

# 10 Books That I Would Read Personally When I Feel Stressed and Demotivated

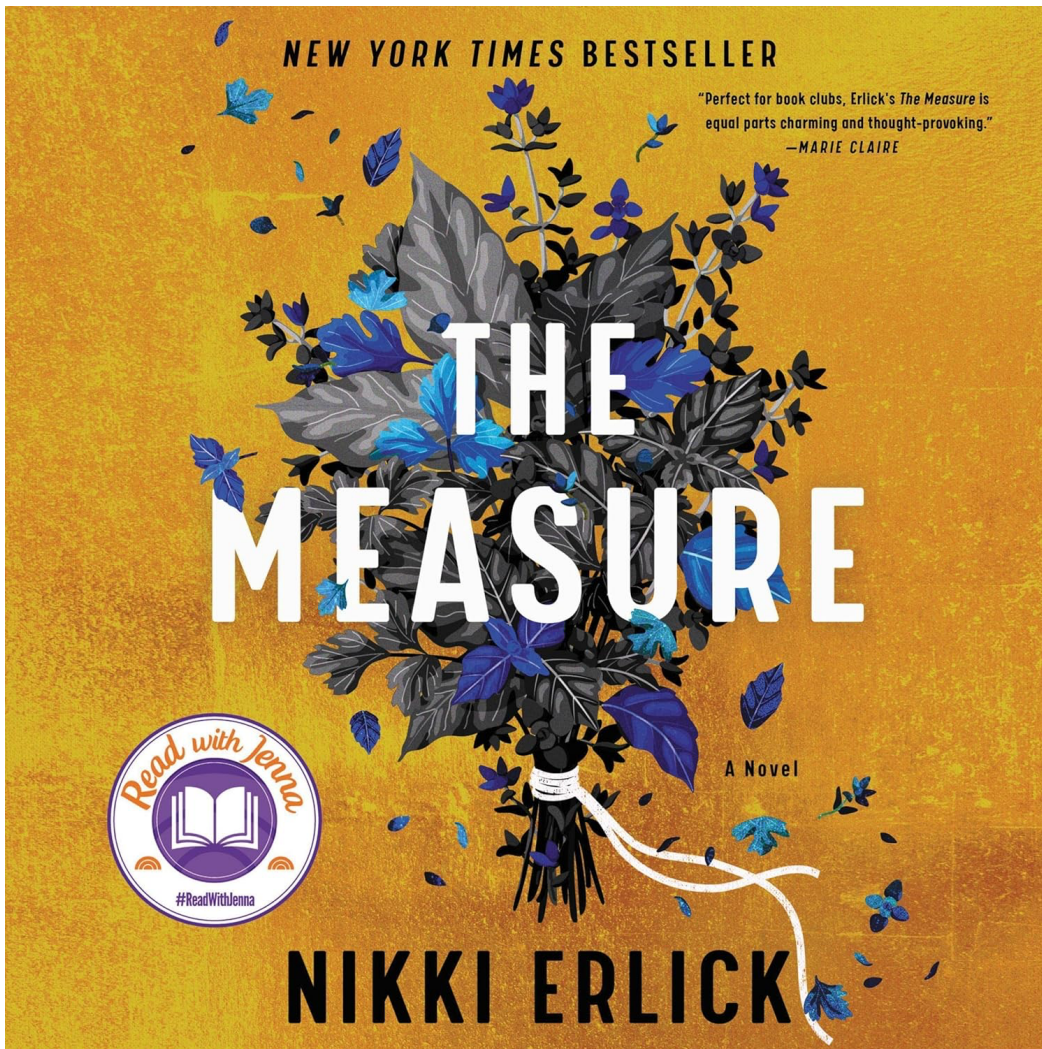


# INTRODUCTION

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I FELT COMPLETELY DRAINED BY WORK, WEIGHED DOWN BY PRESSURE, AND STUCK IN A CYCLE OF STRESS, FRUSTRATION, AND LOW MOTIVATION. I KNOW HOW IT FEELS WHEN LIFE BECOMES SO OVERWHELMING THAT EVEN SMALL THINGS SEEM HEAVY, AND YOU SLOWLY STOP FEELING LIKE YOURSELF. THAT IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS I WANTED TO GIVE THESE RESOURCES AWAY FOR FREE. I HAVE BEEN IN THAT SAME DARK AND EXHAUSTING PLACE BEFORE, AND AFTER TAKING TIME TO HEAL, REBUILD, AND REHABILITATE MYSELF, I FELT A STRONG DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS WHO MAY BE GOING THROUGH SOMETHING SIMILAR. THE BOOKS IN THIS COLLECTION ARE SOME OF MY PERSONAL FAVOURITES, AND EACH OF THEM HAS GIVEN ME PERSPECTIVE, COMFORT, OR A PUSH FORWARD WHEN I NEEDED IT MOST. MY HOPE IS THAT THIS CAN BE A GENTLE STARTING POINT FOR YOU: PERHAPS YOU BEGIN WITH THE HEALTHY HABIT OF READING, THEN TAKE ONE SMALL POSITIVE STEP, THEN ANOTHER, AND SLOWLY LET THOSE TINY CHANGES STACK UP OVER TIME. BIT BY BIT, WHAT FEELS IMPOSSIBLE TODAY CAN BECOME MANAGEABLE, AND THE VERSION OF YOU THAT FEELS GRUMPY, EXHAUSTED, AND OUT OF CONTROL CAN GRADUALLY BECOME SOMEONE CALMER, REFRESHED, AND FULLY IN CHARGE OF LIFE AGAIN.

# Book 1: The Measure

**Author:** Nikki Erlick



## Book Summary

*The Measure* presents a provocative premise: what if everyone in the world received a box containing a string that reveals exactly how long they will live? This philosophical novel follows eight interconnected characters as they navigate this extraordinary reality. Some embrace their strings as cosmic fortune cookies filled with hope, while others spiral into fear, denial, or reckless abandon. The story explores how society fractures when faced with this knowledge—creating new forms of discrimination between "long-stringers" and "short-stringers," affecting hiring decisions, relationships, and insurance policies.

Erlick masterfully examines the tension between fate and free will. While the strings dictate duration, they don't determine direction. The novel traces how institutional bias codifies quickly, how media narratives either corrode or heal the social fabric, and ultimately how

characters reclaim agency through their choices—whom they love, what they risk, and where they stand. The strings become symbols of hope, discrimination, and despair, revealing how something as simple as a piece of string can fundamentally alter human relationships and self-perception.

