

Make Your Bed Summary – William H. McRaven

15 MINUTE READ

[Make Your Bed](#) (2017)

Little Things That Can Change Your Life...And Maybe the World

by [William H. McRaven](#)

Make Your Bed became a best seller by breaking down how you can change your life and change the world into ten simple steps that start with simply making your bed – by former US Navy SEAL, Admiral William McRaven. ([144 pages](#))

[Paperback](#) | [Ebook](#) | [Audiobook](#)

Note: This **Make Your Bed summary** is part of an ongoing project to summarise the [Best Productivity Books](#) and [Best Self Help Books](#) of All Time.

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Make Your Bed Review

[Habits](#) don't come easy to me. I'll never wake up one morning and realize that I'm a true-life version of Groundhog Day. I'm a bit of a wild card, and I'm constantly searching for the way to a routine and structured life.

But when I reached for *Make Your Bed*, I thought perhaps I'd found my solution.

Could ten little changes to my day really change my life? And the world?

I opened this book looking for routines and habits. But what I found was so much more. McRaven takes you on an intense journey through his life and the lessons learned. You find yourself in Navy SEAL training with him—

cold, tired and covered in sand. You travel with him through his struggles and his eye-opening experiences.

Somehow, making my bed every morning didn't feel impossible anymore. The ten life lessons found in *Make Your Bed* are not things I ever considered life-changing. But within the context of McRaven's experiences, his simple advice transforms into an inspiring guide for your life.

My bed? Is now made every morning. And I realized that changing my life and the world around me doesn't depend on my routines, but on who I am.

I recommend this book to every single person. If you're searching for habits, looking for a change or stuck in a rut – read *Make Your Bed*. If you aren't searching for anything at all – read it anyway!

For now though, enjoy this free summary of the book.



Make Your Bed One-Sentence Summary

Life isn't fair and throws many obstacles in your way, but if you start with making your bed and end with never, ever saying "I quit!", you'll be just fine.



Make Your Bed Summary

Based on [the viral video of McRaven's famous commencement speech](#), Make Your Bed covers ten key habits that can change your life and help you change the world.

McRaven learned these valuable life lessons during his time training to be a Navy SEAL. He applied them to his years of military service again and again.

The ten Make Your Bed habits are:

1. Start Your Day with a Task Completed;
2. You Can't Go It Alone;
3. Only the Size of Your Heart Matters;
4. Life's Not Fair, so Drive On;
5. Failure Can Make You Stronger;
6. You Must Dare Greatly;
7. Stand Up to the Bullies;
8. Rise to the Occasion;
9. Give People Hope; and
10. Never, Ever Quit!

Click on the habit above to jump to that section or read on to find out how

McRaven became a successful Admiral in the US Navy.



1. Start Your Day with a Task Completed

McRaven himself never understood the purpose of making his bed until Navy SEAL training forced him to make his bed every single day. His simple bed had to be made every single morning.

It had to be made in exactly the same way every morning. If it failed?

McRaven became a sugar cookie. In other words, if his bed failed inspection, he would remake it and then hit the surf on the beach at Coronado, California for a roll in the wet sand.

And if you've ever wondered if they really do expect a quarter to bounce off of that bed. They do. A perfectly made Navy bed will bounce a coin back up into the instructor's hand.

Do you need that type of precision in making your bed?

No. Don't worry about the exact requirements.

McRaven explains that during the hard times in his life-while recovering from a parachuting accident or when post-911 he found himself sleeping on a cot in the Baghdad airport-making his bed seemed to be the one

thing that made his life seem normal.

As an aside, he notes that Saddam Hussein never made his bed. During a visit to check on his welfare in 2003, McRaven noticed that Hussien had simply left his blankets in a rumpled mess.

It all comes down to the fact that you can't control much of your life. However, you can always make the choice to make your bed.

It gives you structure.

It gives you something you've accomplished right from the beginning of your day.

It gives you a sense of pride in knowing you took care of one important thing.

You made your bed.



2. You Can't Go It Alone

If you want to change the world, you won't be able to do it alone.

SEAL training focuses on teamwork. Even when you are a simple tadpole.

While in training to become Navy frogmen, McRaven and his crew members were required to carry a 10-foot rubber raft everywhere.

They carried their raft when they ran.

They carried their raft to the chow hall.

They paddled the raft through the pounding surf to get to their destinations.

