

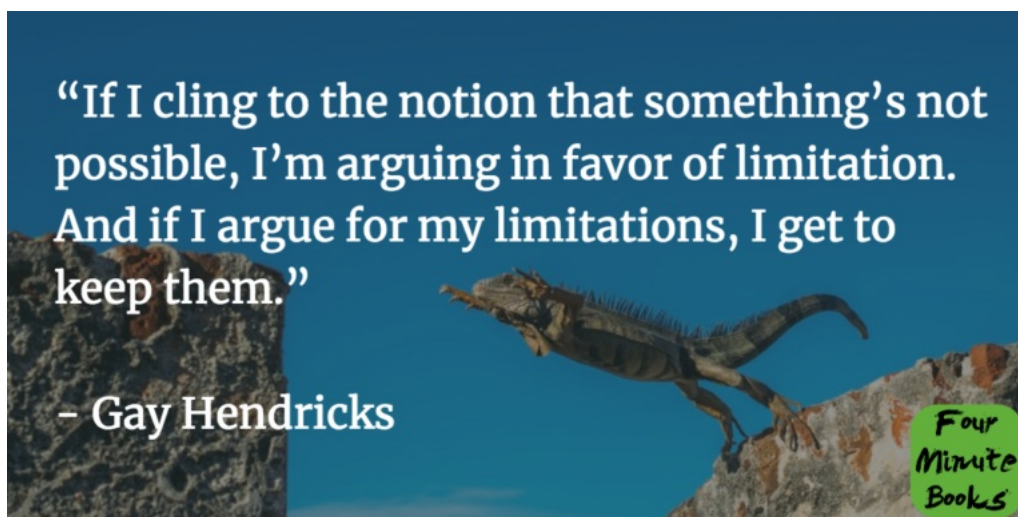
# The Big Leap Summary

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**1-Sentence-Summary:** *The Big Leap* is about changing your overall perspective, so you can embrace a philosophy that'll help you achieve your full potential in work, relationships, finance, and all other walks of life.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Two years ago I was in the middle of a massive email list campaign, trying to reach 10,000 subscribers from ground zero. About five months into the project, multiple efforts started to kick in simultaneously and, suddenly, I was on an exponential growth curve.

Having piled up a few successes, I was floored when I found out I would be featured to over 100,000 people on another newsletter. It almost felt too good to be true. So, sure enough, I sent an incredibly stupid, unreflected email and blew it all. Boom. Right back to the slow, painstaking pace I was on before.

I've always wondered why I did that. It was completely unnecessary. However, I finally found the answer in Gay Hendricks's *The Big Leap*. Gay is a Stanford psychologist, who's co-authored over 35 books with his wife and is famous for his work in relationships and mindfulness.

This book is his most popular. It outlines a philosophy of life aimed at maximizing your potential. Here are 3 lessons from it that stuck with me:

1. We don't believe we deserve to be happy all the time, so we cap our levels of joy for no reason.
2. Fear and self-sabotage are two common ceilings we can break through with the right attitudes and exercises.
3. When it comes to work, we can be in four zones, but only one is worth shooting for.

Ready to jump out of the fish bowl and into the open sea? It's time for a big leap!

## Lesson 1: We artificially limit our happiness, because we don't think we deserve to have it all.

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In the early 19th century, engineers figured out how to use steam engines to power wheels and thus, the steam locomotive was born. First used only to transport goods and resources, people quickly discovered it'd be a great means of transport as well. However, due to the state of science at the time, early adopters suggested to never run trains at more than 30 mph, for the human bodies on board would just explode.

Yes, you read that right. Folks genuinely believed their bodies would *explode* if they went faster than 30 mph. Luckily, some "madman" decided to go 31 anyway and here we are, driving cars that exceed 280 mph. What's the lesson here? **How much is possible is often limited only by how much we try.**

A similar story is the one of Roger Bannister breaking the 4-minute mile. It was believed to be physically impossible before, but once he did it, others quickly followed. In the same vein, how often we're happy and how long that happiness lasts doesn't need to be defined by what we think is "normal."

In *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt explained that we all have a biological happiness set point to which we tend to regress, but he too believes we can raise that baseline. Ask yourself: how much of your unhappiness comes from your belief that it "has to be there?"

## Lesson 2: Two common upper limits are fear and self-sabotage.

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So, why did I blow my relationship with the people who wanted to promote the heck out of me? I sabotaged myself. That's it. Since we have this subconscious idea of how much happiness we deserve, we tend to ruin ourselves for no apparent reason, if things start going too well for us. Hendricks calls this **an upper limit mindset, as a result of which we create fake drama and unnecessary problems.**

Often, we do this in another area of life, say, love, if you're doing well financially. However, this is usually a sign of you letting your guard down and then making a careless mistake, rather than actually screwing up without meaning to. So if you're on a winning streak, just make sure you keep your ego in check. Don't get cocky and you'll be fine.

Another common upper limit is fear. There's a long, famous quote by Marianne Williamson that our worst fear is not that of failure, but "that we are powerful beyond measure." It makes sense. If you knew and accepted that you have all you need to live up to your potential, that leaves you with no excuse not to.

Since fear isn't something you can rid yourself of completely, Hendricks suggests "breathing into it," quoting German psychotherapist Fritz Perls, who said that "fear is excitement without the breath." Usually our breath gets shorter when we're scared. To counteract this, you can take back control by breathing slowly and deeply. If you're about to give a presentation, for example, this'll help you turn stress into energy and deliver a great talk.

## Lesson 3: There are four zones of work and the Zone of Genius is where we should strive to be.

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Transferring this idea of lasting happiness to your career, Hendricks claims work shouldn't really feel like work. You want time to flow by for a few hours and emerge inspired, ready to pick up where you left off the next day. To achieve this, you need to work in what Hendricks calls your Zone of Genius. It's one of four different stages of work:

1. **Zone of Incompetence.** You suck at the task. Many people can do it better than you.
2. **Zone of Competence.** You're alright, but lots of others cope better.
3. **Zone of Excellence.** You're highly skilled and few can hold a candle to you.
4. **Zone of Genius.** You're literally the best in the world at it.

This might sound like a tall order, but remember the first lesson: you can never know what you can pull off if you don't try. Also keep in mind that you can pick a very narrow field and only serve a small group of people, and the definition will still hold.

So, what are you waiting for? If you're not going to choose yourself, who will? It's time to take a leap!

## The Big Leap Review

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This book is more on the motivational side, but it does hold practical exercises as well. If you're stuck on making a big decision or are fed up with your own perspective on life, *The Big Leap* is a good read to pick up.

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- Which Stoic question can help you deal with another upper limit
- Why one of Hendricks's billionaire clients was deeply unhappy
- What the author's personal success mantra is
- How you can use the Enlightened No to stay on track

- A time management technique that's based on dealing with problems

## **Who would I recommend The Big Leap summary to?**

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The 17 year old with plenty of spare time to figure out her career trajectory, if only she tries, the 52 year old, who's bottled up marriage issues for over a decade now, and anyone who regularly struggles with impostor syndrome.