## Reason for Recommending

This book resonates deeply with me during stressful periods because it reframes how we think about time and meaning. When corporate pressures make every day feel like a burden, *The Measure* reminds me that the length of our lives matters far less than what we choose to do with them. The characters who thrive aren't necessarily those with long strings—they're the ones who make meaningful choices regardless of their fate.

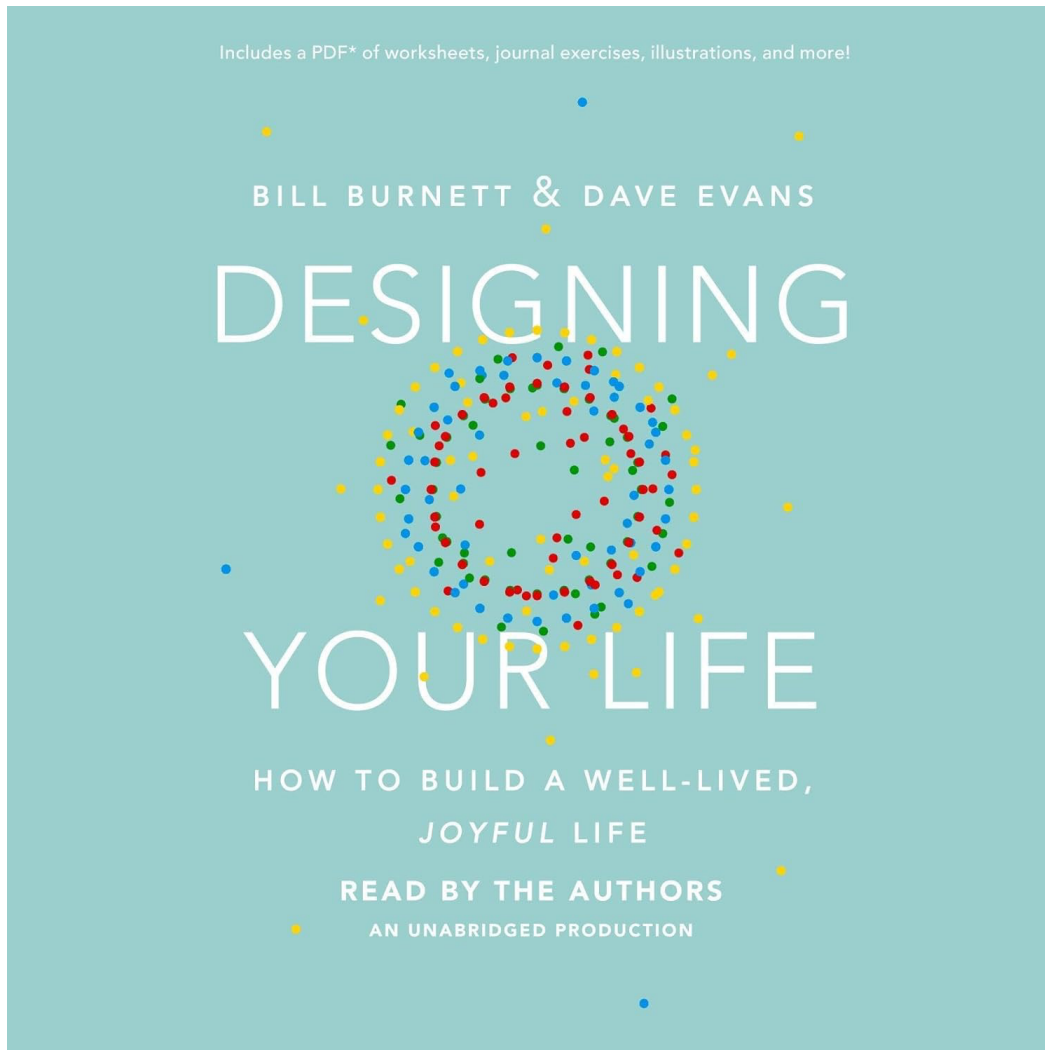
I find myself returning to this novel when overwhelmed by workplace anxiety because it provides profound perspective. Your job title, your promotion timeline, your quarterly targets—none of these define the substance of your existence. The book's message is liberating: you have agency over how you spend your days, even when circumstances feel predetermined. It's a gentle yet powerful reminder to focus on what truly matters—relationships, purpose, and authentic choices—rather than getting lost in the competitive rat race of corporate life.

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# Book 2: Designing Your Life

**Authors:** Bill Burnett and Dave Evans



## Book Summary

Written by two Stanford professors, *Designing Your Life* applies design thinking principles to the challenge of building a fulfilling career and life. The authors debunk the myth that you must "follow your passion" to be happy and successful, arguing instead that passion is often misunderstood and overrated. Many people don't have a single passion or can't translate it into a viable career. Rather than waiting for passion to strike, the book advocates focusing on what engages you and fills you with energy—what the authors call achieving "flow."

The book introduces practical frameworks for life design, including tracking your daily activities to identify what energizes versus drains you, and prototyping different life paths

through small experiments rather than making drastic changes. Burnett and Evans emphasize that engagement sits on a scale from disengagement to flow state, while energy ranges from draining to energizing. By consciously categorizing your activities and building a life around flow experiences, you can design a sustainable, fulfilling existence. The approach is systematic yet flexible, offering tools like "Odyssey Plans" to explore multiple possible futures simultaneously.

## Reason for Recommending

I turn to this book when feeling trapped in my corporate trajectory because it offers a practical escape hatch—not through reckless career abandonment, but through thoughtful experimentation and design. The concept of "prototyping" different life possibilities is particularly powerful when you're burned out but afraid to make big changes. You don't need to quit your job tomorrow; you can test small versions of alternative paths.