Have you ever tried to paddle a large raft by yourself?

It's impossible. It takes a team.

It takes a team for much more than paddling a rubber raft.

McRaven shares one of the darkest moments of his life with us. He recounts a parachuting accident in horrific detail.

Left broken into so many pieces, he faced a reality that he'd never encountered: he was not invincible. In fact, he might never be a Navy SEAL or even have a normal life again.

Two long months of recovery filled him with self-pity. The only things that pulled him through weren't things at all. They were people.

His wife. His Admiral. His friends.

Without them, he would not have survived.

You can't paddle a boat alone. You must get out there and find people. Form a team. Be there for them and let them be there for you.



3. Only the Size of Your Heart Matters

Have you ever felt like you are not good enough?

Think of Tommy Norris.

Tommy Norris didn't have the muscles. He had floppy hair that covered his ears. He didn't even get a second glance from McRaven.

Until a SEAL recruiter introduced Tommy Norris to McRaven.

Of course, McRaven instantly knew the name. Tommy had earned the SEAL Medal of Honor for his heroic actions in Vietnam.

Despite almost being booted out of SEAL training for being too small, too weak, and not the typical SEAL.

An idea began to form at that meeting. Maybe people succeeded simply based on the size of their heart.

Later, during intense training, McRaven witnessed a SEAL instructor question a tadpole.

He questioned his size.

He questioned his strength.

He questioned his ability.

And when McRaven completed the training exercise, he found that tadpole already waiting on the beach.

He asked his fellow tadpole what the instructor had whispered to him after berating him.

"Prove me wrong."

You see, it isn't the size of your muscles that counts. It is the size of your heart that matters.



4. Life's Not Fair, so Drive On

Being a sugar cookie is not fun.

After taking a dip in the ocean, you roll around in the sand until you are completely coated.

Sure, there could be worse things. But when you have sand in every crevice for an entire day, there simply isn't anything more uncomfortable.

After being required to turn into a human sugar cookie, McRaven was asked by his instructor if he knew why he was now completely sand coated. He didn't.

Lieutenant Moki Martin explained it to him in simple terms.

"Life isn't fair."

Later on, the Lieutenant would encounter this first hand. During a training ride, Martin collided with another cyclist.

The accident left him paralyzed and in a wheelchair.

Did he complain?

No.

He learned to paint. He had a daughter. He founded the Super Frog Triathlon in Coronado.

Was what happened to him fair?

Are the dark moments and difficult times that come our way fair?

Absolutely not.

No matter what you do in life, you sometimes find yourself covered with sand.

The only thing you can do is keep moving forward. Accept that it isn't fair and drive on.



5. Failure Can Make You Stronger

If you want to change your own life, you can't be afraid of the circus.

The waves in the ocean off of Coronado Island are challenging. Despite swimming as hard as they could, McRaven and his swim buddy struggled.

Arriving last on the beach, they had to face a very irritated instructor. Coming in last was not an option.

Off to The Circus they went.

It's not the circus you may be thinking of. The Circus was extra calisthenics at the end of the day. And not just a bit of exercise.

It was an obstacle course to be endured. Exercise while being harassed. Flutter kicks, pull-ups, bodybuilders and endless pain. All while instructors yell loudly.

To get a spot at The Circus, all you had to do was fail.

The Circus often left the tadpoles exhausted to the point that they would fail in some way again.

Back to The Circus they returned.

Something strange would happen with time. Failure and the associated punishment would eventually begin to build strength.

Time at The Circus made the tadpoles stronger. Strong enough to swim through the most brutal waves.

McRaven faced failure during his SEAL career. His early training taught him to keep moving forward and learn from his failures. He found that because of failure, he was able to go further than he ever thought possible.

You will face a lot of circuses in life. Failures happen to everyone. Don't be afraid to grow stronger through your failures.



6. You Must Dare Greatly

Do you trust yourself and your abilities?

Special operation forces deal in risk. In order to free hostages in hostile areas, sometimes decisions must be made when the situation is less than ideal.

You don't have time to wait.

McRaven learned this over and over throughout his career. What often

seemed spontaneous and brazen was actually based on years of training, strategy and knowledge.

And the ability to take a huge leap.

The British Special Air Service follows the motto "Who Dares Wins."

Prior to the famous bin Laden raid, this motto was quoted by Command Sergeant Major Chris Faris to the SEAL team. It was a reminder to go strong.

