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# SuperBetter: The Power Of Living Gamefully



## 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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kirkus: "For those in search of a new self-help regimen, "SuperBetter" might just be the answer. Strong medical research and firsthand accounts provide evidence that playing games can make you a healthier, happier, more confident person." Daniel H. Pink, bestselling author of Drive and A Whole New Mind: "At the heart of SuperBetter is a simple and potentially transformative idea: We can use the same psychological strengths we display when we play games to confront real-life challenges, whether it's illness, injury, or just changing our habits for the better. Grounded in research and informed by McGonigal's own sometimes harrowing experiences, this book will make you stop and think, then get you to act." Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., Clinical Professor, UCLA School of Medicine and author of Mindsight: "SuperBetter delivers mind-boggling, science-supported, health-promoting knowledge and practical steps to bring more well-being into your life in a fun and engaging way, even if you are facing epic challenges like anxiety, depression, traumatic brain injury, or medical illness. Visionary innovator and researcher Jane McGonigal provides the proof and the practices that reveal how living a "gameful" life can help you get personally stronger, closer to others, clearer in your mind, braver in your actions, and a greater hero in your own unfolding life story. SuperBetter is a playful, hands-on manual immersing you directly in challenges and adventures of creative gaming to develop more flexibility and resilience as you transform your life." Jennifer Senior, author of All Joy and No Fun: "In this dazzling manifesto, Jane McGonigal knits together state-of-the-art research, moving anecdotes, and extremely satisfying mini-challenges to show us how games "video and otherwise" hold the key to a more productive, joyous life. A game designer by training and an empath by nature, McGonigal uses every power-up at her disposal to convince her audience that the very tools we deploy in imaginary worlds can be used to overcome struggles in everyday life. The result is a

candy-crushing, genre-slaying read, for which fans will surely be sending her gratitude notes for years to come.

• Felicia Day, creator of Geek and Sundry and author of *You're Never Weird on the Internet (Almost)*: "SuperBetter is an amazing book that fuses psychology and play in an revelatory way. With a wonderfully encouraging writing style, Jane morphs the tropes of gaming into an empowering tool set for change. SuperBetter is impeccably researched, extremely accessible, and sure to inspire gamers and non-gamers to adopt gameful techniques into their day-to-day lives. The sword of self-improvement never seemed easier to wield against the monsters lurking in one's mind!"

• Rob Delaney, comedian and author of best-selling memoir *Rob Delaney: Mother. Wife. Sister. Human. Warrior. Falcon. Yardstick. Turban. Cabbage.*: "You can't think your way out of a problem, but you can work your way out of a problem. SuperBetter shows us that it's also possible, and maybe even healthier, to play your way out of a problem. Especially if you're a silly person, like me or Stephen Hawking."

• Asi Burak, President of Games for Change: "Jane McGonigal is easily one of the most innovative thinkers in gaming today. In SuperBetter, she reveals to the world a great secret that avid game players kept for years: games are not a waste of your time; they can make you stronger, happier and more mindful. Reading this book is a compelling quest for anyone—whether you play games regularly, or you just have an open mind about them."

• Amy Cuddy, associate professor, Harvard Business School; author of *Presence*: "This book is a wise and compassionate distillation of a wealth of good research about the psychology and neuroscience of resilience and social support, married to a game framework that itself comes out of rigorous new science into the psychology and neuroscience of gaming. SuperBetter has been studied in action by the University of Pennsylvania and the National Institutes of Health, among others, and the facts are incontrovertible: following the SuperBetter rules makes people happier, more satisfied, less controlled by suffering, and stronger in their relationships with others. It really works."

• Susan Cain, co-founder of Quiet Revolution LLC and New York Times bestselling author of *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*: "After reading Jane McGonigal's SuperBetter I'll never again say that something is only a game. SuperBetter gives readers the tools to take the same challenge mindset we bring to playing the games we love and apply it to facing our greatest life challenges. The result is a clear path, not just to post-traumatic recovery, but to post-traumatic growth. In every sense a game-changing book."

• Jack Kornfield, Buddhist teacher and bestselling author of *A Path With Heart*: "Jane McGonigal shows a playful doorway to well-being and how much we can gain from training attention. This is using the art of games to grow, heal and learn."

• Charles Duhigg, New York Times bestselling author of *The Power of Habit*: "Hundreds of thousands of people

have had their lives changed by Jane McGonigal's SuperBetter program, and I see why. It's a marriage of positive psychology with pioneering insights from cutting-edge game design. This is a plan for profound growth in the face of whatever challenges life throws at you - and whatever ones you can throw at yourself.