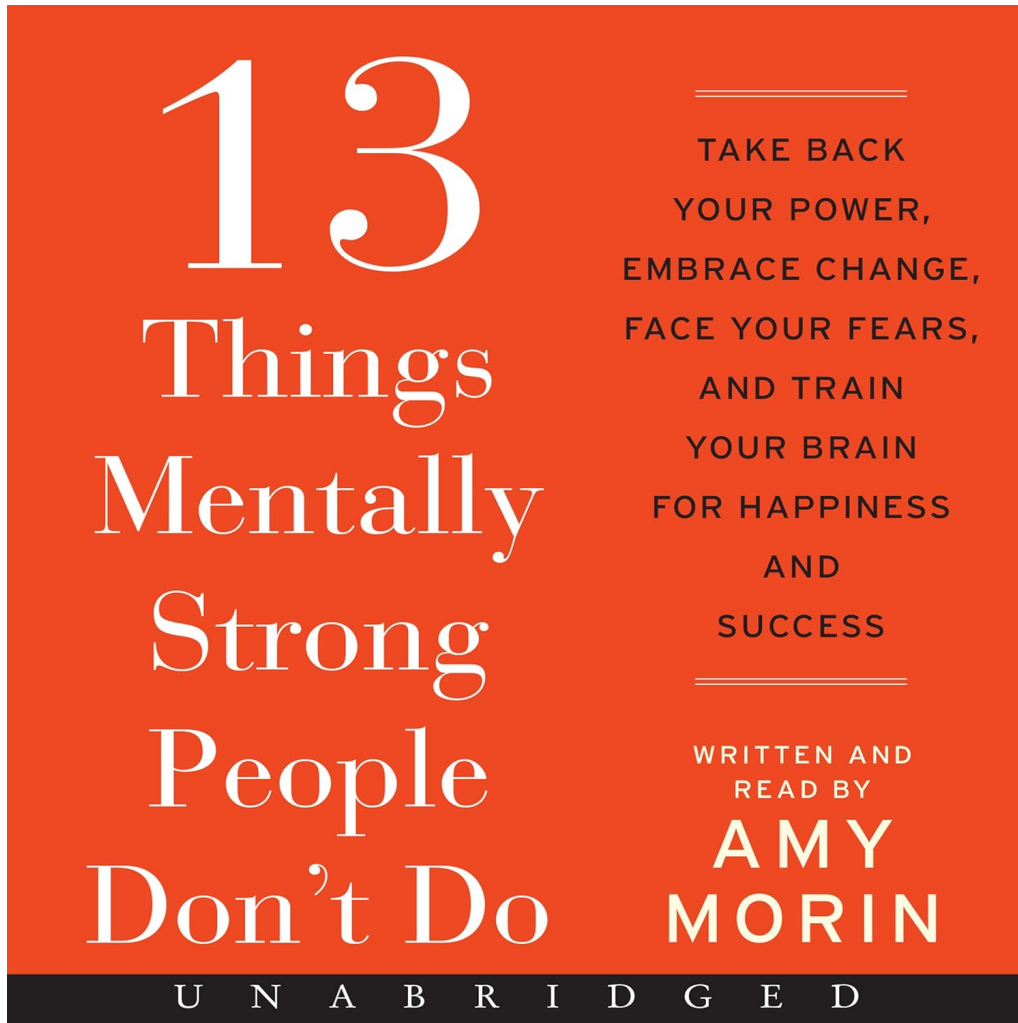
What I appreciate most is the book's rejection of the "passion" myth. When you're stressed and demotivated, people often say "just follow your passion," which feels dismissive and unhelpful when you're exhausted. This book instead says: notice what gives you energy, build from there, and use design principles to iterate toward a better life. It's actionable, compassionate, and grounded in reality. The authors understand that you can't abandon your responsibilities, but you *can* systematically redesign your life while maintaining stability. This practical wisdom makes it invaluable when you're seeking change but need to move carefully.

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# Book 3: 13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do

Author: Amy Morin



## Book Summary

Amy Morin, a psychotherapist who experienced profound personal tragedy, created a viral framework identifying thirteen destructive mental habits that undermine our resilience and success. The book goes beyond listing what mentally strong people *do*—it focuses on what they actively *avoid* doing. These include wasting time feeling sorry for yourself, giving away your power to others, shying away from change, dwelling on the past, resenting others' success, expecting immediate results, and fearing alone time.

Morin writes with searing honesty, incorporating stories from her work as a psychologist and personal anecdotes about how she bolstered her own mental strength when grief threatened to consume her. Each chapter tackles one destructive habit, explains why we fall into it, identifies the problem it creates, and provides specific exercises and troubleshooting advice for breaking

the pattern. The book emphasizes that mental strength isn't about suppressing emotions or projecting toughness—it's about recognizing unhealthy patterns and consciously choosing different responses. It takes practice and hard work, but with Morin's targeted strategies, you can fortify your mental resilience and dramatically improve your quality of life.

## **Reason for Recommending**

This book serves as my mental reset button during difficult corporate periods. When workplace stress has me spiraling into victim mentality or resentment toward colleagues who seem to advance effortlessly, Morin's framework snaps me back to reality. The focus on what *not* to do is refreshingly practical—it's often easier to stop a destructive behavior than to start a new positive one.

What makes this book particularly valuable is Morin's emphasis on personal responsibility without judgment. She doesn't shame you for struggling; she simply illuminates the mental habits that keep you stuck and provides clear paths forward. When I catch myself dwelling on a past mistake at work or feeling sorry for myself after being passed over for a project, I reference the relevant chapter and work through the exercises. The book has taught me that mental strength is a skill you build through daily practice, not an innate quality you either have or lack. During demotivating periods, this message is essential—you're not broken, you just need better mental habits.

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## **Books May Comfort You. Reclaim Helps You Rebuild.**

Books can expand your perspective and remind you of what is possible.

But real change often asks for more than a meaningful idea or a moment of inspiration.