McRaven encourages you to adapt the phrase as your own personal motto. Approach your life with the idea that no matter what, you can do it.

Don't be afraid of failure. After all, it's going to happen. However, you won't know where success is unless you try. Take the leap.



7. Stand Up to the Bullies

Most people are afraid of sharks.

Swimming in the open ocean at night with a swim buddy by his side, McRaven knew there were sharks deep below. Or maybe not even that deep.

However, the goal of becoming a Navy Seal mattered so much to McRaven, the risk was worth facing the sharks.

Believing in your goal gives you courage. And courage gives you the ability to face your sharks.

Who are your sharks?

The world is full of bullies. Some of them are larger than others. But when it comes down to it, they are all still sharks.

McRaven had a first-row seat to the first meeting between a captured Saddam Hussein and the new Iraqi leaders. From a safe distance, the leaders yelled at Saddam.

His reaction was one of calm. He smiled. He invited them to sit.

The purpose of the meeting was to show Saddam that he no longer had power. But as the leaders yelled, they revealed their fear of the dreaded dictator.

Saddam was a shark.

McRaven had seen sharks before. He had Saddam moved to a humble room. He ordered the soldiers to remain mute around Saddam.

He made daily visits where he insisted Saddam sit while he stood.

By standing up to the shark, he was able to transform him back into a captured dictator. He took away Saddam's feeling of power.

It doesn't matter if it is Saddam Hussein or an office bully, they all thrive on the same thing: fear.

Just like sharks sense blood in the water, bullies sense fear.

You must find the courage to push towards your goal even if sharks are circling you. You will find that when you take away the fear, the bullies will disappear.



8. Rise to the Occasion

Who are you in your darkest moments?

McRaven found himself staring across the bay at a line of warships. This wasn't your typical training mission. It was the toughest, most dangerous mission the tadpoles would face.

Someone could die.

His instructor addressed the team and gave them advice that would stay with McRaven for the next 30 years.

"Tonight, you will have to be your very best. You must rise above your fears..."

Later, McRaven would recall these words when watching a Ramp Ceremony.

A Ramp Ceremony is what happens when a C-17 aircraft lowers its ramp to receive the remains of a fallen soldier. Soldiers gather for a final

goodbye. It doesn't matter if they personally knew the soldier or not. The soldier was one of them.

One of the darkest moments in life happens when you lose a loved one. It can seem impossible to rise up and stand strong.

Dark moments come from all types of grief, not just loss. But the grief is still crushing and disorientating. All you can do is remember the instructor's words.

Reach deep, rise up and be your best.



9. Give People Hope

If you want to change the world, you have to start with the people around you.

Can you imagine having the choice between a long, cold trek through neverending mud or a nice warm fire and hot coffee? It seems like an easy choice.

In order to get the comfort and get out of the mud, McRaven and his fellow tadpoles had a choice. Five of their team had to quit. They simply needed to give up.

Would a SEAL team allow that to happen?

As it became a serious option for many of the tadpoles, something happened that transformed the cold mud into an obstacle that could be survived.

Someone began to sing.

One by one, the soldiers all joined in. A simple song while neck deep in mud gave the tadpoles something much more than comfort.

It gave them hope.

When a helicopter full of Navy SEALs, Army aviators and Afghan Special Operations partners went down during the War on Terror, McRaven saw hope made all the difference.

There were no survivors. Instead, there were children, spouses, parents and other family members left in disbelief and unbearable grief.

McRaven did what he could to offer comfort, but he felt inadequate.

One thing he noticed was the ease with which Marine Lieutenant General John Kelly talked with the families of the soldiers. And it dawned on him: Kelly knew first-hand how it felt to grieve such a loss.

When Kelly's son, Marine First Lieutenant Robert Kelly, was killed in Afghanistan, the Kelly family struggled. But they survived.

By just talking with the families of fallen soldiers, Kelly offered them something very powerful. He gave them hope that they would survive the pain and grief.

When you find yourself neck deep in mud, only hope can drive you forward. Sing loudly and give hope to those around you.



10. Never, Ever Quit

The first day of Navy SEAL training is just intimidating. You are reminded that this is the toughest US military instruction. Only the strongest make it through it.

Right from the beginning, the goal of the instructors is to make you quit.

And they make it easy to quit. All you have to do is ring a bell. Three rings. And you go home to your nice comfortable life.

