



59 Seconds: Change Your Life in Under a Minute

By Richard Wiseman

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An easy-to-use, concise guide to changing your life in under a minute, backed by cutting-edge scientific research.

Bestselling author and psychologist Richard Wiseman had become increasingly frustrated with the self-help industry and its snake-oil treatments. Here, bringing together a remarkably diverse range of scientific data, he has crafted a no-nonsense response to their ineffectual programs. Filled with tips and tricks that come straight from the latest scientific journals and his own original research, Wiseman outlines the new science of "rapid change" and describes with clarity and infectious enthusiasm how these quirky, sometimes counterintuitive techniques can be effortlessly incorporated into your everyday life.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a self-help book, but with a difference: almost everything in it is underpinned by peer-reviewed and often fascinating research."

— *New Scientist*

"For all those who are tired of the usual self-help formula--homespun anecdotes, upbeat platitudes, over-the-top promises--Richard Wiseman's **59 Seconds** is just what the PhD ordered."

— *The Wall Street Journal*

"Seemingly perfect for this age of short attention spans and instant gratification."

— *The Chronicle Herald*

"At last, a self-help guide that is based on proper research. Perfect for busy, curious, smart people."

— Simon Singh, author of **Fermat's Enigma**

"Wiseman is a brilliant name for a psychologist, and this book proves the professor is not misnamed. . . . [59 Seconds] contains dozens of fascinating and useful nuggets, and they all have science on their side."

— *The Independent*

About the Author

Richard Wiseman is based at the University of Hertfordshire in the United Kingdom and has gained an international reputation for research into offbeat areas of psychology, including deception, humor, and luck. He is the author of *The Luck Factor*, *Quirkology*, and numerous other books. A passionate advocate for science, Wiseman is well-known for his media appearances, high-profile talks, live demonstrations, and mass-participation studies. Wiseman also regularly acts as a creative consultant for print, broadcast, and new media.

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Self-help exposed,

Sophie's question, and the

potential for rapid change

DO YOU WANT TO IMPROVE an important aspect of your life? Perhaps lose weight, find your perfect partner, obtain your dream job, or simply be happier? Try this simple exercise. . . .

Close your eyes and imagine the new you. Think how great you would look in those close-fitting designer jeans, dating Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie, sitting in a luxurious leather chair at the top of the corporate ladder, or sipping a piña colada as the warm waves of the Caribbean gently lap at your feet.

The good news is that this type of exercise has been recommended by some in the self-help industry for years. The bad news is that a large body of research now suggests that such exercises are, at best, ineffective

and, at worst, harmful. Although imagining your perfect self may make you feel better, engaging in such mental escapism can also have the unfortunate side effect of leaving you unprepared for the difficulties that crop up on the rocky road to success, thus increasing the chances of your faltering at the first hurdle rather than persisting in the face of failure. Fantasizing about heaven on earth may put a smile on your face, but it is unlikely to help transform your dreams into reality.

Other research suggests that the same goes for many popular techniques that claim to improve your life. Attempting to “think yourself happy” by suppressing negative thoughts can make you obsess on the very thing that makes you unhappy. Group brainstorming can produce fewer and less original ideas than individuals working alone. Punching a pillow and screaming out loud can increase, rather than decrease, your anger and stress levels.

Then there is the infamous “Yale Goal Study.” According to some writers, in 1953 a team of researchers interviewed Yale’s graduating seniors, asking them whether they had written down the specific goals that they wanted to achieve in life. Twenty years later the researchers tracked down the same cohort and found that the 3 percent of people who had specific goals all those years before had accumulated more personal wealth than the other 97 percent of their classmates combined.

It is a great story, frequently cited in self-help books and seminars to illustrate the power of goal setting. There is just one small problem—as far as anyone can tell, the experiment never actually took place. In 2007 writer Lawrence Tabak, from the magazine *Fast Company*, attempted to track down the study, contacting several writers who had cited it, the secretary of the Yale Class of 1953, and other researchers who had tried to discover whether the study had actually happened. No one could produce any evidence that it had ever been conducted, causing Tabak to conclude that it was almost certainly nothing more than an urban myth. For years, selfhelp gurus had been happy to describe a study without checking their facts.