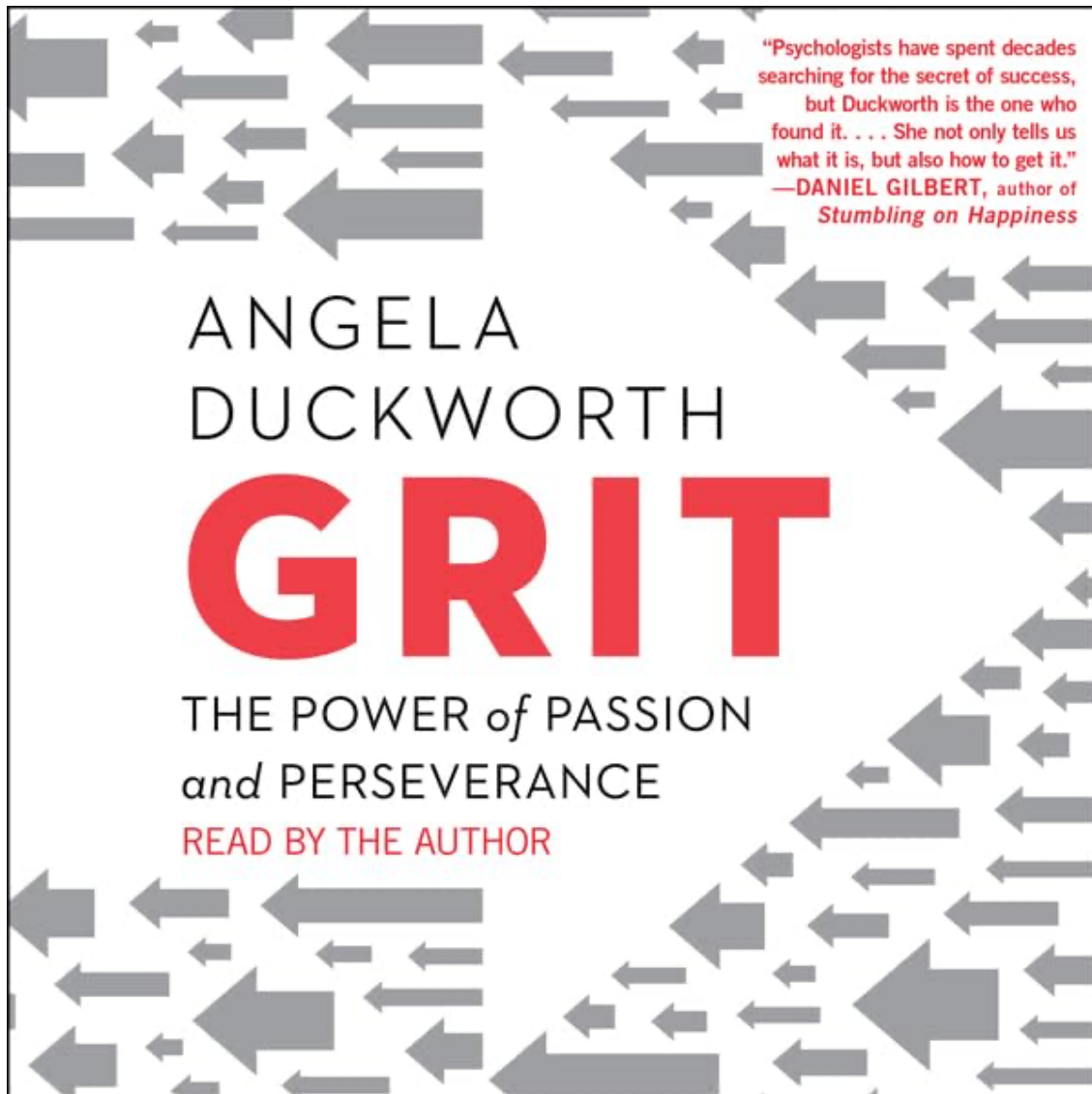
Reclaim is designed for people who are ready to go beyond reflection and into guided change, with a clearer path to reset patterns, think with more clarity, and move with purpose.

If this free reading guide spoke to where you are right now, Reclaim could be the natural next step in turning insight into lasting momentum.

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# Book 4: Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Author: Angela Duckworth



## Book Summary

Psychologist Angela Duckworth presents groundbreaking research demonstrating that talent and intelligence matter less to success than grit—a combination of sustained passion and perseverance toward long-term goals over many years. Drawing on her own journey as the daughter of a scientist who frequently questioned her intelligence, Duckworth describes her

path through teaching, business consulting, and neuroscience that led to this revolutionary hypothesis.

The book challenges our cultural bias favoring natural talent over effort, presenting evidence that effort actually counts twice: it improves talent into skill, and it turns skill into achievement. Duckworth argues that grit is not static but malleable—it can be consciously developed and taught. She explores how to identify your passion (or develop it gradually through experience), how to practice deliberately rather than mindlessly, how to cultivate purpose that connects your work to others' well-being, and how to build hope that sustains you through inevitable setbacks. The book includes Duckworth's grit assessment tool and profiles of gritty individuals from various fields, demonstrating that perseverance and passion drive lasting achievement more reliably than raw talent.

## Reason for Recommending

*Grit* became my lifeline during periods when I felt overshadowed by colleagues who seemed naturally talented or politically savvy. Duckworth's research liberated me from the belief that success belongs only to the gifted few. The formula that "talent × effort = skill" and "skill × effort = achievement" shows mathematically why effort counts twice—a revelation that fundamentally changed how I approach challenges.

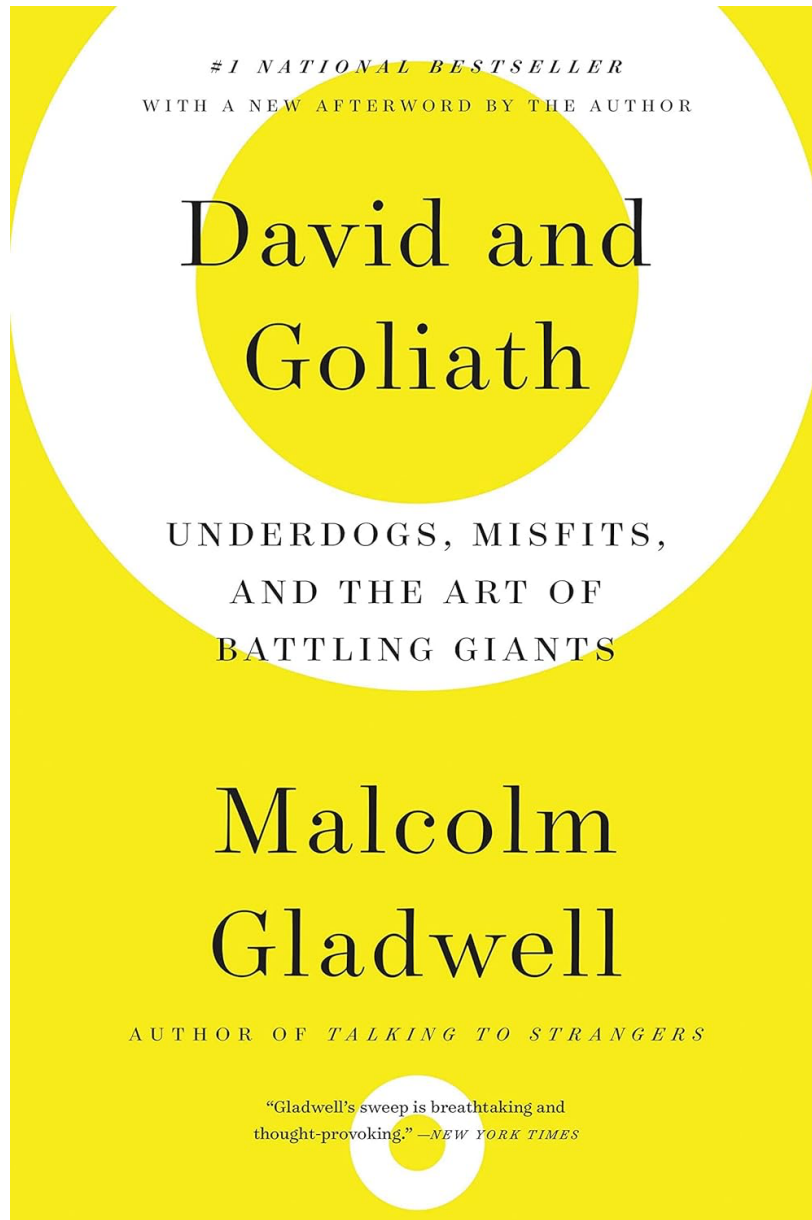
When corporate stress makes me want to quit, this book reminds me that passion doesn't strike like lightning—it develops gradually through engagement and cultivation. I don't need to have everything figured out; I need to keep showing up, practicing deliberately, and connecting my work to something larger than quarterly targets. Duckworth's message that grit is learnable, not innate, transforms discouragement into opportunity. If I'm struggling, it doesn't mean I lack talent—it means I'm in the practice phase of building skill. This reframe is incredibly motivating when demotivation strikes. The book teaches that success is a marathon requiring sustained effort, and that perspective alone relieves the pressure to perform brilliantly immediately.

