

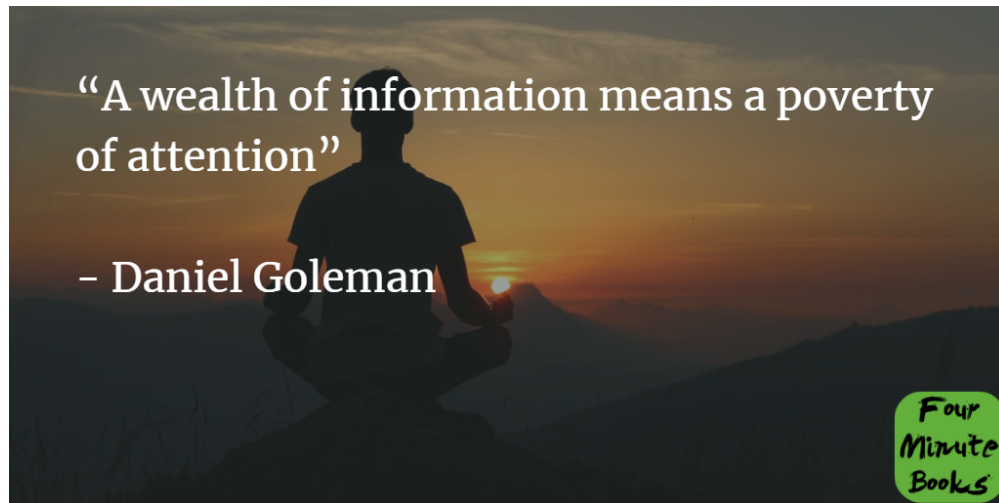
Altered Traits Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *Altered Traits explores the science behind meditation techniques and the way they benefit and alter our mind and body.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Meditation is the act of silently calming and focusing our minds for relaxation. It has been shown to reduce stress, get anxiety under control, promote emotional health and self-awareness, improve sleep, fight addictions, lower blood pressure, control pain, and even increase lifespan. If this isn't enough to convince you that you need to start meditating *now*, I don't know what is. The best part is, it's easy, it can benefit anyone, and you can do it anywhere.

Authors Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson want to help you get past the negative associations you may have about meditation and start using it to improve your life. In *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body*, they share their decades of cutting-edge research on meditation. They'll not only share the benefits but also how we can get the most out of it. This book will also help you forget the misconceptions by sharing the surprising way that meditation leads to changes in personality traits.

These are the 3 most interesting lessons this book taught me:

1. If you want to improve your mental ability and focus, stop multitasking and start meditating.
2. Meditation will stop your brain from going into "default mode" when you aren't doing anything.
3. You get increasing benefits the more frequently you meditate.

Are you ready to improve your life in lasting ways by learning to meditate? Let's get started!

Lesson 1: Meditation helps to improve concentration and mental performance while multitasking exhausts your brain.

Multitasking is something we are constantly doing in the world today. Many people even take pride in juggling responsibilities each moment and try to get better at it.

In 2009, a scientist at Stanford ran a study on multitasking. He found that, contrary to popular belief, the brain is *incapable* of multitasking. Instead, when we attempt to multitask, our brain has to work much harder by switching between multiple tasks quickly. This shifting means we lose concentration and have to take more time to refocus on the original task. He also found that people that often multitask more easily fall prey to distraction, and they have to use more of their brain to concentrate.

Do you want a great replacement for all that multitasking? The effects of meditation are even better for those who tend to multitask frequently. In a 2016 experiment, psychologists had one group meditate for 10 minutes, and another browse the internet for 10 minutes before they both took a concentration test. During the exam, meditators performed better, and the improvement was most significant for those who regularly multitasked.

As for long-term effects of meditation, a 2013 study found students who learned and practiced meditation for two weeks before a graduate school entrance exam improved their scores by up to 30 percent. They also experienced reduced distraction after meditating. Next time you are tempted to multitask to get more done, try meditation instead, you'll probably get more done, and your brain won't feel so exhausted.

Lesson 2: “Default mode” isn’t good for your brain, and meditation will help you turn it off.

When we're lying on the couch after a long day at work to rest, we'd like to think we're giving our mind a break. But in reality, we're not.

When we're doing nothing, parts of our brain are highly active. Though your brain is only a small percentage of your body in mass, it takes up 20 percent of your energy to run. Whether we're solving a calculus problem or sitting in a hammock outside, we're using the same proportion of energy. This is because even if you're not doing anything, your brain stays active in what is known as “default mode.”

When we're in default mode, our mind wanders, which is correlated with unhappiness. Our unoccupied brain tends to look back on past mistakes and anxieties and dwell on them. It's not good for your brain to always go to default, and this is where meditation will help you. A study found those that the areas of the brain that run full-time in default mode were “relatively deactivated” in people who were experienced meditators. We are just starting to discover that regular meditation can even change the pathways in the brain.

Lesson 3: More meditation means more benefits for you.

Okay so maybe you don't have time to sit in on a mountain top for weeks at a time in solace. But

the studies on meditation, none of them have long-lasting benefits without continued practice.

So consistency is key. But evidence shows more you practice, the more you'll get out of it because meditation changes the way the brain works.

After practicing for thousands of hours, your body will be less responsive to stress triggers and release the stress hormone, cortisol, less. As we learned before, the more we meditate, the better concentration becomes and the less our mind wanders, which makes us unhappy. Doing compassion meditation regularly will improve empathy the more you do it, and will make you more likely to help others in need.

The science is already in: meditation can and will improve your life. All you have to do is take the time to slow down and try it out. What do you have to lose?

Altered Traits Review

Altered Traits brings a flood of legitimacy to an ancient practice that many regard as the next fad in self-improvement. The authors have studied for decades, and they bring us up-to-date studies and insights on meditation and how it can change us. I found it as fascinating as it was convincing and would definitely recommend it to any newbie who is skeptical about meditation.

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Who would I recommend the Altered Traits summary to?

The 23-year-old college student who wants to improve her focus and prepare for job interviews, your 35-year-old skeptic friend who thinks meditation is for hippies, and anyone interested in learning about what science says about meditation.