

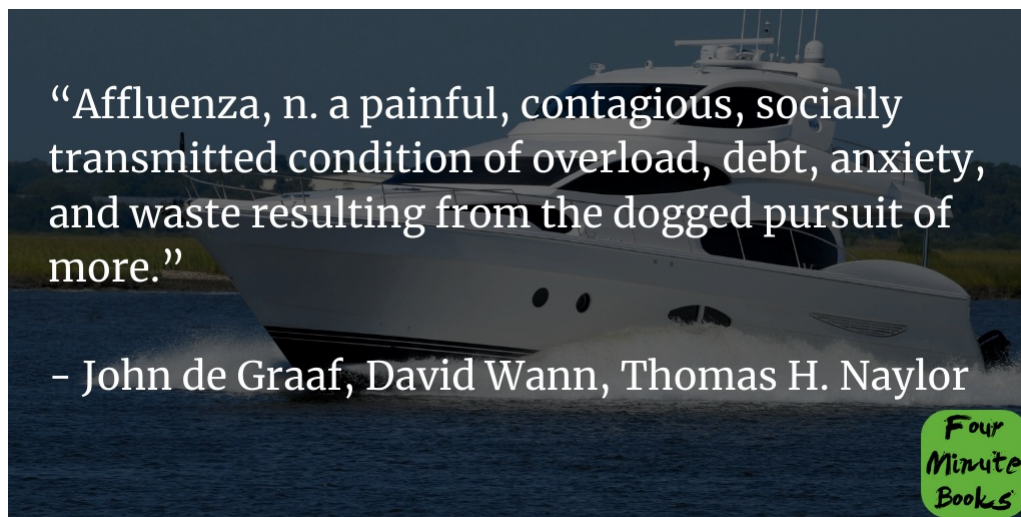
Affluenza Summary



1-Sentence-Summary: *Affluenza* asserts that the reason we are so unhappy is because of our obsession with consumption and the sickness that it brings upon ourselves and the world around us as well.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



When was the last time you bought something? Probably today, or at least in the last couple of days. But here's a better question: when was the last time you bought something you didn't *really* need? Let's face it, most of us buy non-essential items fairly regularly. In fact, the average American spends about \$18,000 a year on nonessentials. Ouch.

Why do we spend so much on stuff that doesn't really matter? Probably because we have a false notion that it will make us happier. But in truth, our addiction to consumption is ruining our relationships and sending us into debt. And it's ruining our planet.

Authors John De Graaf, David Wann, and Thomas H. Naylor introduce us to what they call "affluenza" in their book, *Affluenza: How Overconsumption is Killing Us—and How to Fight Back*. Treating it as a deliberately spread disease, they explain the symptoms, the origin, and the treatment. We might feel a temporary high when we purchase more stuff. But the accumulation of stuff only gets in the way of what really matters. This book will help you overcome the ever-powerful Urge to Splurge and start living your best life with the people you love.

Here are the 3 most interesting lessons about this viral disease:

1. We purchase more stuff to try to make up for the unhappiness we feel, but this only makes our misery worse.
2. Your life will be happier if you buy less.
3. To vaccinate yourself against the affluenza virus, educate yourself about the media and work to undermine its influence on you.

Get ready to get the vaccination for the affluenza virus! Let's begin!

Lesson 1: **If you think you need the latest version of the iPhone to be happy, you're trying to cover your misery but you're only making it worse.**

Have you ever been really excited about getting the brand new version of a smartphone? When you buy it and open it, it can feel exhilarating. But after a couple days with the new phone, it's no longer exciting because the novelty has worn off. This is just one example of how buying things only created a momentary satisfaction, but it will never make us happy.

In fact, the more stuff we buy, the less happy we tend to be. Why? **Because the more stuff we consume, the harder we have to work to keep up with our consumption.** This leaves us with less time to do the things that actually make us happy, like spending time with family or friends.

With the rise of the industrial revolution, productivity increased dramatically. In 1965, the US Senate predicted that by 2000, the average working week would be 14-22 hours. But instead, most of us work long hours so we can keep up with ever-increasing spending habits.

No wonder we're too busy to spend time with our kids. Most parents now spend the majority of the precious time they do have with their kids flopping down on the couch and watching TV with them.

Couples are spending less time socializing with each other. The author calls this cocooning. We compensate for our unhappiness by buying things because we don't have the time to build meaningful relationships. But we all know there is no way to buy happiness. The only way to break this vicious cycle is to seek out what we really need: connections with the people around us and with nature.

Lesson 2: **Buying less stuff will make you happier.**

So how can we fight this plague? The first is coming clean with yourself. Come to terms with the fact that buying things will never make you happy while buying less actually can. Science has actually proved this. A 1995 survey found that 86 percent of people who voluntarily cut

their consumption down reported being happier.

The author suggests buying less and trying to get more out of what you do have. **Young professionals in Seattle have actually opted to live in tiny apartments, nicknamed “apodments” so they can fight cocooning.** Because they’re so small, it forces them to get out and be social and to be in nature.

Living in this day and age of technology isn’t all bad. It allows us to more easily connect with others. Support from others who struggle with over-consumption can be the key to solving the issue. Online, it can be easy to find others who struggle with affluenza and want to live a more minimalist lifestyle.

In Cecile Andrews’ book, *The Circle of Simplicity*, she talks about how anyone can create study groups of people who want to help each other learn how to live well on a lower income. Finding connections like this is a fantastic way to fight affluenza and connect with others, which will make you happier.

Lesson 3: Education about media tactics and undermining its influence on you are the immunization against the affluenza virus.

The next step to ridding yourself of affluenza is understanding media tactics and finding a way to become immune to these tactics. Everywhere we look, whether it’s billboards, magazines, or anywhere on the internet, we are exposed to advertising that compels us to buy more and more, even if we don’t need it.

A suggestion the author gives to fight affluenza is to use anti-ads. These are the exact opposite of an advertisement and causes viewers to really think about what they’ve seen, rather than mindlessly consume.

An example of an anti-ad is one where two cowboys similar in resemblance to the Marlboro Man are riding horses into the sunset and below there is a caption reading, “I miss my lung, Bob.”

Schools are starting to recognize the amount of media consumption children are taking part in. They spend an average of 40 minutes a week outside but now spend somewhere around 50 hours a week with electronic media.

In response, some schools have started to teach kids to analyze media, an effort called “media literacy.” This is a way to teach kids that they should analyze and question advertisements they see, and arguably this is starting to be just as important as literacy itself.

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Affluenza Review

While I really like the message that *Affluenza* teaches, there was definitely a little bit of a political agenda in it. But the idea that we can all live happier if we consume less is amazing. I've found it to be true for myself and I'm certain you will too!

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Who would I recommend the *Affluenza* summary to?

The 23-year-old who thinks that having the latest version of the iPhone will make them happy, the 45-year-old parent that wants to find simple ways to make their children have better lives, and anyone that wants to increase their pleasure in the simple joys of life.