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# Book 5: David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants

Author: Malcolm Gladwell



## Book Summary

Malcolm Gladwell reexamines the biblical story of David and Goliath to challenge our fundamental assumptions about power, advantage, and success. The traditional interpretation

views David as a miraculous underdog who defeats the mighty Goliath against impossible odds. Gladwell reveals a different truth: as a slinger with projectile weapons, David actually had a tactical advantage over Goliath, an infantry warrior vulnerable to long-range attacks. The story we thought we knew is actually about exploiting hidden strengths and the concealed vulnerabilities of the powerful.

The book extends this framework through compelling stories of underdogs who triumphed by turning apparent weaknesses into strengths. Gladwell introduces the concept of the inverted U-curve, showing how many advantages (wealth, resources, small class sizes) actually operate on a curve where too much becomes detrimental. He explores how difficulties and obstacles can produce unexpected capabilities, how being forced to struggle with limitations develops resourcefulness that privileged competitors never acquire, and how misfits who learn different strategies can disrupt established systems. Through historical examples and psychological research, Gladwell demonstrates that what we label as disadvantages often contain the seeds of our greatest strengths.

## **Reason for Recommending**

This book transforms how I view my position as a mid-level corporate employee facing organizational giants—senior executives, entrenched competitors, systemic inertia. Gladwell's analysis liberates me from the belief that lacking power means lacking options. When I feel outmatched in office politics or resource allocation battles, this book reminds me to look for asymmetric advantages: agility where they have bureaucracy, innovation where they have legacy systems, direct customer relationships where they have hierarchy.

What resonates most during stressful periods is Gladwell's message that struggles build capabilities that smooth paths never develop. The colleague who was handed every opportunity may lack the resourcefulness you've developed fighting for every win. Your disadvantages have trained you differently, potentially better. This perspective shift is psychologically powerful when demotivation strikes—instead of resenting what you lack, you learn to leverage what you've uniquely developed. The book teaches that underdogs win not by playing the giant's game, but by changing the rules entirely. When corporate stress peaks, this reminder that you can rewrite the competitive framework restores both hope and strategic clarity.

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# Book 6: Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things

Author: Adam Grant



# HIDDEN POTENTIAL

The Science of Achieving  
Greater Things

INCLUDES A  
BONUS PDF\*



# ADAM GRANT

#1 *New York Times* bestselling author of

**THINK AGAIN**

READ BY THE AUTHOR WITH A FULL CAST

## Book Summary

Organizational psychologist Adam Grant challenges the cult of innate genius and natural talent, arguing that greatness isn't limited to superstars born with exceptional abilities. Through research-backed insights, Grant demonstrates that anyone can achieve remarkable things by developing character skills, maintaining long-term motivation, and creating systems of opportunity. The book emphasizes how far people have come rather than where they started, celebrating growth over raw talent.

Grant distinguishes between personality (natural tendencies) and character (the ability to prioritize values over instincts). Character skills can be developed, and the key is starting before you feel ready—taking action generates confidence rather than waiting for confidence to permit action. He explores how progress often feels circular rather than linear, requiring persistence through apparent plateaus. The book introduces practical techniques like "brainwriting" (written idea generation before group discussion) that produce better collaborative results than traditional brainstorming. Grant provides a three-part framework: developing character through deliberate practice, sustaining motivation through systems and scaffolding, and designing opportunity structures that enable continuous learning.

## Reason for Recommending

*Hidden Potential* rescued me from the toxic belief that corporate success belongs only to charismatic extroverts or Ivy League graduates. Grant's research proves that how far you've traveled matters more than where you started, which validates every hard-won skill I've developed through struggle. When imposter syndrome strikes at work—when I feel unqualified compared to seemingly natural leaders—this book reminds me that my growth trajectory is the real measure of potential.