You begin to wonder if maybe you should ring the bell. After months of pain and hard work, you keep wondering if you should ring the bell.

McRaven's class of 150 soldiers was narrowed down to just 33 tadpoles at graduation. Only 33 soldiers listened to the instructor's warning.

"If you quit, you will regret it for the rest of your life. Quitting never makes anything easier."

This is McRaven's greatest lesson to teach. Even though he starts with making the bed, he always finishes with never quitting.

It's not profound. It's not eye-opening.

It's simple.

Never quit.

Nineteen-year-old Adam Bates had been in Afghanistan for only a week. On his first combat mission, he stepped on a pressure plate mine. As a result, both of his legs were amputated.

McRaven had an opportunity to talk to the young soldier at the hospital. He struggled to find the words, but Bates reassured McRaven that he would be okay.

A year later, Ranger Bates was standing tall in his uniform on prosthetic legs. He never quit.

Life isn't easy. No matter what you do, there will be difficult times. Life's unfairness will throw obstacles in your way.

What can you do?

Never quit.



Make Your Bed FAQs

What Are the 10 Lessons From Make Your Bed?

The 10 lessons from Make Your Bed are:

1. Start Your Day with a Task Completed;
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For more on each lesson, read [the full Make Your Bed summary](#).

What Are the Benefits of Making Your Bed?

The benefits of making your bed are that no matter what comes your way during the day, and during your life, you know that you have accomplished something. This gives you the strength, courage and hope to never quit.

[Click here for a full breakdown](#) of every lesson in William H. McRaven's famous speech.



Make Your Bed Quotes

These [Make Your Bed](#) quotes come from [TANQ – The Art of Living's](#) growing central library of thoughts, anecdotes, notes, and [inspirational quotes](#).

"Norris proved them all wrong and once again showed that it's not the size of your flippers that counts, just the size of your heart."

— William H. McRaven, *Make Your Bed*

"Sometimes no matter how hard you try, no matter how good you are, you still end up as a sugar cookie. Don't complain."

— William H. McRaven, *Make Your Bed*

"Without pushing your limits, without occasionally sliding down the rope headfirst, without daring greatly, you will never know what is truly possible in your life."

— William H. McRaven, *Make Your Bed*

"Suddenly, above the howl of the wind came a voice. Singing."

— William H. McRaven, *Make Your Bed*

"Never, ever, ring the bell."

— William H. McRaven, *Make Your Bed*



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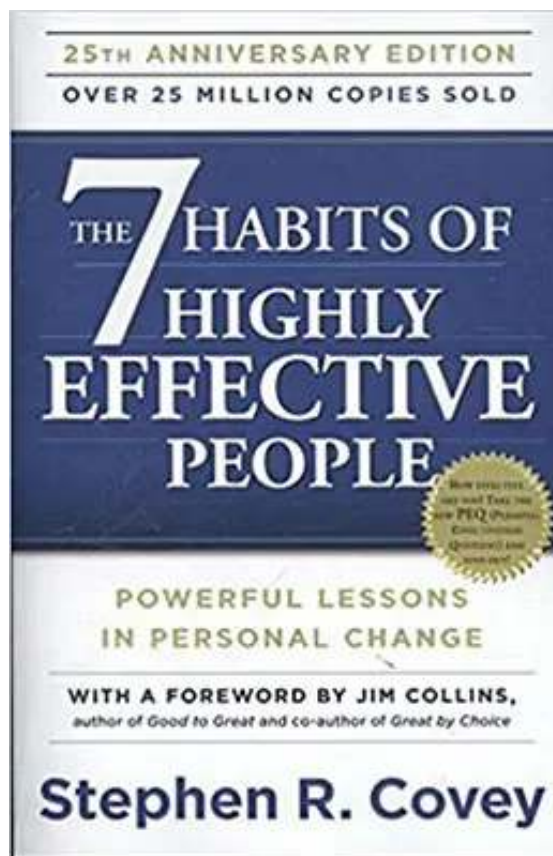
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[Books](#) of all time.

And in the meantime...

