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**BOOK**  
**SUMMARY**

**SOUNDTRACKS**

**BY JON ACUFF**





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## A BRIEF LOOK

### Quick Summary

Jon Acuff explores how overthinking and negative self-talk hold people back from success and happiness. He teaches readers to replace negative "soundtracks" with positive, productive thoughts that help them take action.

Using humor, personal stories, and practical strategies, Acuff provides a simple framework for changing thinking patterns to achieve better results in life and work.

### BOOK HIGHLIGHTS

Your thoughts are the internal soundtracks you listen to even more than your favorite songs. If you listen to any thought long enough, it becomes part of your personal playlist.

#### 3 KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Overthinking becomes a superpower when you control your thought patterns.
2. Ask three questions: Is it true, helpful, and kind?
3. Replace broken soundtracks through repetition.



Acuff introduces a three-step process: retire broken soundtracks, replace them with new ones, and repeat them until they're automatic. The solution isn't to stop thinking but to run your brain with different soundtracks. If you can worry, you can wonder. If you can doubt, you can dominate. Your thoughts empower your actions, which generate your results.



## CHAPTER 1

## I THINK I CAN DO THIS



Acuff discovered how to turn overthinking from a super problem into a superpower. Overthinking is when what you think gets in the way of what you want. Your thoughts are the internal soundtracks you listen to even more than your favorite songs. If you listen to any thought long enough, it becomes part of your personal playlist.

Unfortunately, when you don't create, curate, and choose what soundtracks you'll listen to, the music doesn't stop—you just hear songs you don't like. These are called broken soundtracks, negative stories you tell yourself about yourself and your world. They play automatically without any invitation or effort.

### KEY THOUGHT

“Overthinking is when what you think gets in the way of what you want.”  
(p. 15)





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## CHAPTER 1

# KEY QUOTES



- "I discovered how to turn overthinking from a super problem into a superpower." (p. 14)
- "Your thoughts are the internal soundtracks you listen to even more than your favorite song." (p. 19)
- "If you can worry, you can wonder. If you can doubt, you can dominate. If you can spin, you can soar." (p. 28)
- "Your thoughts empower your actions, which in turn generate your results." (p. 31)



## CHAPTER 2

## THE CHOICE IS YOURS



Priming's formal name is the ideomotor effect, and it works both ways—your thoughts influence your actions, and your actions influence your thoughts. When you pick the soundtracks you listen to most, there's no limit to what you can accomplish. Ask three questions about every soundtrack: Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it kind?

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. Two things have the greatest impact when practicing mindfulness: repeating a phrase deliberately for a set period, and gently bringing yourself back by saying "Oh well" when distracted.

### KEY THOUGHT

“When you pick the soundtracks you listen to the most, there's no limit to what you can accomplish.”  
(p. 41)





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## CHAPTER 2

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "One of the greatest mistakes you can make in life is assuming all your thoughts are true." (p. 41)
- "Culture is just a collection of soundtracks playing consistently at a company." (p. 45)
- "Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally." (p. 52)
- "We spend eighteen years teaching our kids that work sucks and then act surprised when they graduate from college and don't seem eager to get a job." (p. 56)

## CHAPTER 3

## TURN DOWN THE DIAL



A dial approach says the goal isn't to stop listening forever to all your broken soundtracks. The goal is to turn them down when they get loud, to head them off when life's surprises crank the volume to 10. When we neglect turn-down techniques, the best music doesn't really have a chance to go viral.

Five turn-down techniques include: running or endorphin exercise, LEGO sets, lists (the fastest way to bring clarity to chaos), minor tasks with massive payoff like laundry or cleaning your desk, and talking to friends. Don't ever use any form of exercise you hate as a turn-down technique—find your own way to get endorphins into your system.