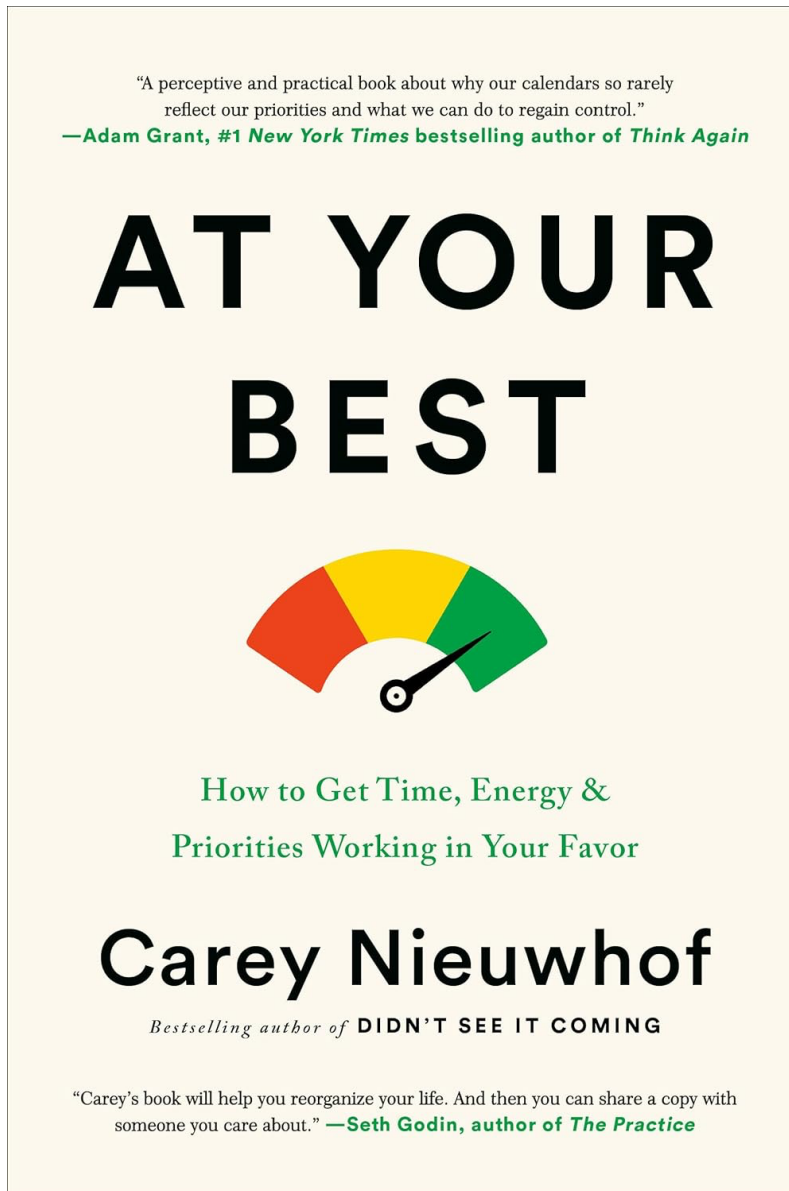
The concept that character trumps personality is particularly liberating for introverts or those who don't fit the traditional executive mold. You don't need to transform your fundamental nature; you need to develop character skills that align actions with values. Grant's advice to "start before you're ready" has broken my paralysis countless times—I've pitched ideas, volunteered for challenging projects, and taken on stretch assignments while feeling unprepared, and the action itself built the confidence I lacked beforehand. During demotivating periods when I doubt my capabilities, this book refocuses me on learnable skills and systematic improvement. It's a roadmap for turning hidden potential into realized achievement through consistent effort rather than waiting for talent to manifest.

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# Book 7: At Your Best: How to Get Time, Energy, and Priorities Working in Your Favor

**Author:** Carey Nieuwhof



## Book Summary

Leadership expert and former pastor Carey Nieuwhof draws from his personal experience with burnout to create a practical system for maximizing time, energy, and priorities. The book's

central insight is that success depends more on energy management than traditional time management alone. Nieuwhof introduces the "Green Zone" concept—identifying the time periods when your energy and focus are naturally highest, then protecting those hours for your most important work.

The book teaches how to align tasks with natural energy cycles rather than fighting against your biological rhythms. Nieuwhof explains how to identify your personal Green Zone (typically 2-5 hours daily when you're at peak capacity), how to jealously guard that time from meetings and interruptions, and how to batch lower-priority work during lower-energy periods. He addresses the cultural pressure toward relentless activity and explains why strategic prioritization prevents burnout better than working harder. The system is holistic, considering biological and emotional factors that influence performance, making it accessible to both religious and secular audiences. Nieuwhof provides troubleshooting advice for common obstacles like guilt about protecting your time or organizational cultures that reward constant availability.

## **Reason for Recommending**

This book fundamentally changed how I structure my workdays during high-stress periods. Before reading it, I approached productivity like most corporate workers: pack the calendar with back-to-back meetings, respond to every email immediately, and push important strategic thinking to evenings or weekends when exhausted. Nieuwhof showed me why this approach guarantees burnout and mediocre output.

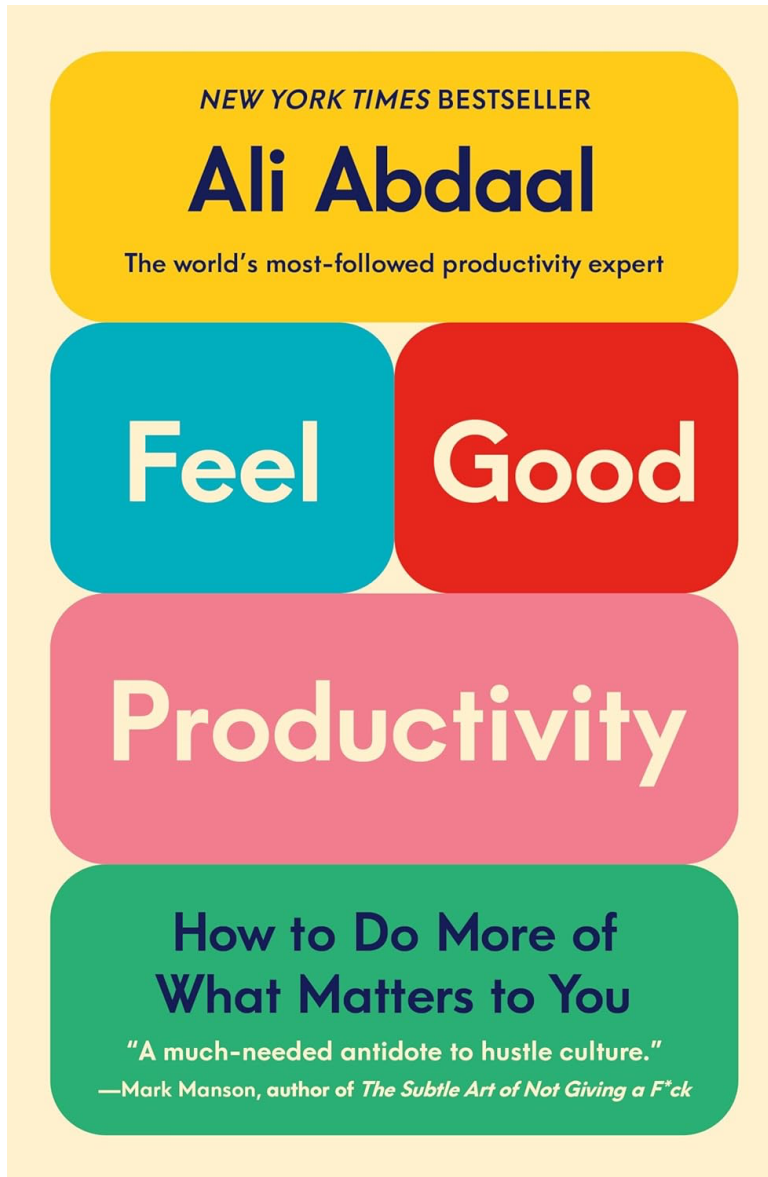
Identifying and protecting my Green Zone—for me, 9 AM to 12 PM—has been transformative. I now block that time ruthlessly for deep work: strategic planning, difficult problem-solving, creative projects. Meetings get scheduled in the afternoon when my energy naturally dips. This one change dramatically reduced my stress because I'm no longer sacrificing my best thinking hours to reactive tasks. When demotivation strikes, it's often because I've violated my Green Zone boundaries for too long, allowing urgent-but-unimportant demands to crowd out meaningful work. The book's framework gives me permission to prioritize ruthlessly and structure my days around sustainable energy management rather than unsustainable activity. It's practical wisdom that creates breathing room in suffocating corporate schedules.