Here are 5 top books like *Make Your Bed...*

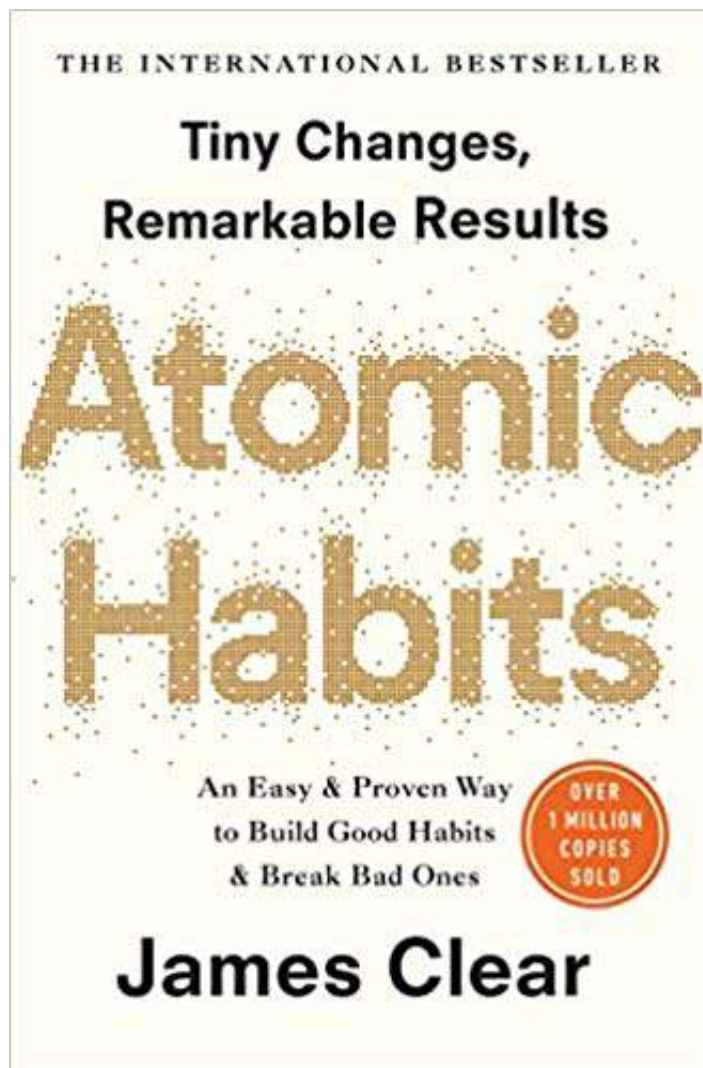


1. [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#) – [Stephen R. Covey](#) ([FREE Summary](#))

Powerful Lessons in Personal Change

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is a perennial masterpiece on leading a happy, productive and purposeful existence and an unmissable stop for any pilgrim of personal improvement – by educator, author and speaker, Stephen Covey.

Published 1989 // 372 pages // Rated 4.1 over 611,600 reviews [on Goodreads](#)

