

'CliffsNotes' Book Club Recap

DO YOU LOVE BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP, NEUROSCIENCE, AND BUSINESS, BUT NOT HAVE TIME TO READ ALL THE BOOKS?

Join the **'CliffsNotes' club**—where there's no pressure to pre-read the book, no membership required, no cost, and lots of discussion in just 90 minutes. Each month, you will hear a **summary of highlights** from a recently-published business book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. We'll keep you "in the know" on the latest and greatest concepts and models. **Register here** for upcoming events.



December 2023

Year-End Open Mic

Our year-end meeting is an open forum where members share suggestions for reading, listening, or watching. The summary below reflects resources mentioned—and previews the 2024 book line-up.

Discussion Highlights

Reading Suggestions

- **Dedicated** – Pete Davis [From Amazon](#): Most of us have had this experience: browsing through countless options on Netflix, unable to commit to watching any given movie—and losing so much time skimming reviews and considering trailers that it's too late to watch anything at all. In a book inspired by an idea first articulated in a viral commencement address, Pete Davis argues that this is the defining characteristic of the moment: keeping our options open. We are stuck in "Infinite Browsing Mode"—swiping through endless dating profiles without committing to a single partner, jumping from place to place searching for the next big thing, and refusing to make any decision that might close us off from an even better choice we imagine is just around the corner.
- **Recoding America** – Jennifer Pahlka [From Amazon](#): Just when we most need our government to work—to decarbonize our infrastructure and economy, to help the vulnerable through a pandemic, to defend ourselves against global threats—it is faltering. Government at all levels has limped into the digital age, offering online services that can feel even more cumbersome than the paperwork that preceded them and widening the gap between the policy outcomes we intend and what we get.
- **Coaching A to Z** – Haesun Moon [From Amazon](#): Language is a powerful tool that can unite, engage, and move people to action. It's all in what you choose to say, and how you say it. In this practical, accessible guide to having more powerful conversations, leading evidence-based coaching expert Haesun Moon offers a set of powerful words or phrases—one for every letter of the alphabet—to help you move others toward greater purpose and accomplishment. Based on her extensive research with the University of Toronto and Harvard Medical School, Moon shows you how to apply each of these concepts to transform the way you relate to others and empower them to strive for and achieve better outcomes.
- **How to Know a Person** – David Brooks [From Amazon](#): As David Brooks observes, "There is one skill that lies at the heart of any healthy person, family, school, community organization, or society: the ability to see someone else deeply and make them feel seen—to accurately know another person, to let them feel valued, heard, and understood." And yet we humans don't do this well.
- **The Social Animal** – David Brooks [From Amazon](#): This is the story of how success happens. It is told through the lives of one composite American couple, Harold and Erica—how they grow, push forward, are pulled back, fail, and succeed. Distilling a vast array of information into these two vividly realized characters, Brooks illustrates a fundamental new understanding of human nature. A scientific revolution has occurred—we have learned more about the human brain in the last thirty years than we had in the previous three thousand.
- **The Body Keeps the Score** – Bessel van der Kolk [From Amazon](#): Trauma is a fact of life. Veterans and their families deal with the painful aftermath of combat; one in five Americans has been molested; one in four grew up with alcoholics; one in three couples have engaged in physical violence. Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the world's foremost experts on trauma, has spent more than three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he uses recent scientific advances to show how trauma literally reshapes both body and brain, compromising sufferers' capacities for pleasure, engagement, self-control, and trust. He explores innovative treatments that offer new paths to recovery by activating the brain's natural neuroplasticity.
- **Extreme Ownership** – Jocko Willink and Leif Babin [From Amazon](#): Combat, the most intense and dynamic environment imaginable, teaches the toughest leadership lessons, with absolutely everything at stake. Jocko Willink and Leif Babin learned this reality first-hand on the most violent and dangerous battlefield in Iraq. As leaders of SEAL Team Three's Task Unit Bruiser, their mission was one many thought impossible: help U.S. forces secure Ramadi, a violent, insurgent-held city deemed "all but lost." In gripping, firsthand accounts of heroism, tragic loss, and hard-won victories, they learned that leadership—at every level—is the most important factor in whether a team succeeds or fails.
- **Slow Productivity** – Cal Newport [From Amazon](#): Our current definition of "productivity" is broken. It pushes us to treat busyness as a proxy for useful effort, leading to impossibly lengthy task lists and ceaseless meetings. We're overwhelmed by all we have to do and on the edge of burnout, left to decide between giving into soul-sapping hustle culture or rejecting ambition altogether. But are these really our only choices? Long before the arrival of ping-pong inboxes and clogged schedules, history's most creative and impactful philosophers, scientists, artists, and writers mastered the art of producing valuable work with staying power. In this timely and provocative book, Cal Newport harnesses the wisdom of these traditional knowledge workers to radically transform our modern jobs. Drawing from deep research on the habits and mindsets of a varied cast of storied thinkers – from Galileo and Isaac Newton, to Jane Austen and Georgia O'Keefe – Newport lays out the key principles of "slow productivity," a more sustainable alternative to the