### KEY THOUGHT

A dial approach says, "The goal isn't to stop listening forever to all my broken soundtracks. The goal is to turn them down when they get loud." (p. 64)





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## CHAPTER 3

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "When we neglect turn-down techniques, the best music doesn't really have a chance to go viral." (p. 69)
- "A list is the fastest way to bring clarity to chaos." (p. 71)
- "Don't ever use any form of exercise you hate as a turn-down technique, but find your own way to get some endorphins into your system." (p. 71)

## CHAPTER 4

## BORROW FROM THE BEST



The question isn't whether or not you'll hear a soundtrack today. The question is whether you'll choose it or chance it. You're better at picking out great thoughts to listen than your feelings are. The antidote to overthinking isn't more thinking—the antidote is action. You can't have gratitude if you can't first admit something is good.

Five soundtracks to borrow include: "People are trying to give me money," "I'll feel awesome after," "Spare change adds up," "Pick ROI, not EGO," and "Pivot, don't panic." These borrowed soundtracks provide immediate frameworks for handling business conversations, challenging moments, extra effort, decision-making, and unexpected changes.

### KEY THOUGHT

"The antidote to overthinking isn't more thinking—the antidote is action."  
(p. 89)





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## CHAPTER 4

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "The question isn't whether or not you'll hear a soundtrack today. The question is whether you'll choose it or chance it." (p. 83)
- "You're better at picking out great thoughts to listen to than your feelings are." (p. 85)
- "You can't have gratitude if you can't first admit something is good." (p. 92)

## CHAPTER 5

## WIN THE WEEK



The goal of writing wasn't to release a book—it was to release Acuff. You have a soundtrack for everyone in your life. Replacing your soundtracks is about identifying what you've been listening to and then owning the responsibility of changing them.

Three questions help you win the week: Where do I want to win this week? What soundtracks will help? What actions can I take? This framework moves you from passive overthinking to active planning. By identifying specific areas for victory and connecting them to supportive soundtracks and concrete actions, you create a weekly roadmap for success.

### KEY THOUGHT

Replacing your soundtracks is about identifying what soundtracks you've been listening to and then owning the responsibility of changing them."  
(p. 107)





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## CHAPTER 5

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "The goal of writing that wasn't to release a book. It was to release me." (p. 101)
- "You have a soundtrack for everyone in your life." (p. 107)
- "Where do I want to win this week? What soundtracks will help? What actions can I take?" (p. 114)

## CHAPTER 6

If you want to create a new soundtrack, pick a broken one that's loud and flip it upside down. What's the flip side of finishing a whole book? Writing a few pages—that's the opposite. Change is the only thing every company has in common.

## DON'T FIGHT IT FLIP IT

Broken soundtracks like to traffic in absolutes. Everything, nothing, none, and forever are sure signs you're overthinking. What's the opposite of criticism? Curiosity. The flip side of saying no is saying yes. If you want to find a soundtrack to flip, listen to the unkind things you repeatedly say about yourself. You never beat an old lie with a new lie.

### KEY THOUGHT

"If you want to find a soundtrack to flip, listen to the unkind things you repeatedly say about yourself."  
(p. 127)





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## CHAPTER 6

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "Broken soundtracks like to traffic in absolutes. Everything, nothing, none, and forever are sure signs that you're overthinking." (p. 121)
- "What's the opposite of criticism? Curiosity." (p. 121)
- "The flip side of criticism is curiosity. The flip side of saying no is saying yes. The flip side of declaring why it won't work is discovering why it could." (p. 126)
- "You never beat an old lie with a new lie." (p. 128)

## CHAPTER 7 ZIG YOUR WAY TO POSITIVE THINKING



Overthinking doesn't play fair, so we won't either. "I react to problems" versus "I respond to problems" is a subtle shift, but it's an important one. React implies immediacy and emotion, while respond suggests thoughtfulness and control.

The next time you're in the middle of a stressful situation, ask yourself, "Am I focusing on the problem or the solution?" It's simple but it works. This question redirects your mental energy from dwelling on what's wrong to discovering what's possible. The shift from reactive to responsive thinking creates space for better decisions and more productive outcomes.

