

# 10% Happier Summary

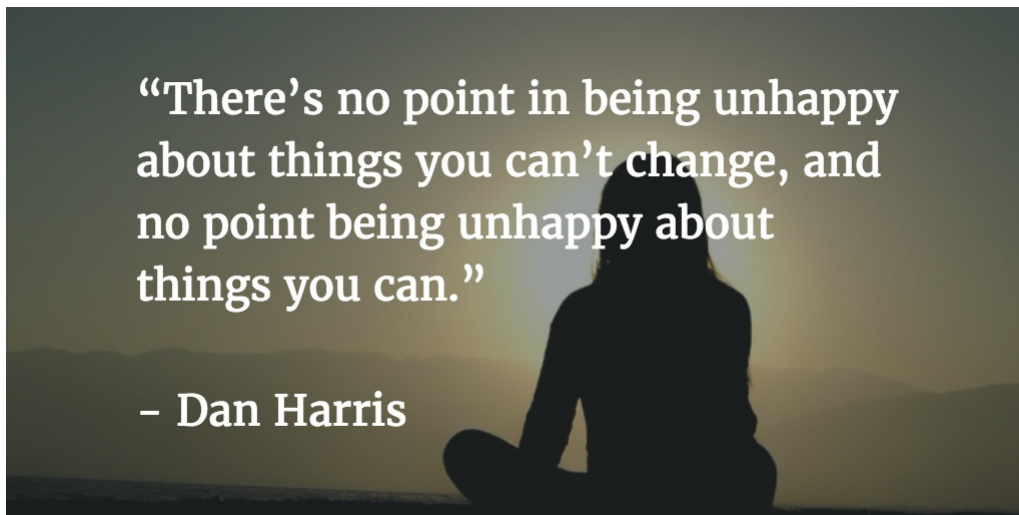
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 [fourminutebooks.com/10-happier-summary/](https://fourminutebooks.com/10-happier-summary/)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *10% Happier* gives skeptics an easy “in” to meditation, by taking a very non-fluffy approach to the science behind this mindfulness practice and showing you how and why letting go of your ego is important for living a stress-free life.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Life as a ABC News correspondent must feel pretty good right? The pay is great, millions of people know your face and name, and you get to tell everyone what's important. But for some, the pressure can become too much – and they crack.

This happened to Dan Harris 12 years ago and his voice broke in a live, on-air panic attack on national television. Convinced that it was time to do some digging into his self and life, he started a long journey into the science of stress and eventually, mindfulness. Originally a skeptic himself, Dan eventually learned to tame his ego with the power of meditation, and shared his lessons in this 2014 bestseller.

Here are 3 lessons to show you why your ego causes problems, that letting it go won't make you lose your touch and how meditation helps with this process:

1. The problem with your ego is that it's never satisfied.
2. Be simple, not a simpleton – why letting go of your ego won't make you a pushover.
3. Meditation increases your mindfulness and compassion by giving you a fourth habitual response.

Ready to crank up your happiness by at least 10%? Let's go!

**Lesson 1: Your ego gets in the way of your happiness by constantly wanting more.**

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The friction between acting in the present, but constantly thinking about the future and past is what causes your ego to be impossible to satisfy. This issue is also addressed in The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle in a very similar manner.

Dan Harris says your ego constantly assesses your worth by looking at your own wealth, looks and social status, and then finding the next best person with more of it to compare it against. Therefore, **your ego's default setting is more**. The minute you feed your ego a new achievement, toy or compliment, the baseline for desire is reset and it starts looking for the next thing.

It thrives on drama and worry, and will instantly look for the next bigger achievement to compare yourself to, and if none is there, dig up some ancient problem or crisis and pester you with it. That's why the ego is never happy, and it's up to you to take charge of that, because no matter which new heights you reach, it'll never be enough.

Time to reign it in!

## Lesson 2: Be simple, not a simpleton – why letting go of your ego won't make you a pushover.

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Now you might say: "If my ego is my drive to achieve greater things, won't I lose my edge if I completely let go of it?"

Nope! That doesn't have to be the case at all. To the contrary. Often people overdo it with the Buddhist attitude of letting go and in some cases even end up not letting themselves orgasm during sex or letting other people order for them at restaurants in order not to express personal preference.

That's just stupid. As Indian meditation teacher Munindra taught his students to keep things simple and easy, one of them approached him when he was fiercely negotiating the price of a bag of peanuts at the local market about how this matched his earlier lesson. Munindra replied: **"I said be simple, not a simpleton!"**

Mindfulness just makes you more creative and productive, not a pushover. It removes the need for competition and fuels your drive by removing wrong assumptions and bad thoughts, so instead of the usual stress you'll approach things more clearly, because you're not giving in to aggressive temptations.

Dan found himself filling pages upon pages with notes during a meditation retreat, because his mind was less cluttered and chaotic, and his creativity flowed freely.

## Lesson 3: Meditation makes you more mindful and compassionate by giving you a fourth habitual response.

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So what is it that meditation can help us do to tame the ego and fuel our drive?

It makes us more mindful and helps us live in the moment, as well as act more compassionately towards others. Meditation achieves this by giving you a fourth habitual response. According to ancient Buddhist wisdom, we usually exhibit three characteristic

habitual responses to all of our experiences:

1. **We want it.** Ever passed by a hamburger place when you were hungry? Yeah. That.
2. **We reject it.** Did a spider ever land on your hand? You probably instantly threw it off.
3. **We zone out.** I bet you always listen to the flight attendant's safety instructions all the way to the end too. Yeah, right.

But once you start meditating, you'll be able to choose a fourth alternative: **Observing, without judging.**

It usually starts with physical pain, and you notice when your legs are sore or your nose itches, but you can resist the urge to scratch it and just let it be. But after a while, this transfers to your emotions and thoughts as well. You'll catch yourself while gossiping, acting out on a bad habit, or when you're thinking negative thoughts – and can just observe your feelings until they pass by, without reacting to them.

It's this little pause between thinking and acting that makes you realize often no action is necessary and thus helps you make better choices altogether.

## My personal take-aways

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I'm skeptic about meditation. If you are too, this book is perfect for you. It does away with all the mumbo-jumbo flower power hippie stuff and takes a purely scientific, down-to-earth approach to mindfulness.

I like that this book spends more time on convincing you to give it a try, than it does on explaining the process, because it's really simple: sit and focus on your breath. If your thoughts wander off, bring them back. That's all there is to it. *10% Happier* explains that and then focuses on the benefits, which are much more important for beginners than nailing the technique.

It takes a lot of guts to write a book about one of your most embarrassing moments in life – Dan's boldness sure paid off!

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

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[Learn more about the author](#)

## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- A way to describe the ego everybody understands (even if you have no idea who Sigmund Freud is)
- What Harvard found out about people who meditate when they put them into an MRI
- How meditation reduces toxic chemicals in your body
- Which diseases meditation can help prevent (it's actually a whole lot of them!)
- The 4-step process to accept negative emotions and remove yourself from them

## Who would I recommend the 10% Happier summary to?

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The 15 year old, who often gets angry at her classmates, the 32 year old with a demanding and stressful career in a competitive environment, like journalism, and anyone who thinks meditation is hocus-pocus.