

Peaks & Valleys by Spencer Johnson

The book in a nutshell, The audio version is also great !

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I listen to this book over and over, everybody I suggest this to , loves it and suggests it to somebody else. * also try “The Present”

The book makes the point that the ups and downs of life are inevitable but it is possible to manage them in a way that allows us to find more peace and success. We can do this by taking the Peaks and Valleys approach to dealing with the good and the bad times. The more we use this approach we are able to do three things: get out of a valley (our lows) sooner, stay on a peak (our successes and highs) longer and have more peaks and fewer valleys in our lives.

Key takeaways

Peaks and valleys are normal but it's how you feel about and respond to them that makes the difference in your life. It is natural for everyone to have ups and downs at work and in life in general. Some can last minutes while others can last days, months and even years. The key is to separate what happens to you from how good and valuable you feel you are as a person. It is possible to still feel good about yourself even when bad things are happening in your life.

Peaks and valleys are connected. The mistakes you make when times are good create the bad times that follow. Conversely, the wise things you do when things are bad bring the good times. The problem is that we fail to manage our good times and don't realize that we are the ones creating our bad times by wasting too many resources, forgetting the basics, and ignoring what matters most.

Peaks are moments when we appreciate what we have. Valleys are moments when we long for what is missing. But we can change a valley to a peak by either changing what is happening or changing how we feel about what is happening so that it works to our advantage. We can find and use the good that is hidden in the bad time.

How we manage our valleys will determine how soon we reach our next peak. If we fail to learn while in a valley we become bitter instead of better. Similarly if we are unprepared for a peak we will soon fall from it and feel pain. Our ego makes us arrogant on the peak but fearful in the valley. On a peak, our ego makes us see things better than they are and in a valley they seem worse. It makes us think a peak will last forever and a valley will never end.

To stay on a Peak we have to shed our ego and embrace humility and gratitude. We continue doing the things that got us to the peak and continue to improve ourselves, the people around us and our environment. We save resources for the valleys we know are going to come.

The best way to get through a valley is to create a compelling but achievable vision and start working towards it. It has to be something you want so much that you don't have to force yourself to do what you need to do to make it happen.

Final thoughts

This is a short book packed with what at times feels obvious but rather compelling advice. Going through the ups and downs of life doesn't have to make us stressed or anxious. Once we realize that we are not the peaks or the valleys, we are able to find peace. We can learn how to better manage our peaks and valleys so that our peaks last longer and our valleys last a much shorter time. By being honest with what is happening in our lives and changing our attitude to it we can find the positive in any situation. We can learn from these experiences and make better decisions as we move through life.

Notes:

What I like about "Peaks and Valleys" and the other books by Spencer Johnson is that they remind us of the simple, and encourage us to apply these simple lessons to our own lives. One of the lessons in "Peaks and Valleys" is to imagine yourself enjoying a better future in such specific, believable detail, that you soon enjoy doing what takes you there.

Here's how to get out of a Valley sooner, how to stay on a Peak longer, and how to have more Peaks and fewer Valleys in our future.

Peaks And Valleys Are Connected in Two Ways:

The Errors You Make In Today's Good Times Create Tomorrow's Bad Times.
And The Wise Things You Do In Today's Bad Times Create Tomorrow's Good Times.

The secret is to truly appreciate and enjoy each time for what it is, while you are living it.

What's the key to enjoying every situation in our life?

Look for the lessons and be grateful for them.

In fact, gratitude is the key to happiness in any situation.

Peaks Are Moments When You Appreciate What You Have.

Valleys Are Moments When You Long For What Is Missing.

So, if you want to have fewer Valleys, avoid comparisons of others.

The only comparison you should be making is your current self with your future self.

If you enjoy or appreciate what's good about the moment, you feel more like you are on a Peak.

The Path Out Of The Valley Appears When You Choose To See Things Differently.

Many people don't realize that they need to be truly prepared if they want to stay on a Peak longer. Myself included.

I have experienced this so many times throughout my life.

You can change your Valley into a Peak when you find and use the good that is hidden in the bad time.

Creativity is formed out of constraints.

Between Peaks there are always Valleys.

How You Manage Your Valley Determines How Soon You Reach Your Next Peak.

If you do not learn in a Valley, you can become discouraged , you spend time on a plateau.

Like a healthy heartbeat, your personal Peaks and Valleys are an essential part of a normal, healthy life.

So are the Plateaus, if they are times of healthy rest, when you take stock of what is happening, and pause to think about what to do next.

Like resting 1 day a week or taking vacations, or my favorite, going camping out in nature away from the city.

It is unhealthy to try to escape by blocking out reality, by having a drink.

it can often be very healthy to just relax and rest and trust that things will get better. Because, after a good night's sleep or a few days' break, they often do.

How can it be healthy to have ups and downs? How can that be peaceful?

Don't all the highs and lows make you feel anxious and stressed out?

Only if you go up and down with them.

Once you truly learn to manage your good and bad times, you gain a sense of healthy balance.

But how?

To begin with, you become more peaceful once you realize that you are not your Peaks, your 'good' times, and you are not your Valleys, your 'bad' times.

You Can Have Fewer Bad Times When You Appreciate and Manage Your Good Times Wisely.

How do you manage your good times poorly?

When you were feeling so good, did you perhaps boast a little?

What is the source of a person's fear? For most of us, it's ego.
Your ego can make you arrogant on the Peak and fearful in the Valley.
It keeps you from seeing what is real. Your ego distorts the truth.

When you are on a Peak, your ego makes you see things as better than they really are.

And when you are in a Valley, your ego makes you see things as worse than they really are.

It makes you think a Peak will last forever, and it makes you fear a Valley will never end.

The Most Common Reason You Leave a Peak Too Soon is Arrogance, Masquerading as Confidence.

The Most Common Reason You Stay in a Valley Too Long is Fear, Masquerading as Comfort.

When you put your ego aside, you are more likely to leave a Valley sooner.

I find the best way to get through a Valley begins with gratitude.

What are you grateful for? Then take complete ownership for where you are. It may not be your fault, but it's still your responsibility.

This is the same with peaks.

By putting your ego aside and disciplining yourself to remain grateful, this is the key to help you stay on a Peak longer.

Then to get to the next peak, imagine a vision of a future Peak you want to be on that makes good sense to you.

It has to be believable. Because... —>Beliefs influence your goals, —>Goals influence your identity, —>Identity influences your Habits, —>Habits influences your attitude, —>And attitude determines the altitude of your peaks and valleys.

So, imagine something as big as you can imagine that is also realistic and attainable that you really want.

Imagine how your future Peak will look, sound, smell, taste and feel, until it becomes so real to you that the image of getting there pulls you through your Valley.

A great way to get to your next Peak is to surround yourself with like minded people who are on the same journey as you are.

Consider these potential mindsets...

Stuck – Uninterested in feedback

Passive – Open to feedback

Proactive – Request feedback

Ambitious – Pay for feedback

Imagine yourself enjoying your better future in such specific, believable detail that you soon enjoy doing what takes you there!

Why does being in a Valley have to be so painful?

The Pain In A Valley Can Wake You Up To A Truth You Have Been Ignoring.

You are always creating a vision of your future, whether you are aware of it or not—either a fearful vision, or a sensible vision.

And it's just a question of which vision you follow.

Avoid Believing Things Are Better Than They Really Are When You Are On A Peak – Arrogance masquerading as confidence.