### KEY THOUGHT

"Good days start with good thoughts."  
(p. 143)





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## CHAPTER 7

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "Overthinking doesn't play fair, so we won't either." (p. 134)
- "'I react to problems' versus 'I respond to problems' is a subtle shift, but it's an important one." (p. 141)
- "The next time you're in the middle of a stressful situation, ask yourself, 'Am I focusing on the problem or the solution?' It's simple but it works." (p. 144)

## CHAPTER 8

## PUT THE NEW ANTHEM ON REPEAT



The first step was to create a brand-new set of affirmations. Ten new soundtracks include: "Today is brand-new and tomorrow is too," "I've got a gift worth giving," "The only person standing in my way is me, and I quit doing that yesterday," and seven others that reshape thinking patterns.

Repeating the New Anthem helped reduce overthinking and self-doubt while increasing satisfaction and productivity. Self-care starts with self-talk. There are two slingshot moments you have access to: first thing when you wake up and last thing before you fall asleep. One launches you into your day and the other launches you into your dreams.

### KEY THOUGHT

"Self-care starts with self-talk."  
(p. 160)





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## CHAPTER 8

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "Repeating the New Anthem helped reduce overthinking and self-doubt. It increased satisfaction and productivity." (p. 159)
- "There are two slingshot moments you have access to: first thing when you wake up and last thing before you fall asleep." (p. 162)
- "We don't know how the day is going to go, but we know the volume of broken soundtracks is going to get raised at least a few times." (p. 162)

## CHAPTER 9

## GATHER EVIDENCE



A pocket jury is a collection of broken soundtracks that judge your life whenever you try to become more than you currently are. Fear requires no effort while faith demands intentional work. To defeat a pocket jury, you must listen to its accusations, gather actual evidence about reality, and speak truth to yourself based on facts rather than feelings.

Without corresponding action, even the best soundtrack becomes nothing more than an inspiring quote that accomplishes nothing. The most effective way to silence your internal critics is to demonstrate overwhelming proof through consistent action.

### KEY THOUGHT

“Fear comes free. Faith takes work.”  
(p. 173)





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## CHAPTER 9

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "A pocket jury is a collection of broken soundtracks that judge your life whenever you dare to be more than you currently are." (p. 171)
- "A soundtrack without action is just a fortune cookie. It might be catchy, it might even be clever, but until you put it into action it doesn't accomplish anything." (p. 183)
- "The best way to shut my pocket jury up is to show up with overwhelming action." (p. 184)

## CHAPTER 10

## MAKE A SOUNDTRACK STICK WITH A SYMBOL



Symbols and the meaning we attach to them are powerful tools for living out our new soundtracks. A good symbol must meet three criteria: it needs to be simple, personal to your story, and visible in your daily life. Without visibility, you've created a souvenir rather than an actionable reminder.

The right symbol acts as a constant trigger for your new soundtrack, reinforcing positive thinking patterns throughout your day. When you see it repeatedly, it cues the mental shift you're working to build. This physical representation transforms abstract thoughts into tangible reminders, making it easier to maintain new thinking habits even when life gets chaotic.

### KEY THOUGHT

"Symbols, and the meaning we attach to them, are powerful tools for living out our new soundtracks."  
(p. 195)





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## CHAPTER 10

# *KEY QUOTES*

- "Symbols, and the meaning we attach to them, are powerful tools for living out our new soundtracks." (p. 195)
- "If you can't easily see your symbol, then it's not a symbol, it's a souvenir." (p. 201)

# ABOUT JOHN

Some folks would consider me a reader's reader. For years now, I have read 52 books a year, gleaning nuggets from books ranging from leadership to apologetics. These book summaries have helped me retain key ideas from each book.

Now I'm sharing them with you!

Each book summary is meant to give you a big-picture overview of the book through the "A Brief Look" section. The summary also covers each chapter, providing you with a chapter summary, key thought, and several quotes to take away or save for future use.

However you use these summaries, I hope they provide you with wisdom, insight, and key takeaways that you can use in the future.

Grace and peace,

*John C. Richards, Jr.*

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