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SuperBetter: The Power Of Living Gamefully

New York Times Bestseller



“Grounded in scientific research, and based on the experiences of over half a million people,

SuperBetter

The Power of Living Gamefully

is at heart a simple and transformative idea: We can use the same psychological strengths we display when we play games to confront real-life challenges, from trauma and illness to just changing our habits for the better.”

—DANIEL H. PINK

Jane McGonigal



Synopsis

An innovative guide to living gamefully, based on the program that has already helped nearly half a million people achieve remarkable personal growth. In 2009, internationally renowned game designer Jane McGonigal suffered a severe concussion. Unable to think clearly or work or even get out of bed, she became anxious and depressed, even suicidal. But rather than let herself sink further, she decided to get better by doing what she does best: she turned her recovery process into a resilience-building game. What started as a simple motivational exercise quickly became a set of rules for "post-traumatic growth" that she shared on her blog. These rules led to a digital game and a major research study with the National Institutes of Health. Today nearly half a million people have played SuperBetter to get stronger, happier, and healthier. But the life-changing ideas behind SuperBetter are much bigger than just one game. In this book, McGonigal reveals a decade's worth of scientific research into the ways all games—including videogames, sports, and puzzles—change how we respond to stress, challenge, and pain. She explains how we can cultivate new powers of recovery and resilience in everyday life simply by adopting a more "gameful" mind-set. Being gameful means bringing the same psychological strengths we naturally display when we play games—such as optimism, creativity, courage, and determination—to real-world goals. Drawing on hundreds of studies, McGonigal shows that getting superbetter is as simple as tapping into the three core psychological strengths that games help you build:

- Your ability to control your attention, and therefore your thoughts and feelings
- Your power to turn anyone into a potential ally, and to strengthen your existing relationships
- Your natural capacity to motivate yourself and super-charge your heroic qualities, like willpower, compassion, and determination

SuperBetter contains nearly 100 playful challenges anyone can undertake in order to build these gameful strengths. It includes stories and data from people who have used the SuperBetter method to get stronger in the face of illness, injury, and other major setbacks, as well as to achieve goals like losing weight, running a marathon, and finding a new job. As inspiring as it is down to earth, and grounded in rigorous research, SuperBetter is a proven game plan for a better life. You'll never say that something is "just a game" again. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Gamer or not, SUPERBETTER will improve your life; it is this year's POWER OF HABIT. The fact is: Jane McGonigal outlines a surefire way to gain mental, emotional, physical, and social resilience. The fact is: "game play supercharges self-efficacy, work ethic, and determination." McGonigal is the "first person in the world to earn a Ph.D. studying the psychological strengths of gamers and how those strengths can translate to real-world problem solving." She brings TONS of research and scientific findings into practical, playful "gameful" approaches to our everyday stresses and problems. It's a fun way to make major improvements in life. "You're going to get SuperBetter at something, not SuperBetter from something." After applying her studies to herself, in creating "Jane the Concussion Slayer", and seeing how it worked, McGonigal opened the "game" to over 400,000 people. Most of them saw improvements within 2 weeks, many seeing even more noticeable improvements 4-6 weeks into the program. The program went on to be controlled trial at University of Pennsylvania and a clinical trial at Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and Cincinnati Children's Hospital. SuperBetter is now a website with accompanying apps on iTunes and the Play Store. Here's the gist, in 7 rules of the game: 1) Challenge yourself. 2) Collect and activate power-ups. 3) Find and battle the bad guys. 4) Seek out and complete quests. 5) Recruit your allies. 6) Adopt a secret identity. 7) Go for an epic win. The book is broken into three parts: one to tell us why games make us better; two to teach us how to be gameful; three to build adventures in love, body transformation, and time enrichment. If you want to geek out (who doesn't?

This book would be better named SuperHype primarily because McGonigal has grossly exaggerated the science behind gaming. The research on McGonigal's game SuperBetter best

exemplifies this. The dropout rate from the SuperBetter study was huge - about 90%. This is despite recruiting a group of highly motivated participants. So the bottom line is that even the most motivated people struggled to engage with SuperBetter. The high dropout rate makes any claims to the benefits of SuperBetter highly questionable at best and realistically probably irrelevant. As the authors of the research say "should be interpreted cautiously in light of high attrition rates and the motivated, self-selected sample." Extrapolating the dropout rate you'd probably find that nobody continued to use the Superbetter. It's like many of those apps that seemed useful when we purchased them, but the novelty rapidly dissipates, and they now lie dormant on our phones! I also point out the research was very poorly designed. As mentioned earlier "small biased sample (predominantly females interested in positive psychology), no placebo control (is it better than a sugar pill?), self report measures, and no reasonable follow-up (does it last longer than a month?)" most of these interventions don't last. The poor quality of the research and the high dropout rate probably explain why the research couldn't be published in a first grade journal. I have to admit I was a little puzzled by McGonigal's poor understanding of science. The book seemed like a collection of those "hypey" press releases for studies which tend to exaggerate outcomes rather than understanding the nuance and limitations in research. But it became clear when I googled her background.

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