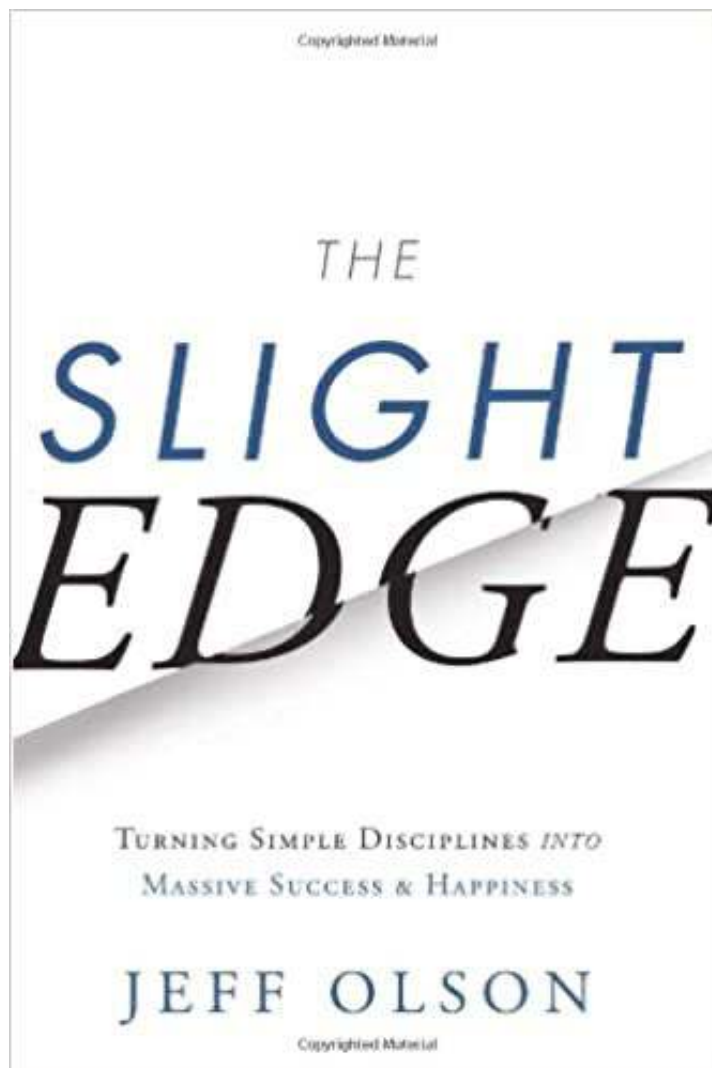


2. [Atomic Habits](#) – [James Clear](#) ([FREE Summary](#))

An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones

Atomic Habits is a powerful and practical guide to transforming your habits, making change stick and achieving remarkable results – by author and habit-guru, James Clear.

Published 2018 // 319 pages // Rated 4.4 over 273,900 reviews [on Goodreads](#)

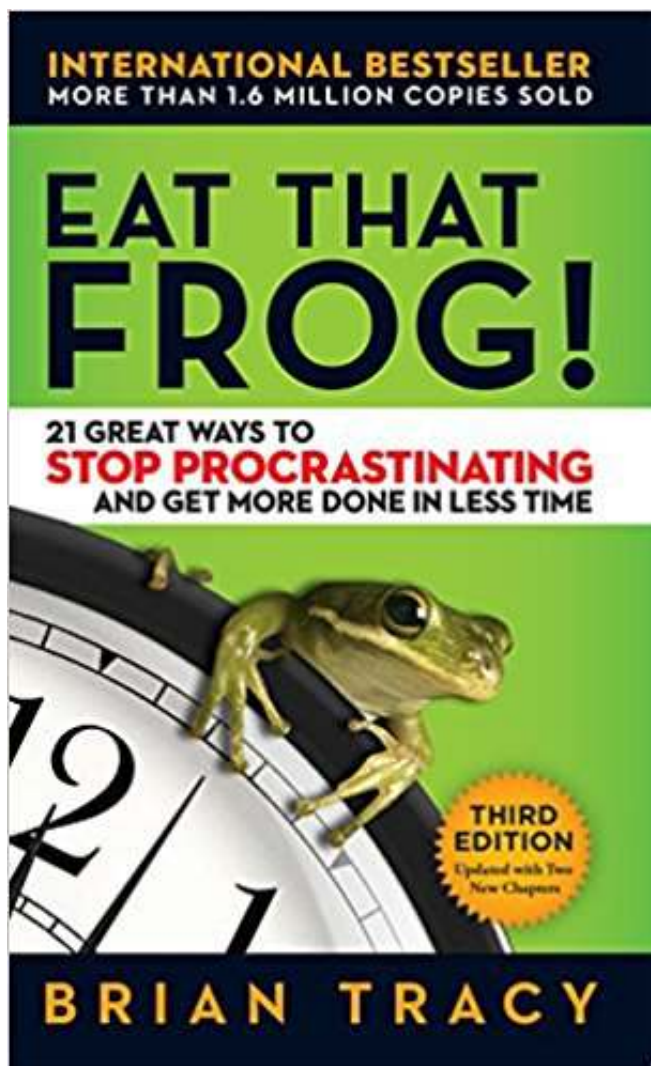


3. [The Slight Edge](#) – [Jeff Olson](#) ([FREE Summary](#))

Turning Simple Disciplines Into Massive Success & Happiness

The Slight Edge is a short, punchy, practical guide to the why, what and how of using simple daily disciplines to achieve breakthrough success – by serial entrepreneur, speaker and author, Jeff Olson.