- Gretchen Rubin, bestselling author of *Better Than Before* and *The Happiness Project*: "Don't we all want to be better than before? In fact, we'd like to be super better! Jane McGonigal's fascinating, ground-breaking approach shows how 'living gamefully' can help us lead happier, healthier, more engaged lives."
- James R. Doty, M.D., Professor of Neurosurgery, Stanford University School of Medicine: "Many of us struggle to overcome challenges that seem overwhelming. Jane McGonigal has taken her immense knowledge of the science of gaming to create an innovative guide that allowed her to overcome her greatest challenge and now, thankfully, is available to each of us to overcome our own."
- Nilofer Merchant, CEO, Silicon Valley strategist, and author of *The New How*: "Until you understand yourselves as the hero of your own story, you'll never make a dent in the world. This insightful book shows you how to create the life of your dreams, using a gameful approach."
- Stacy London, host, *What Not to Wear*; author of *The Truth About Style*: "Jane McGonigal's book is an inspiring one about overcoming personal obstacles, and a revolutionary testament that game playing is for ANYONE who wants to change their life for the better. To become stronger, braver, and happier, you have to 'play with a purpose.' And if you don't know what that means, get ready | you will."
- Marc Goodman, author of *Future Crimes* and Chair for Policy, Law & Ethics at Singularity University: "Masterfully written and well researched, SuperBetter is literally a game-changer for anybody looking to build resilience in their lives. Though today's rapidly evolving world can often seem overwhelming, McGonigal offers an important and timely roadmap to take back control of our own lives and focus on what really matters. SuperBetter is a quest well-worth going on."

Jane McGonigal, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Institute for the Future and the author of the New York Times bestseller *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. Her work has been featured in *The Economist*, *Wired*, and *The New York Times* and on MTV, CNN, and NPR. She has been called one of the top ten innovators to watch (*BusinessWeek*), one of the one hundred most creative people in business (*Fast Company*), and one of the fifty most important people in the gaming industry (*Game Developers Magazine*). Her TED talks on games have been viewed more than ten million times.

I've watched Jane McGonigal's TED talks, read *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better*

and How They Can Change the World" and installed the "Super Better" app on my various phones. But until I started reading Super Better, I didn't "get" the power of the concepts contained in the process. The writing is easy to read, and the use of the "quests" in the middle of the book make me excited to continue reading. My first experience was when reading the book on a bus and being challenged to complete the first 4 quests in the next 5 minutes. How do you strike a power pose in the morning rush on a bus without being "the strange man" who people avoid? I summoned my gaming knowledge and decided to be a ninja super better hero, finding the subtle and hidden ways to achieve the quests while blending into my surroundings. Suddenly I was doing things I'd never do, seeing things I'd never see, and experiencing my commute in a new way. I continually am sending snapshots of paragraphs to friends and family who need to hear the truth behind being "gameful" in life. Friends who have been mocked for playing games, or who have thought less of themselves because they play them. Seeing the benefit in applying a gameful mindset to life is inspiring me to do more, and read more. The explanations are so natural and easy to follow, that I'm looking forward to becoming more than just better - I'm looking forward to becoming "Super Better".

I am very happy to read this book. I was a bit skeptical from the bombastic claims in the beginning of the book. But I am very happy to hear some of the research done in gaming. It was an eye opening. I am not sure about some of the researches add extra hours in to hour lives by planing games. That was too much to believe.

This book is worth reading. It gives you another perspective on how to approach the serious parts of life. Also it should be required reading for the anti gaming alarmists. The negatives of the book are that it is repetitive and often seems trivial.

This work is not only well researched, entertaining and very helpful; but it also points out the values that the most important game should have; optimizing physical health, rational thinking, emotional intelligence and a sense of connectivity towards our peers. Sometimes it's not about effort, but direction and how real our idea of destination is. I will be recommending this book for sure!

Excellent book. Heard about it on TED. Ms. McGonigal is an amazing person.

This was my favorite non-fiction book of the year. Not only is Jane a dynamic and engaging writer, not only does she back everything up with tons of science, research and references, but she

also creates an engaging game-as-you-go. This book is leveling up at life “whether you play the game, or just take what you learn and integrate into your life, this book will make you better and more apt to look at life playfully. I wrote about an early experience with Jane’s work on Medium @airjoshb, look for the post with Superbetter in the title.

well worth the read

Helped me get over some anxiety

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