aimless overwhelm that defines our current moment. Combining cultural criticism with systematic pragmatism, Newport deconstructs the absurdities inherent in standard notions of productivity, and then provides step-by-step advice for cultivating a slower, more humane alternative.

- **The No Club: Putting a Stop to Women's Dead-End Work** – Linda Babcock, Brenda Peyser, Lise Vesterlund [From Amazon](#): The No Club started when four women, crushed by endless to-do lists, banded together to get their work lives under control. Running faster than ever, they still trailed behind male colleagues. And so, they vowed to say no to requests that pulled them away from the work that mattered most to their careers. This book reveals how their over-a-decade-long journey and subsequent groundbreaking research showing that women everywhere are unfairly burdened with “non-promotable work,” a tremendous problem we can—and must—solve.
- **Unmasking AI: My Mission to Protect What is Human in a World of Machines** – Joy Buolamwini [From Amazon](#): To most of us, it seems like recent developments in artificial intelligence emerged out of nowhere to pose unprecedented threats to humankind. But to Dr. Joy Buolamwini, who has been at the forefront of AI research, this moment has been a long time in the making. After tinkering with robotics as a high school student in Memphis and then developing mobile apps in Zambia as a Fulbright fellow, Buolamwini followed her lifelong passion for computer science, engineering, and art to MIT in 2015. As a graduate student at the “Future Factory,” she did groundbreaking research that exposed widespread racial and gender bias in AI services from tech giants across the world.
- **The Inclusive Language Field Guide** – Suzanne Wertheim [From Amazon](#): In today's fast-moving and combative culture, language can feel like a minefield. Terms around gender, disability, race, sexuality and more are constantly evolving. Words that used to be acceptable can now get you “cancelled.” People are afraid of making embarrassing mistakes. Or sounding outdated or out of touch. Or not being as respectful as they intended. But it's not as complicated as it might seem. Linguistic anthropologist Suzanne Wertheim offers six easy-to-understand principles to guide any communication—written or spoken—with anyone...
- **Lead from the Outside** – Stacey Abrams [From Amazon](#): Leadership is hard. Convincing others—and often yourself—that you possess the answers and are capable of world-affecting change requires confidence, insight, and sheer bravado. *Lead from the Outside* is the handbook for outsiders, written with the awareness of the experiences and challenges that hinder anyone who exists beyond the structure of traditional white male power—women, people of color, members of the LGBTQ community, and millennials ready to make a difference.
- **Right Kind of Wrong** – Amy Edmondson [From Amazon](#): We used to think of failure as the opposite of success. Now, we're often torn between two “failure cultures”: one that says to avoid failure at all costs, the other that says fail fast, fail often. The trouble is that both approaches lack the crucial distinctions to help us separate good failure from bad. As a result, we miss the opportunity to fail well. After decades of award-winning research, Amy Edmondson is here to upend our understanding of failure and make it work for us. In *Right Kind of Wrong*, Edmondson provides the framework to think, discuss, and practice failure wisely. Outlining the three archetypes of failure—basic, complex, and intelligent—Amy showcases how to minimize unproductive failure while maximizing what we gain from flubs of all stripes. She illustrates how we and our organizations can embrace our human fallibility, learn exactly when failure is our friend, and prevent most of it when it is not. This is the key to pursuing smart risks and preventing avoidable harm.
- **Who do We Choose to Be?** – Margaret Wheatley [From Amazon](#): Bestselling author Margaret Wheatley has summoned us to be courageous leaders who strengthen community and rely on fully engaged people since her 1992 classic book, *Leadership and the New Science*, and eight subsequent books. In response to how quickly society is changing and the exponential increase in leadership challenges, this second edition of her latest bestseller is 80% new material.
- **Remote Not Distant** – Gustavo Razzetti [From Amazon](#): The pandemic taught many businesses a very valuable lesson — those who don't adapt will get left behind. Some businesses managed to not only survive but actually thrive in a remote and hybrid work model. What's their secret? *Remote, Not Distant* unveils the secrets behind successful remote workplace cultures and provides actionable tools for senior leaders, managers, team members, and consultants. Authored by top culture thought leader Gustavo Razzetti, this book provides a clear roadmap to understanding, adapting to, and succeeding in a hybrid workplace.
- **Never Lose an Employee Again** – Joey Coleman [From Amazon](#): Joey Coleman, one of the world's leading experts on employee experience, reveals practical strategies that will teach you exactly how to recruit top talent, bring them onboard successfully, and keep them engaged while they produce remarkable results for years to come. Finding and keeping quality employees is one of the greatest challenges facing businesses today. With more people quitting their jobs each month than ever before and employees demanding flexibility, freedom, and advancement, companies are struggling to build a foundation with new hires that leads to long-term commitment. To effectively combat the hiring crisis and remain competitive, business owners and managers must design an employee experience program that begins on day one.
- **Never Enough** – Jennifer Breheny [From Amazon](#): In the ever more competitive race to secure the best possible future, today's students face unprecedented pressure to succeed. They jam-pack their schedules with AP classes, fill every waking hour with resume-padding activities, and even sabotage relationships with friends to “get ahead.” Family incomes and schedules are stretched to the breaking point by tutoring fees and athletic schedules. Yet this drive to optimize performance has only resulted in skyrocketing rates of anxiety, depression, and even self-harm in America's highest achieving schools. Parents, educators, and community leaders are facing the same quandary: how can we teach our kids to strive towards excellence without crushing them?

