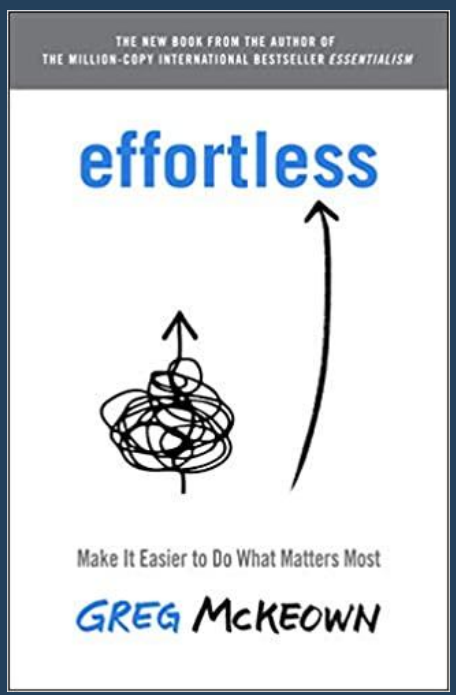

Effortless: Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most

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Author: Greg McKeown
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Have you ever had the feeling that you are running out of energy and that everyday tasks are getting more and more tiring?
Have you ever thought that maybe you are taking the wrong attitude and that's why you feel so worn out?
In the book "Effortless: Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most", Greg McKeown explains that when we prioritize what's most important, we end up finding space in our lives for both the things we value and the superficial things.
So if you want to learn how to prioritize what's essential and how to ease the unavoidable burdens in life without exhausting yourself, stay here because this summary will teach you how to achieve more without wearing yourself out!

Main ideas of the book

Through this book the author Greg McKeown will show you how to:

- Be physically rested, emotionally unburdened, and mentally energized in order to be one hundred percent present and focused on what is essential;
- Achieve your purpose with less effort;
- Keep getting effortless results over and over again.

Do want to know more about how to achieve your goals effortlessly? Stay here because this summary will teach you everything you need to know!

To whom is this book indicated?

The book "Effortless: Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most" is indicated for professionals who feel that they are doing their best at work, but they are still not achieving the expected results.

This book is also for those who are going through hard times and want to make life easier.

Overview of the book

What is "Effortless State"?

Greg McKeown starts by presenting how amazing our brain is. According to him, in ideal conditions, our brain can work at an amazing speed, however, negative emotions and toxic thoughts can drain our mental energy.
He explains that, according to the perceptual load theory, our brain processes more than 6 thousand thoughts per day. Therefore, when we get more information, the brain needs to decide how to allocate the remaining cognitive resources.
However, there is a problem with this. Our brain is designed to prioritize our emotions with "affective value". And, unfortunately, those emotions encompass feelings such as fear, anger, and resentment.
Therefore, our mental energy is used to allocate toxic feelings, leaving less energy to dedicate to the activities that really matter.
And that's when we get to the Effortless State. When we are physically rested, emotionally stable, and mentally energized, we are capable of focusing one hundred percent on what is essential and we achieve our "Effortless State".
But how can we reach this state?

Trying hard doesn't mean achieving more

You probably believe that if something is easy, then it's not important and that if we want to achieve our goals, we should work hard.
In the book "Effortless" it's explained that this mindset may have its roots in the Puritan idea that says that hard things to achieve have a bigger value. We end up thinking that we are lazy when we work less, and we feel guilty when we don't make a great effort.
But what if what it's preventing you from achieving your goals is this great effort that you are making? What about changing your thought to "If something is difficult, it is because I didn't find an easier way to do it"?
The author explains that when we ditch the Puritan idea that the easy way is inferior, our obstacles disappear, and from there, we can reveal our "Effortless State".

How about making your work less boring?

What if your work could not only be easier, but also fun? Have you ever thought that separating work from fun makes life more difficult?
According to the author, when we combine the essential activities with fun activities, we can effortlessly do the most boring tasks. And, oddly enough, doing that is pretty easy.
To do that, we can combine the essential activity with a reward. You can, for example, watch your favorite tv show while running on a treadmill, or return phone calls while relaxing in a bathtub.
That way, instead of using determination to do the most difficult tasks, you can simply make them fun.

