?

Lesson 2: That feeling of restlessness that you have comes from society's high expectations that you're trying to live up to.

Let's step back into medieval Europe for a moment. We could talk for hours about how much better we have it today. Disease and famine ravaged the poor class while the rich stayed isolated. Certainly people in these times had more status anxiety than we do now, right?

Unfortunately not. With a rise in common material luxuries came an increase in a desire to maintain social hierarchies. Shouldn't we have beaten this unfortunate consequence by now though?

Before the American revolution, people didn't value equality. Once the US became a country, however, humanity also saw an increase in the desire for economic achievements. The former hereditary class system was over.

Once people saw that their lives could improve, they sought to do so as much as possible. **But that came with a constant restlessness for more.** Once affluence became attainable and even the expectation, people struggled when they didn't have it. This got worse when they saw their neighbors having things they didn't have.

This causes angst because we don't decide whether we have enough until we see how much others have. In other words, what you have isn't enough until it's more than they have. And when everyone's clamoring for more, everybody feels the constant anxiety to work harder.

Lesson 3: Philosophy will help you relax by identifying the difference between what everybody else wants for you and what you truly need.

One day in the city of Corinth in the fifth century BC, a philosopher named Diogenes was sitting under a tree. Alexander the Great finds him and asks how he can help. Diogenes just lets Alexander, the most powerful person in the world, know that he can get out of the way because he's blocking the sun.

His lack of concern for social status could have easily got Diogenes killed. But Alexander simply laughed it off and commented that he might like to be Diogenes if he weren't Alexander.

This story illustrates the importance of philosophers throughout history. They've always been around in some form or another to question the status quo. These deep thinkers get us to ask why we value certain things and encourage us to use reason and think for ourselves.

It's the tenets of philosophy that have us stare emotions like anxiety in the face and check them against logic. **Thus we can beat status anxiety by realizing that most people's thinking isn't clear or logical.** In other words, you should listen to your head instead of trying to blindly follow everyone else.

As yourself what is truly valuable to you and only you. Question the traditions of society. And especially use logic to temper the irrational ways that emotion tries to get you to follow the crowd into the depths of status anxiety.

Status Anxiety Review

What an eye-opening book! *Status Anxiety* brings up a lot of issues that were kind of on the back of my mind but that I really need to come to terms with. I've always tried to challenge the parts of the status quo that are a waste of time and energy, and this book just gave me more motivation to keep this habit!

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Who would I recommend the Status Anxiety summary to?

The 36-year-old mom who feels overwhelmed and wants a good reason to let go of her desire to be perfect, the 60-year-old rich person who looks down on others for not being wealthy, and anyone that wants some relief from the stress of underachievement.