Listening Suggestions (Podcasts)

- Hidden Brain (Shankar Vedantam) [episode](#) "Outsmarting Yourself." Discusses decision-making and cognitive dissonance, psychology of self-persuasion. Features Elliott Aronson.
- Rethinking (Adam Grant) podcast episodes:
 - "Why Meetings Suck and How to Fix Them" [episode](#)
 - "Optimizing our Lives" [episode](#) – Features Barry Schwartz (author of *The Paradox of Choice*) and Coco Krumme (author of *Optimal Illusions*), authors of *The Paradox of Choice* and *Optimal Illusions*. Discussion is about how to pursue success in a more balanced way.
- A Slight Change of Plans with Maya Shankar – Great [podcast](#) series; storytelling, science of human behavior, facing change.

Resources & Events

- **Mid Atlantic Facilitators Network** – Book Club member Laura Bowles recommended this group. Events are on Zoom and are worthwhile! For info: <https://www.mafn.org/>
- **Women's Center Conference** – Save the date: Saturday, April 6, 2024. Shankar Vedantam (Hidden Brain Media) will be speaking. For info: <https://thewomenscenter.org/>
- **Responding to Conflict with Compassion (Workshop)** – Book Club member Judy Tso is leading this online [workshop](#) (January to November 2024, third Tuesday of the Month, 7-8 pm ET). Enrollment is now open.

About the Book Club In this monthly club, a presenter shares highlights from a book related to leadership, business, neuroscience, or coaching. Membership is not required, and there's no obligation to pre-read the book. This discussion summary is intended to provide a recap of the conversation at Book Club, rather than serve as a thorough book summary. [Register here](#) for upcoming events. For the full set of discussion summaries, [click here](#).