How about stop complaining?

Have you ever thought that the more we complain, the more we find reasons to complain? Toxic thoughts are easy to accumulate and the more we put mental energy into them, the harder it is to go back to the Effortless State.
But, what many people don't know is that, just as complaint attracts complaint, gratitude attracts gratitude. When you look for a reason to be grateful, you go from the lack state (toxic thinking) to the have state (positive thinking) and you start to see what you have.
It is further explained in the book that the theory "broaden and build" from psychology shows that positive emotions can open space for new points of view and possibilities, and this opening stimulates creative ideas, thus creating an "upward spiral" that increases the likelihood of dealing well with the next challenge.

Are you sleeping well?

We are living in a society that is neglecting sleep more than ever. Greg McKeown shows that people who sleep less than 7 hours a night are more likely to suffer from cardiovascular disease, heart attack, stroke, asthma, arthritis, depression, diabetes and are almost eight times more likely to be overweight.
Even when we sleep the 8 hours needed, if we don't get into a deep sleep, we can suffer from sleep deprivation. During deep sleep, information is stored in long-term memory, our emotions are processed, and is also the moment that our body recovers.
However, it's no use sleeping 8 hours if we don't sleep uninterruptedly. It is highlighted in the book that when we stop fighting against our body's natural rhythm, our lives gain more consistency and clarity, and therefore we can return to our Effortless State.

Are you able to observe?

These days life is so busy that we hardly make time to observe. Staying focused is a difficult task because we can't avoid letting our minds wander.
In the book "Effortless" it is explained that being in the Effortless State is being conscious, alert, and present, even when we are attacked with multiple information and distractions. When we achieve our Effortless State, we can focus on what really matters.
That way, pursuing the Effortless State is essential for us to be able to focus, observe and truly listen to those around us and to the things that are really important for us.

What is "Effortless Action"?

From the moment that we are able to get into our Effortless State, we are capable of moving to the next stage presented in the book, the "Effortless Action".
To understand what that means, stop and try to think if you have ever had the feeling of doing a great job without making a great effort. When we accomplish something that we wish without exhausting ourselves, it is because we got into the stage of Effortless Action.

But how can we accomplish more, but with less effort?

The first step to effortlessly achieve a goal is to define how it will look in the end. That way, you can focus on establishing what will be the first step without wearing yourself out and without worrying about what the next steps will be.
When we break down our project into steps, each action starts to feel effortless. If the first step is hard to define, how about starting the project all over again?

Start from scratch to simplify what looks difficult

Author Greg McKeown suggests we ask ourselves when a project seems too complex:

"What are the minimum steps required to complete this?"

Identifying the minimum steps helps to eliminate the unnecessary steps, enabling us to focus our energy to finish what is more important. After all, we can only say that something went right when we finish the task.

Don't be afraid to be crude

Do not try to start something that you have never done before by trying to get it right on the first try. Give yourself a chance to be crude, make an ugly project so you can fix it, modify it, and redesign it without having to start again. After all, making mistakes is the best way to learn and to progress.
Starting by doing something crude, by making mistakes. This doesn't mean encouraging errors and giving permission for others to make mistakes. According to the author, by allowing mistakes to be made, we can free ourselves from the pressure of always doing things perfectly.
When we accept that we can make mistakes, we can take the first step. Soon or later improvements will be made but in a natural way. From the mistakes done, the next steps will be effortless.

Set the pace

Any time we have a goal, we want to achieve it as fast as possible. However, the faster we try to progress, the more tired we get, and then we need to take a break. This break makes us feel guilty for not being active. And that guilt forces us to give another quick burst in the process.
But what if we could find an effortless pace, a constant pace that wouldn't wear us out?
The truth is that many things in our lives are out of our control. But how to establish a pace when something can get on the way at any time? To progress, despite the uncertainties and at a constant pace, we have to establish the right range of progress and stick to it.
When we establish the right range we are able to steadily progress. That way, when we find a sustainable pace, the progress starts to be visible and therefore we take Effortless Action.
When we are able to take Effortless Action, we can finally achieve Effortless Results, and this is the next topic of the book "Effortless".