Published 2005 // 168 pages // Rated 4.3 over 21,600 reviews [on Goodreads](#)

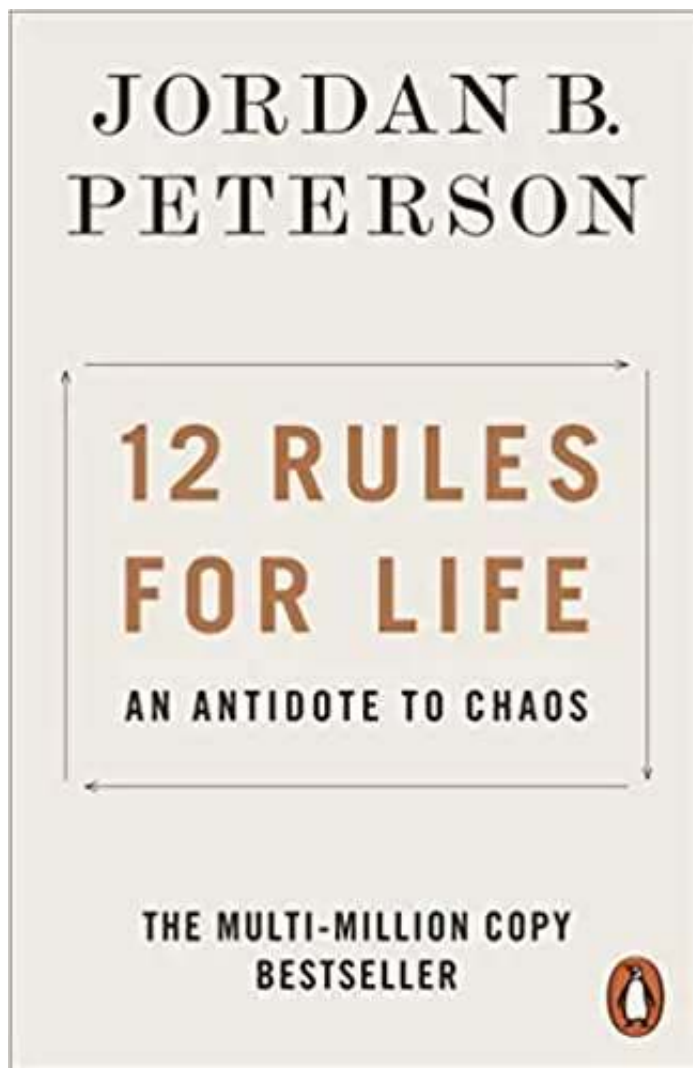


4. [Eat That Frog!](#) – [Brian Tracy](#) ([FREE Summary](#))

21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time

Eat That Frog! punchy, concise guide to identifying what matters, setting powerful goals and then getting to work on them right away – by productivity and self-development legend, Brian Tracy.

Published 2007 // 128 pages // Rated 3.9 over 56,800 reviews [on Goodreads](#)



5. [12 Rules for Life](#) – [Jordan B. Peterson](#) ([FREE Summary](#))

An Antidote to Chaos

12 Rules for Life is a #1 international bestseller that distills some of life's toughest questions into accessible, practical advice – by the New York Times's "most influential public intellectual in the Western world right now," Jordan B. Peterson.

Published 2018 // 409 pages // Rated 4.0 over 41,900 reviews [on Goodreads](#)



Wish There Was a Faster/Easier Way?

Whenever you're ready, here are four ways I can help you be more productive, find more balance and live life more on purpose...

1. **Curious? Discover how productive you really are...** Take this free, 2-minute assessment to unlock your PQ and discover the top 25 habits you need to get big things done. [Take the 2-minute quiz →](#)
2. **Overwhelmed? Get a free chapter of my book...** Let me show you how to beat procrastination, permanently, with this free sneak peek inside **TAoL's** ultimate productivity primer. [Download your free chapter →](#)
3. **Stuck? Grab a 90-Day TRACKTION Planner...** Get the tool thousands trust to help them take control of their time, master their habits and hit goals in every part of their lives. [Order your 90-day planner →](#)
4. **Burned out? Join the TRACKTION Community...** Take the 6-week masterclass, get weekly group coaching, find accountability partners and connect with like-minded self-starters. [Get started FREE →](#)



Make Your Bed - William H. McRaven

15 MINUTE READ | Make Your Bed became a best seller by breaking down how you can change your life and change the world into ten simple steps that start with simply making your bed - by former US Navy SEAL, Admiral William McRaven.

URL: <https://theartofliving.com/make-your-bed-summary/>

Author: William H. McRaven

[Arthur Worsley](#)

I founded **TAoL** to discover and share the best wisdom on how to live long and prosper. Before that I studied Psychology, Philosophy & Physiology at Oxford and consulted at McKinsey. **Still curious?** [Learn more](#) or [take my FREE productivity quiz](#).

