

Key Takeaways From “Smarter Faster Better” by Charles Duhigg

- Productivity is the name we give our attempts to figure out the best uses of our energy, intellect, and time as we try to seize the most meaningful rewards with the least wasted effort
 - Learning how to succeed with less stress and struggle
- Productivity isn't about working more or sweating harder, productivity is about making certain choices in certain ways
- The workers who have succeeded in this new economy are those who know how to decide for themselves how to spend their time and allocate their energy
- People who know how to self-motivate earn more money than their peers, report higher levels of happiness, and say they are more satisfied with their families, jobs, and lives
- A prerequisite to motivation is believing we have authority over our actions and surroundings
 - To motivate ourselves, we must feel like we are in control
- When people believe they are in control, they tend to work harder and push themselves more
- People who believe they have authority over themselves often live longer than their peers
- The first step in creating drive is giving people opportunities to make choices that provide them with a sense of autonomy and self-determination
- Motivation is triggered by making choices that demonstrate to ourselves that we are in control
- If you can link something hard to a choice you care about, it makes the task easier
- Make a chore into a meaningful decision, and self-motivation will emerge
- If you give people an opportunity to feel a sense of control and let them practice making choices, they can learn to exert willpower
- To teach ourselves to self-motivate more easily, we need to learn to see our choices not just as expressions of control but also as affirmations of our values and goals
- When we start a new task or confront an unpleasant chore, we should take a moment to ask ourselves “why”
- Teams functioned best when they contained a concentration of people with similar levels of extroversion and introversion
- Enthusiastic norms made teams better. Loyalty norms made them less effective
- On the best teams, leaders encouraged people to speak up

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- They were all behaviors that created a sense of togetherness while also encouraging people to take a chance
- We knew it was important for teammates to be open with each other. We knew it was important for people to feel like they can speak up if something's wrong
- The good teams had succeeded not because of innate qualities of team members, but because of how they treated one another
- It was the norms, not the people, that made teams so smart
- The members of the good teams spoke in roughly the same proportion
- As long as everyone got a chance to talk, the team did well
- The good teams tested as having “high average social sensitivity”
 - The groups were skilled at intuiting how members felt based on their tone of voice, how people held themselves, and the expressions on their faces
- Giving everyone a voice and finding people willing to be sensitive enough to listen to one another
- Teams need to believe their work is important
- Teams need to feel their work is personally meaningful
- Teams need clear goals and defined roles
- Team members need to know they can depend on one another
- Team leaders needed to model the right behaviors
- Leaders should not interrupt teammates
- They should demonstrate they are listening by summarizing what people say after they said it. They should admit what they don't know. They shouldn't end a meeting until all team members have spoken at least once. They should encourage people who are upset to express their frustrations and encourage teammates to respond in nonjudgmental ways
- They should call out intergroup conflicts and resolve them through open discussion
- Teams succeed when everyone feels like they can speak up and when members show they are sensitive to how one another feels
- You can think about your brain's attention span like a spotlight that can go wide and diffused, or tight and focused
- Productivity rises when people do the same kind of tasks over and over. Repetition makes us faster and more efficient because we don't have to learn fresh skills with each new assignment
- People who know how to manage their attention and who habitually build robust mental models tend to earn more money and get better grades

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- Narrate your life, as you are living it, and you’ll encode those experiences deeper in your brain
- Get into the habit of telling yourself stories. Narrate your life as its occurring
- To become genuinely productive, we must take control of our attention; we must build mental models that put us firmly in charge
- Determined and focuses people tend to work harder and get tasks done more promptly
- SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and based on a Timeline
- Specific high goals lead to a higher level of task performance than do easy goals or vague, abstract goals
- Identify a stretch goal- an aim so ambitious that managers couldn’t describe how they would achieve it
- Forcing people to commit to ambitious, seemingly out-of-reach objectives can spark outsized jumps in innovation and productivity
- Come up with a menu of your biggest ambitions. Dream big and stretch. Describe the goals that seem impossible. Then choose one aim and start breaking it into short-term, concrete steps. Ask yourself: what realistic progress can you make in the next day, week, month? What are the specific, short-term steps along the path to bigger success?
- There was a genuine devotion to convincing employees they were part of a family
- Everyone had to make suggestions, anyone could declare a time-out if they thought a project was moving in the wrong direction, and the person closest to a problem had primary responsibility for figuring out how to solve it
- How much potential can be unlocked when you give people more authority
- Employees work smarter and better when they believe they have more decision-making authority and when they believe their colleagues are committed to their success
- Many of our most important decisions are attempts to forecast the future
- To become better at predicting the future we need to know the difference between what we hope will happen and what is more and less likely to occur
- Winners are comfortable admitting to themselves what they don’t know
- You have to be comfortable not knowing exactly where life is going
- Why was I so certain things turn out one way? Why was I wrong?
- People become creative brokers when they learn to pay attention to how things make them react and feel

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- Be sensitive to your own experiences. Pay attention to how things make you think and feel
- The quality of people’s decisions generally gets better as they receive more relevant information. But then their brain reaches a breaking point when the data becomes too much
- The Engineering Design Process:
 - Define the dilemma
 - Collect data
 - Brainstorm solutions
 - Debate approaches
 - Experiment
- When we encounter new information and want to learn from it, we should force ourselves to do something with the data
- Motivation becomes easier when we transform a chore into a choice. Doing so gives us a sense of control
- Self-motivation becomes easier when we see our choices as affirmations of our deeper values and goals
- Something as simple as jotting down a couple of reasons why I am doing something makes it much simpler to start
- Explain to yourself why this chore will help you get closer to a meaningful goal
- We aid our focuses by building mental models- telling ourselves stories- about what we expect to see
- Telling yourself a story about what you expect to occur makes it easier to decide where your focus should go when your plan encounters real life
- Productivity is about recognizing choices that other people often overlook