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# Book 8: Feel Good Productivity: How to Do More of What Matters to You

Author: Ali Abdaal



## Book Summary

Former doctor turned YouTuber Ali Abdaal introduces a revolutionary approach to productivity: achieving more by feeling better rather than grinding harder. Initially relying on discipline and hustle to complete medical school, Abdaal discovered that traditional productivity methods were unsustainable as a practicing doctor. His research into positive

psychology led to developing "Feel-Good Productivity"—the principle that positive emotions fuel achievement more effectively than willpower and sacrifice.

The book is structured around three actionable parts: Energize (building and maintaining energy levels to stay motivated), Unblock (addressing the root causes of procrastination to enable action), and Sustain (creating systems that maintain productivity long-term). Abdaal draws on Barbara Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory, which demonstrates that positive emotions expand awareness and problem-solving capabilities while building resilience over time. The approach flips conventional productivity wisdom: instead of forcing yourself to work and hoping to feel good eventually, you cultivate positive feelings first, which naturally enhances focus, creativity, and output. The book provides practical strategies for making work more enjoyable, reframing challenges as opportunities, and designing environments that support sustained motivation without burnout.

## Reason for Recommending

*Feel Good Productivity* arrived at exactly the right moment in my career—when I was drowning in the "hustle culture" mentality that dominates corporate environments. The constant pressure to sacrifice wellbeing for output was destroying both my happiness and my actual productivity. Abdaal's research-backed argument that feeling good is the *foundation* of sustainable achievement, not a luxury reward for finishing work, felt revolutionary.

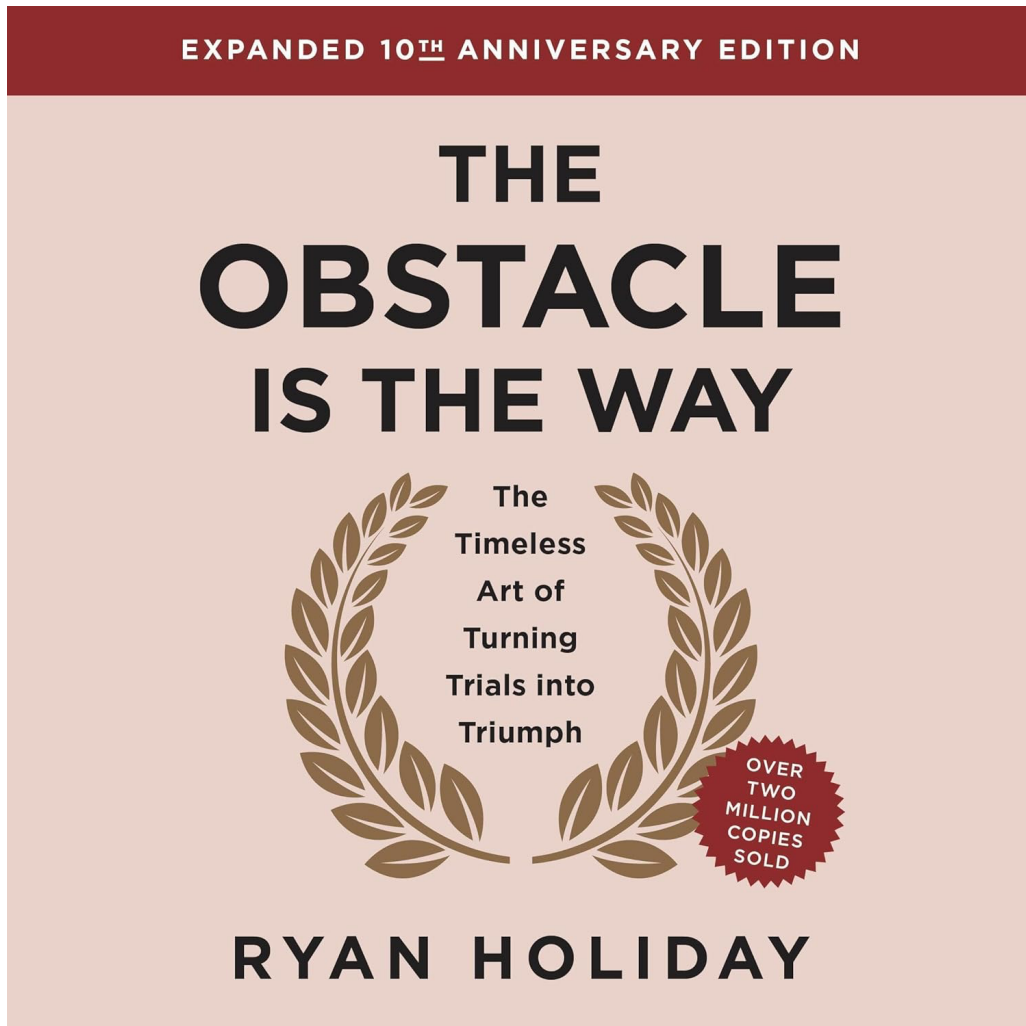
What makes this book invaluable during stressful periods is its permission structure: you're not weak for wanting work to feel good, you're strategically optimizing for better long-term results. When demotivation strikes, I use Abdaal's "Unblock" framework to diagnose why I'm procrastinating—usually it's because a task feels overwhelming, meaningless, or disconnected from anything I care about. His strategies for making work more engaging (adding play elements, connecting tasks to values, reducing friction) have helped me tackle projects I'd been avoiding for months. The book taught me that productivity shouldn't require constant self-coercion. If you're always forcing yourself to work, you've designed a broken system. Build positive emotions into your workflow, and productivity becomes natural rather than exhausting.

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# Book 9: The Obstacle Is the Way: The Timeless Art of Turning Trials into Triumph

Author: Ryan Holiday



## Book Summary

Drawing on Stoic philosophy, particularly Marcus Aurelius's teaching that "the impediment to action advances action—what stands in the way becomes the way," Ryan Holiday presents a framework for turning adversity into advantage. The book argues that obstacles are not roadblocks to success but the very path toward it, depending entirely on how we perceive and respond to them.

