

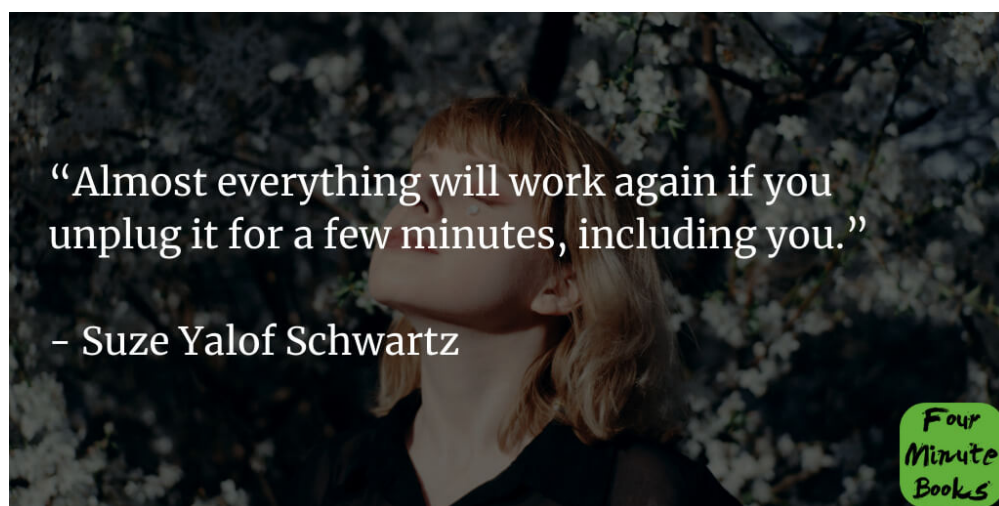
Unplug Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Unplug* is your guide to utilizing meditation to enhance your brain, deal with stress, and become happier, explaining the basics of this practice, how to get started with it, and what science has to teach about its many benefits.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



A couple of years ago a coworker was telling me about this new app he'd found for meditating. At first, I was thinking "what are you, a monk?"

Thankfully I got past my initial hesitation and decided to try it out. These days I don't know what I would do if it weren't for the breathing techniques I've committed to memory that help me calm down, focus, unwind, and much more.

Although meditation has had some strange ideas attached to it in the past, it's becoming much more mainstream. That means it's pretty easy to pick up an app like Headspace and learn how to do it yourself.

But what's not easy is remembering the dramatic benefits mindfulness has on your brain and health. Not to mention how hard it can be to quiet your mind when it's time to sit down and do it!

These reasons and more are why you're going to enjoy Suze Yalof Schwartz's *Unplug: A Simple Guide to Meditation for Busy Skeptics and Modern Soul Seekers*.

Here are 3 of the most helpful lessons about using mindfulness to unplug:

1. If you meditate you will become smarter and happier.
2. Mantras are just one of the six steps to a successful mindfulness practice.
3. Use visualization to overcome negative thoughts.

Let's learn how to meditate to find out how to destress and strengthen our brains!

Lesson 1: If you want to become smarter and happier, you need to start meditating.

When I was younger I remember adults telling me that your brain is unchangeable after about age 25. I've since learned that this is not true. You can actually mold your brain however you like, no matter your age.

The only trick is learning the right techniques and using tools like meditation to intentionally shape it instead of letting the world do it for you.

Two studies by Sara Lazar, a neurologist at Harvard, prove this point. Both studies compared the brains of people who meditate and those who don't.

The results of her experiments showed that people who practice mindfulness regularly have more gray matter in their frontal cortex. This is the part of your brain that controls decision-making and memory.

What's more, while the frontal cortex usually gets smaller as people age, this isn't the case for people who meditate regularly.

In one of Lazar's studies, participants that had never practiced mindfulness tried it for eight weeks straight for 30-40 minutes each day. Afterward, their brains had grown. They performed better on tasks related to concentration, learning, memory, and emotion. And they were happier, too!

Lazar's research also discovered that the parts of the brain responsible for fear and anxiety become smaller through meditation.

And if this isn't enough to motivate you to try meditation out yourself, other research confirms that this practice will reduce your stress levels!

Lesson 2: Begin your mindfulness practice with these six steps.

Now that you know the science behind what meditation can do for your brain, it's time to learn how to actually do it. To make it easier, the author has broken it down into six simple steps:

1. **Pick something to focus on.** Your breath is a common one because you take it with you everywhere you go. But you can also use an object or even a mantra, which we'll talk more about in a moment.
2. **Get into the rhythm so that you're not focusing on anything at all.**
3. Recognize the period of time where you're free of thoughts and can relax in a feeling of peace.
4. **Let thoughts enter this headspace you've created, but don't follow them.**
5. **Recognize the thought**, let it pass, and return to your initial point of concentration.
6. **Repeat** steps two through six for the rest of your meditation session.

Let's talk about a way to make this process a little easier on you. If you're struggling to focus on your breath, a mantra is especially helpful. This is a phrase or word you repeat in your mind that you can let follow the rhythm of your breath.

Try to come up with mantras that you can think of the first syllable on the in breath and the second on the out breath. Here are some ideas to help you start:

- In: Ah, out: hum (Ah-hum)
- In: So, out: hum (So-hum)
- In: I, out: am, in: ha-, out: -ppy (I-am, Ha-ppy)

Lesson 3: You can combine meditation with visualization to beat negative thinking.

Does it seem like the worrying or sad thoughts you have are like a weight that you just can't shake off? Can you imagine how free you would feel if you could finally get rid of them and let that heaviness go?

Although this sounds nice, we'd be foolish to think that getting rid of unwanted ideas is easy. At least we have meditation to give us some help in redirecting our thoughts though!

It's almost impossible to halt your thinking altogether when you begin to get anxious or depressed. **That's why one of the best tools that a mindfulness practice will give you is the ability to let those thoughts come and go without connecting with them.**

You don't have to get down when a depressing thought enters your mind. All it takes to let it go is redirecting yourself to your focus point. The idea isn't to eliminate thoughts, but instead to not get caught up in them.

This is where visualization comes in as a powerful tool to help you see your thoughts accurately. Imagine, for instance, that each thought is like a leaf that's floating down a river. You don't have to catch it or examine it. Just let it pass by with the current.

Remember that you don't have to engage with your thoughts to benefit from acknowledging them and examining them for what they really are. Taking this approach can lead to a healthier mind as you start to understand yourself better!

Unplug Review

Woah, I really liked this book! *Unplug* gives all the basics and some of the more advanced tips of meditation, including the science of the potential this practice has to boost your brainpower. I've given meditation a chance and it's changed my life, and I hope that you will try it out too after reading this summary!

Who would I recommend the Unplug summary to?

The 62-year-old that's been worried about all the bad news in the world and is skeptical of meditation, the 42-year-old father that's just lost his job and is struggling to deal with stress, and anyone who wants a quick guide to unlocking the full potential of their brain through mindfulness.