Both the public and the business world have bought into modern-day mind myths for years and, in so doing, may have significantly decreased the likelihood of achieving their aims and ambitions. Worse still, such failure often encourages people to believe that they cannot control their lives. This is especially unfortunate, as even the smallest loss of perceived control can have a dramatic effect on people’s confidence, happiness, and life span. In one classic study conducted by Ellen Langer at Harvard University, half of the residents in a nursing home were given a houseplant and asked to look after it, while the other residents were given an identical plant but told that the staff would take responsibility for it. Six months later, the residents who had been robbed of even this small amount of control over their lives were significantly less happy, healthy, and active than the others. Even more distressing, 30 percent of the residents who had not looked after their plant had died, compared to 15 percent of those who had been allowed to exercise such control. Similar results have been found in many areas, including education, career, health, relationships, and dieting. The message is clear—those who do not feel in control of their lives are less successful, and less psychologically and physically healthy, than those who do feel in control.

A few years ago I was having lunch with a friend named Sophie. Sophie is a bright, successful thirtysomething who holds a senior position in a firm of management consultants. Over lunch Sophie explained that she had recently bought a well-known book on increasing happiness, and she asked me what I thought of the industry. I explained that I had serious reservations about the scientific backing for some of the techniques being promoted, and described how any failure to change could do considerable psychological harm. Sophie looked concerned and then asked whether academic psychology had produced more scientifically supported ways of improving people’s lives. I started to describe some of the quite complex academic work in happiness, and after about fifteen minutes or so Sophie stopped me. She politely explained that interesting though it was, she was a busy person, and she asked whether I could come up with some

effective advice that didn't take quite so much time to implement. I asked how long I had. Sophie glanced at her watch, smiled, and replied, "About a minute?"

Sophie's comment made me stop and think. Many people are attracted to self-development and self-improvement because of the lure of quick and easy solutions to various issues in their lives. Unfortunately, most academic psychology either fails to address these issues or presents far more time-consuming and complex answers (thus the scene in Woody Allen's film *Sleeper*, in which Allen's character discovers that he has awakened two hundred years in the future, sighs, and explains that had he been in therapy all this time he would almost be cured). I wondered whether there were tips and techniques hidden away in academic journals that were empirically supported but quick to carry out.

Over the course of a few months I carefully searched through endless journals containing research papers from many different areas of psychology. As I examined the work, a promising pattern emerged, with researchers in quite different fields developing techniques that help people achieve their aims and ambitions in minutes, not months. I collected hundreds of these studies, drawn from many different areas of the behavioral sciences. From mood to memory, persuasion to procrastination, resilience to relationships, together they represent a new science of rapid change.

There is a very old story, often told to fill time during training courses, involving a man trying to fix his broken boiler.

Despite his best efforts over many months, he simply can't mend it. Eventually, he gives up and decides to call in an expert. The engineer arrives, gives one gentle tap on the side of the boiler, and stands back as it springs to life. The engineer presents the man with a bill, and the man argues that he should pay only a small fee as the job took the engineer only a few moments. The engineer quietly explains that the man is not paying for the time he took to tap the boiler but rather the years of experience involved in knowing exactly where to tap. Just like the expert engineer tapping the boiler, the techniques described in this book demonstrate that effective change does not have to be time-consuming. In fact, it can take less than a minute and is often simply a question of knowing exactly where to tap.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ruth Mahan:

Do you one of people who can't read pleasant if the sentence chained from the straightway, hold on guys this particular aren't like that. This 59 Seconds: Change Your Life in Under a Minute book is readable by you who hate the perfect word style. You will find the information here are arrange for enjoyable reading experience without leaving actually decrease the knowledge that want to give to you. The writer associated with 59 Seconds: Change Your Life in Under a Minute content conveys the thought easily to understand by many individuals. The printed and e-book are not different in the written content but it just different by means of it. So , do you nevertheless thinking 59 Seconds: Change Your Life in Under a Minute is not loveable to be your top record reading book?

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Judith Craig:

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Hattie Robb:

Is it anyone who having spare time and then spend it whole day through watching television programs or just lying on the bed? Do you need something new? This 59 Seconds: Change Your Life in Under a Minute can be the answer, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are so out of date, spending your time by reading in this fresh era is common not a geek activity. So what these textbooks have than the others?

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