Holiday structures his framework around three Stoic disciplines. Perception: seeing obstacles objectively without emotional distortion, recognizing that problems are rarely as catastrophic as we initially think, and that losing your composure is worse than the obstacle itself. Action: taking persistent, creative action focused exclusively on what you can control, ignoring what you cannot influence, and adapting strategies when initial approaches fail. Will: building inner strength to endure what cannot be changed, maintaining resolve when circumstances seem hopeless, and refusing to adopt a victim mentality. Throughout the book, Holiday illustrates these principles with compelling stories from history, business, sports, and military leadership—showing how figures like Thomas Edison, Amelia Earhart, and Ulysses S. Grant transformed apparent defeats into victories by reframing obstacles as opportunities for growth.

## **Reason for Recommending**

This book has become my philosophical anchor during corporate crises—reorganizations, failed projects, political setbacks, or overwhelming workloads. Holiday's Stoic framework prevents the catastrophizing spiral that stress often triggers. When faced with an obstacle, my first instinct is panic and avoidance. This book trained me to pause and ask: "What is objectively true about this situation? What can I control? How might this difficulty contain opportunity?"

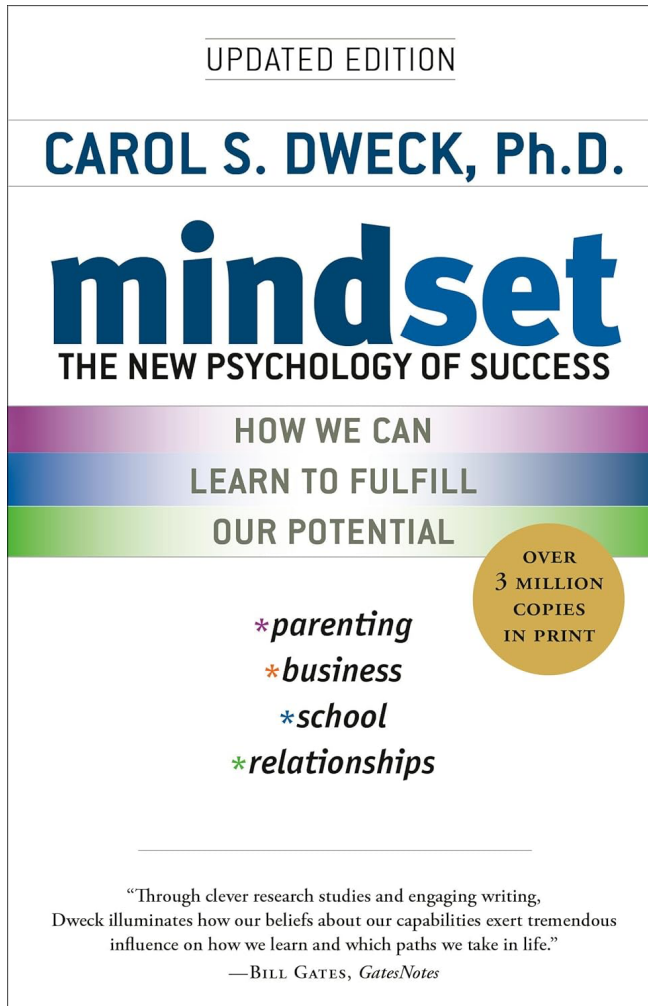
The most powerful lesson for me is Holiday's distinction between the event and your response to the event. Corporate life delivers endless problems you didn't create and can't fully control—unreasonable deadlines, leadership changes, budget cuts, market disruptions. You cannot always change these circumstances, but you absolutely control your perception and response. I've used this framework when passed over for promotions (focusing on skill development rather than resentment), when projects were canceled (redirecting energy toward new opportunities rather than dwelling on sunk costs), and when unreasonable demands arrived (identifying what I could influence rather than feeling helpless). During demotivating periods, Stoicism provides the mental resilience to keep moving forward regardless of circumstances. The obstacle truly becomes the way when you mine it for lessons, adaptations, and character development.

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# Book 10: Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

Author: Carol S. Dweck



## Book Summary

Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck presents decades of research revealing a groundbreaking discovery: the power of mindset shapes success more than talent or intelligence. Dweck identifies two fundamental mindsets. Fixed mindset: the belief that abilities are innate and unchangeable, leading people to avoid challenges, give up easily when facing obstacles, see effort as fruitless, ignore useful feedback, and feel threatened by others' success. Growth mindset: the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work, leading people to embrace challenges, persist through setbacks, see effort as the path to mastery, learn from criticism, and find inspiration in others' achievements.

The book demonstrates how these mindsets affect every area of life—school, work, sports, relationships, parenting. Dweck explains that mindsets are not permanent traits but can be consciously changed. She introduces the concept of "false growth mindset" (claiming to have a growth mindset while actually maintaining fixed beliefs) and guides readers toward authentic transformation. The updated edition expands beyond individual mindsets to organizational cultures, showing how companies and teams can adopt growth-oriented approaches. With the right mindset, Dweck argues, you can motivate yourself and others to transform lives through the belief that fundamental qualities can be cultivated through effort, strategy, and support.

## Reason for Recommending

*Mindset* fundamentally rewired how I interpret both success and failure in my corporate career. Before reading it, I operated from an unconscious fixed mindset: believing some colleagues were "natural leaders" while I wasn't, assuming I lacked certain innate skills, and avoiding challenges where I might look incompetent. Dweck's research liberated me from this limiting belief system.

The book taught me that every skill I admire in successful executives—strategic thinking, executive presence, negotiation ability, emotional intelligence—can be developed through deliberate practice and learning. When I receive critical feedback now, my automatic response has shifted from defensiveness ("they don't appreciate my talents") to curiosity ("what can I learn from this?"). When colleagues succeed, I've learned to study their approaches rather than feel threatened. Most importantly, when I fail at something challenging, I no longer interpret it as evidence of inadequacy but as valuable data for improvement. During demotivating periods when I feel stuck in my career, this book reminds me that growth is always possible—I'm not trapped by my current capabilities. The growth mindset transforms stagnation into opportunity, failure into feedback, and effort into the engine of development. This perspective shift alone makes stress more manageable because setbacks become stepping stones rather than verdicts on your potential.

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## **Books Can Inspire You. Reclaim Helps You Act.**

Reading can give you language, perspective, and hope. But sometimes insight alone is not enough to create real change.

Reclaim is for the moment when you want more than inspiration. It gives you a more guided path to reset your patterns, think more clearly, and move forward with intention.

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