

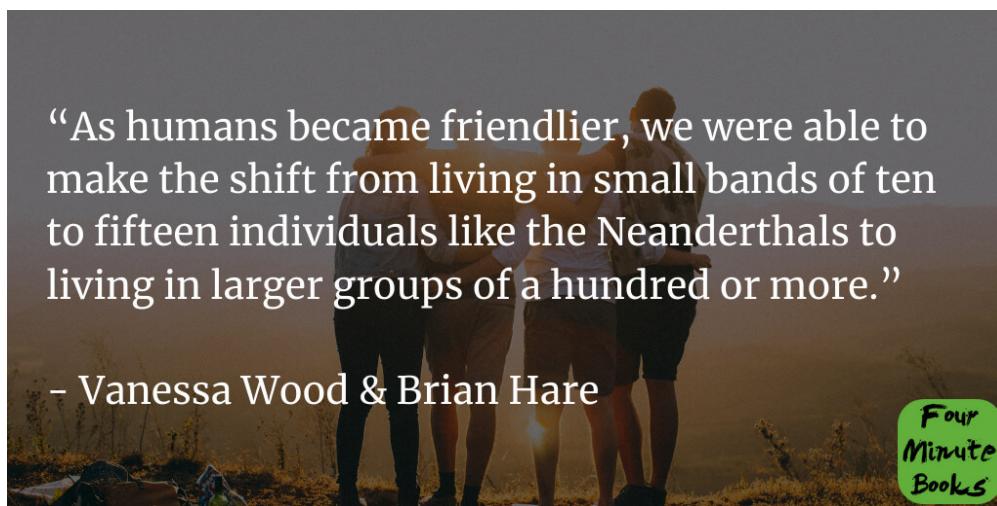
# Survival Of The Friendliest Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Survival Of The Friendliest* explains why the #1 thing you can do for success is to focus on your social connections, how friendliness was the reason that our early ancestors survived as well as they did, and what you can do today to grow your social capital.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Maybe you’ve heard the phrase “survival of the fittest” before. It is a term from the Darwinian concept of evolution basically meaning that only the toughest, most cut-throat organisms will survive while the weaker ones will die off. It makes sense that the species that are best suited to their environment will be the ones to pass on their genes.

However, scientists Vanessa Wood and Brian Hare have an entirely different idea when it comes to the evolution of humankind. Their theory is that among humans, it is actually the *friendliest* that survive. In their book, *Survival of the Friendliest: Understanding Our Origins and Rediscovering Our Common Humanity*, Wood and Hare take a scientific look at human sociability.

You will be surprised to find that our being social is actually an evolutionary trait that we’ve kept to survive. Evolutionary science tends to emphasize aggression and strength. But in truth, it was our ability to work together that ensured our survival.

Let’s see how much we can discover in just 3 lessons:

1. Early homo sapiens developed cognitive abilities to help themselves cooperate, and we still use these skills today.

2. The more friendly we are, the better we can communicate, and the greater our chances of survival.
3. Kindness is a trait that human evolution chose to win out above others.

Are you ready to see why compassion will give you the upper hand? Here we go!

## **Lesson 1: Cooperation among our early ancestors would have been much harder were it not for the cognitive abilities they developed.**

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One of the greatest achievements of the human species is our ability to understand that others have intentions and knowledge separate from our own. **It may seem simple and obvious that other people can think for themselves. But this is a sophisticated concept only we humans have that has come through our evolution to help us communicate.**

You can test this concept with a baby around nine months of age. If you hide a treat under one of two cups and give them hints by gesturing to the correct cup, they will find it. This is just the beginning of their understanding that others have knowledge outside of their own.

If you try playing the game with a chimpanzee, you will become frustrated because they will not understand the concept you know something they don't. Maybe eventually they will learn through repetition what you pointing at the cup means, but change the gesture, and you'll be back to square one.

Dogs fare a bit better in this game. They seem to instinctively follow our gestures. The authors say this is likely because they have been domesticated for so long and the ones who cooperated well with humans had the evolutionary advantage.

## **Lesson 2: Our survival chances skyrocket when we can communicate well, which is dependent on our friendliness.**

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In 1959, geneticist Dmitry Bylaev conducted a long-running experiment in a far-off town in Siberia. His experiment involved domesticating wild foxes. He let foxes with ample affinity with humans breed, while others couldn't reproduce. Over time, the friendlier group of foxes developed a whole new set of characteristics while the wild ones remained the same.

The friendlier foxes have softer fur, shorter snouts, and floppier ears. Even their teeth are less sharp. In a lot of ways, they resemble other domesticated animals like dogs. None of these traits were selected for, but are side effects of the selection for friendliness.

But the difference isn't just physical. The friendlier foxes actually possess greater mental ability and communication skills. They are able to communicate with humans much better. Wild foxes who are presented with the cup game fail half or more of the time, while

domesticated ones follow human gestures. Impressively, their ability to follow gestures is even found in their offspring who were raised by the control group.

This research highlights the fact that sociability and communication skills are genetically linked. **If evolutionary pressure selects for one of these traits, the other improves also.** This is seen in many other domesticated animals.

### **Lesson 3: Evolution has chosen kindness to prevail because it leads to prosperity.**

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Have you ever chosen a specific person to ask for directions simply because they seemed friendly? Maybe they had kind eyes or a smile that made them seem trustworthy. In fact, looking around you will probably see many faces that appear friendly. Why is this?

Like the foxes, human faces evolved as we became friendlier. Evolutionary changes in contours and dimensions of the human face correspond with changes in our minds.

Around 50,000 years ago, we weren't the only humanoid species. There were at least five others. Eventually, we won out. The authors believe it was our social skills that helped us win out over the other species. **Our ability to get along better than other species and form tight-knit communities where technology could be collaborated and shared allowed for our survival.**

Facial features like strong brows and jawlines mean higher levels of testosterone, the hormone responsible for aggression. Fossil records show that as we became more successful and sociable, our brows and jawlines shrunk.

Another modern evolutionary sign of the selection of friendliness in humans today is that the white of our eyes is visible. If you look at a chimp's eyes, you will only see the pigmentation. Modern human eyes have a white area called sclerae that help us determine if someone is making eye contact with us.

### **Survival Of The Friendliest Review**

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I can never get enough of books that speak highly of being awesome to people, and now I have proof that it's an evolutionary advantage! *Survival Of The Friendliest* is interesting, informative, and encouraging. I wish everybody could read this book to see why kindness wins above everything.

### **Who would I recommend the Survival Of The Friendliest summary to?**

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The 45-year-old introvert that wants a reason to get out and meet people, the 22-year-old that loves learning about evolutionary psychology, and anyone who mistakenly thinks that they can get far in life by being mean.