What are Effortless Results?

When we invest our effort only once and we reap the rewards over and over again, we are achieving Effortless Results. But how can we do that?

Learn from what others already know

Applying a method can be useful once to solve a problem, but principles can be learned and applied over and over again.
Many principles are usually universal, in other words, they can be broadly applied to different challenges. If we want to achieve residual results, we must apply principles.
When we understand a task at its fundamental level, we can apply the principles that we've learned in new and surprising ways.

Try to become extraordinary

According to Greg McKeown, being good at what nobody does is better than being good at what everyone else does. That way, try to identify the areas in which you are good at and specialize in them. Consequently, you will get new opportunities to create something completely new.
Becoming exceptional in something requires time, dedication, and effort, but this is an investment that you will have to make only once and after that you will keep getting residual benefits from your effort.
One of the ways approached in the book to help you to become extraordinary is to invest in sharing your knowledge. When we teach, our involvement with a task increases, and our knowledge multiples.
By teaching others what you've learned, try to simplify, try to speak clearly, and share your knowledge in an easy-to-understand way.

Try to find a way to automate things

With technology, the number of areas that you can explore is largely increasing. The problem is that the amount of information that we receive exceeds our mental capacity to manage all that knowledge.
The cognitive load that is required to manage this massive amount of information, makes us susceptible to making mistakes in our activities. Therefore, we need to develop strategies to carry out our essential activities without overloading our memory.
In the book "Effortless" it is claimed that we need to use tools to help us remember to do the important things. Therefore, it is suggested the use of checklists to automate our activities without wearing our memory out.

Work with a high-performance team

In all areas of our lives, we need to deal with people, and we know that human beings are complex beings. Thus, working with other people can be an overwhelming task, and the more people involved, the more we need to invest mental resources to coordinate them.
To have a high-performance team, we need to work with people that we can trust. When we trust our team, we can hand out tasks more effectively, knowing that everyone feels comfortable to talk about the problems and ideas that could arise.
When the employees feel fine working together, the quality of the decisions, the performance, and the ability to concentrate the energy on the tasks that matter increase exponentially.
Within a team the responsibilities of each one can be interrelated, so, if there is no trust, conflicting interests and goals can create friction that can erode the relationships. That way, to avoid friction some things can be done.
The author talks, for example, about the importance of hiring honest people that will keep a high standard of work even when they are not being supervised.
When we hire honest people and with high-level skills that we can trust, those people feel empowered to do their best. But of course, to have trust, the expectations need to be aligned, all tasks must be deliberated and the final result must be prioritized by everyone.
Building a basis of trust is an investment that must be done only once, the small effort applied to relationships will keep producing Effortless Results.

What do other authors say about it?

We think it is clear that there is no point in doing many things at once. We need to focus on what is essential. So, to help you through this journey, how about reading "**The One Thing**"? In this summary, you will learn how to simplify your routine to achieve your goals!

We also talked about how important it is to make our work less boring and more fun, right? So, if you want to live your life with less worry and anxiety, we suggest reading "**How to Stop Worrying and Start Living**"!

Last but not least, we saw that negative thoughts demand a lot of mental energy. That said, we suggest the reading of "**Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude**''. The famous author Napoleon Hill gives amazing tips about how to train your mind to achieve success!

Okay, but how can I apply this in my life?

Making what's most important easier can make our lives a lot simpler, right? So how about using some strategies to start changing your life now?

- Whenever you face a difficult goal, ask yourself "What if this could be easier?"
- Merge work and fun to make your tasks less boring!
- Learn to rest.
- Have the courage to start with a crude project.
- Set a right range that is neither exhaustive nor discouraging.
- Put an effort to develop unique knowledge to stand out.
- Use checklists to not overload your memory.
- Create an environment of trust with your coworkers.
- Always look for the easy way out!

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