

Superbetter Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/superbetter-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *SuperBetter not only breaks down the science behind games and how they help us become physically, emotionally, mentally and socially stronger, but also gives you a 7-step system you can use to turn your own life into a game, have more fun than ever before and overcome your biggest challenges.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Way back in 2012, I was really into watching TED talks. One I remember a lot clearer than most others I've watched, was Jane McGonigal's, which was already her second talk on how games can change our life for the better.

SuperBetter is the game Jane designed for herself when she was recovering from a brain injury and had to lie perfectly still for weeks and weeks. Based on her experience in game design and scientific research, she created an avatar, power-ups, bad guys, and went on quests every single day, to take the illness as a challenge and make it fun.

Note: Jane's sister, Kelly McGonigal, is just as popular, and has written the very popular (and even related) book *The Willpower Instinct*.

After playing the game herself, spreading the word about it and turning it into an app, she's now also condensed all of her knowledge into a book.

Here are 3 valuable gaming lessons you can learn from it:

1. Gamifying your life works because of post-traumatic and post-ecstatic growth.
2. Video games can make you feel less pain.
3. Whether games have a positive or negative impact on your life is up to why you play in the

first place.

Ready to become Super Mario (or Princess Peach)? Let's a go *does Super Mario voice*!

Lesson 1: Gamifying your life works because of post-traumatic and post-ecstatic growth.

SuperBetter was the result of Jane fighting a severe concussion that would not heal. Since she didn't just want to get better, but be even better than before, she came up with the name SuperBetter – simple, right?

Jane the Concussion Slayer (her alter ego in the game) battled bad guys (like bright lights), collected power-ups (like walking around the block) and eventually, landed an epic win by making a full recovery.

The underlying phenomenon Jane relied upon was *post-traumatic growth*. It's when we take a crisis, catastrophe or big adversity in our life, and turn it into a stepping stone to becoming better, take it as a challenge, and find benefits in it.

This often happens to car crash victims, who find themselves appreciating life a lot more after the crash, or cancer survivors, who start running marathons once they recover.

However, you don't need to run your car into the next tree, in order to play a round of SuperBetter. There's another form of growth that doesn't require trauma, called *post-ecstatic growth*.

This is the kind of growth that occurs after running a marathon or when you manage to quit smoking, and it's just as powerful.

SuperBetter can help you achieve both kinds of growth, and the best part is you can design your game entirely yourself.

Lesson 2: You can use video games to reduce physical pain.

Think video games are all about fun?

Nope!

In a study, patients with severe burns, who had to endure painful treatments, got to play a game called *SnowWorld* during the procedure – the recorded brain scans showed they felt less pain, because they were giving their attention to the game.

In a similar study, people who played 10 minutes of Tetris within 6 hours after a traumatic event, like a car crash, instantly experienced a lot less involuntary flashbacks where scenes from the crash kept popping up inside their head.

Remarkable, right?

This reduction in physical pain comes from 2 things:

1. Playing a video game **shifts our attention spotlight**, and allows us to react less to the signal of pain.
2. The activity of playing **engages us in a state called flow**, where we're so engaged and absorbed in the activity that we feel in perfect control of our lives.

In this way we give our attention to a positive activity, which also makes us feel in charge. This gives us the confidence to endure the pain and our body adapts.

Lesson 3: Whether games have a positive or negative impact on your life is up to why you play in the first place.

Of course we all know that one weirdo, who spends all his time in his basement, playing video games, and has zero friends.

But that's his fault!

Whether you let games make your life better or worse is really up to you – **why do you play games in the first place?**

In the above case games have **a self-suppressive effect**, they're a way to escape from the problems of real life, and the immersion in the game leads to avoiding those problems.

But when you play with a positive goal, **gaming becomes self-expansive**, you're more confident to express who you really are and become happier.

The patients who play *SnowWorld*, for example, are of course avoiding the pain while they're playing, but they're also empowering themselves to face their treatment.

No matter which side you start out on, you can always make the switch to self-expansive gaming, for example by starting to play with friends.

SuperBetter Review

After I listened to the talk in 2012, I downloaded the app and played for a while, but eventually stopped doing so. Looking back, I think it was because of 2 reasons:

1. I didn't have a concrete goal that I set for myself and worked towards.
2. Coach.me came along (as Lift back then) and I started tracking all of my habits there.

I'd love to pick a game of *SuperBetter* back up again, I'll have to talk to my girlfriend about playing together. Jane is wonderful, and her research will open your eyes about games and show you a way you've never looked at them before.

I haven't read the entire book yet, but had to snatch up the summary as soon as I saw it in the "Recently blinked" section. It's quite long and details all 7 steps of designing a game of SuperBetter for yourself, so go for it. Throw in her other book and 2 TED talks, and you have a solid gamifying strategy!

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- The 4 types of resilience playing games will boost
- Examples of activities that aren't flow activities like games and don't count towards the positive effects
- What happens when 2 people play games in the same room
- What happens when they don't
- How a video game helps cancer patients survive
- More cognitive effects video games have
- The difference between a threat and a challenge mindset and how to go from one to the other
- All 7 steps of designing your own game of SuperBetter

Who would I recommend the Superbetter summary to?

The 18 year old, who had to suffer a traumatic experience early in her life, the 35 year old, who plays a lot of video games, but feels guilty about it being "a waste of time", and anyone who loves Tetris.