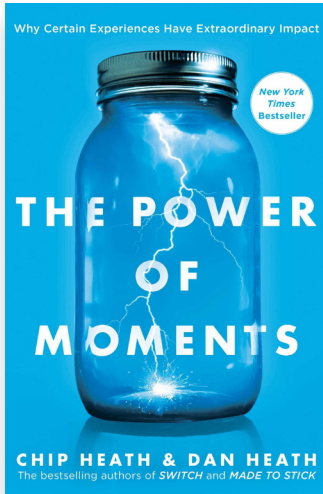


EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARIES

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The Power of Moments

THE SUMMARY

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Chapter 1: Defining Moments

We all have defining moments in our lives which are meaningful experiences that stand out in memory.

In this book, we have two goals. First, we want to examine defining moments and identify the traits they have in common. What, specifically, makes a particular experience memorable and meaningful? Our research shows that defining moments share a set of common elements.

Second, we want to show you how you can *create* defining moments by making use of those elements. Why would you want to create them? To enrich your life, to connect with others, to make memories, and to improve the experience of customers or patients or employees are all good reasons.

Defining moments are memorable “peak” moments and “end” moments. Research shows we tend to remember flagship moments including the peaks, the pits, and the transitions -- not our minute-by-minute sensations. (When we look back on our trip to Disney World, we remember the rush of riding Space Mountain, not standing in line for 45 minutes in 96-degree central Florida heat.) This is a critical lesson for anyone in service businesses where success hinges on the customer experience.

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Somewhere in your home there is treasure chest, full of things that are precious to you because they symbolize defining moments. The contents of your treasure chest are likely to possess at least one of the following four elements:

ELEVATION: Defining moments rise above the everyday. They provoke not just transient happiness (like laughing at a friend's joke), but a memorable delight. A love letter. A ticket stub. A well-worn T-shirt. Haphazardly colored cards from your kids that make you smile with delight. Moments of elevation transcend the normal course of events; they are literally extraordinary.

INSIGHT: Defining moments rewire our understanding of ourselves or the world. In a few seconds or minutes, we realize something that might influence our lives for decades. Quotes or articles that moved you. Books that changed your view of the world. Diaries that captured your thoughts. Although these moments of insight often seem serendipitous, we can engineer them, or at the very least, lay the groundwork.

PRIDE: Defining moments capture us at our best. They are moments of achievement, or moments of courage including ribbons, report cards, recognitions, certificates, thank-you notes, and awards. (It just *hurts*, irrationally, to throw away a trophy.) To create such moments, we need to understand something about the architecture of pride and how to plan for a series of milestone moments that build on each other en route to a larger goal.

CONNECTION: Defining moments are social such as weddings, graduations, baptisms, vacations, work triumphs, bar and bat mitzvahs, speeches, or sporting events. These moments are strengthened because we share them with others. Your wedding photos, vacation photos, and family photos are probably the first thing you'd grab if your house caught on fire.

All these items are, in essence, the relics of your life's defining moments. How are you feeling now as you reflect on the contents of your treasure chest? What if you could give that same feeling to your kids, your students, your colleagues, your customers?

Moments matter. What an opportunity we miss when we leave them to chance. Teachers can inspire, caregivers can comfort, service workers can delight, politicians can unite, and managers can motivate. All it takes is a bit of insight and forethought. This is a book about the power of moments and the wisdom of shaping them.

Chapter 2: Thinking in Moments

What was your first day like at your current (or most recent) job? Would you agree that the lack of attention paid to an employee's first day is mind-boggling? Imagine if you treated a first date like a new employee. "I've got some things to do right now, so why don't you get settled in the passenger seat of the car and I'll swing back in a few hours?" What a wasted opportunity to make a new team member feel included and appreciated.

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To avoid this kind of oversight, we must understand when special moments are needed. We must learn to *think in moments* in order to spot the occasions that are worthy of investment.

This “moment-spotting” habit can be unnatural. In organizations, for instance, we are consumed with goals. Time is meaningful only insofar as it clarifies or measures our goals. The goal is the thing. But for an individual human being, moments are the thing. Moments are what we remember and what we cherish. Certainly we might celebrate achieving a goal, such as completing a marathon or landing a significant client but the achievement is embedded in a moment.

To “think in moments” is to recognize where the prose of life needs punctuation—birthdays, weddings, graduations, holidays, funeral rites, the first day on a new job, etc. The prevalence of New Year’s resolutions is not about the resolutions. They haven’t changed. We still want to lose weight and save money. But it’s the “fresh start effect.” Our past failures are left on the ledger of Old Me. New Me starts today.

Transitions should be marked, milestones commemorated, and pits filled. That’s the essence of thinking in moments. To be clear, not all defining moments fit into these three categories. Many defining moments could happen anytime.

For most of the moments of elevation and connection and pride, almost any time is a good time. The more you can multiply them, the better. The point we’re emphasizing here is that certain circumstances *demand* attention such as promotions, the first day of school, the end of projects, retirement, unheralded achievements, dealing with negative feedback, the loss of a loved one. Life and work are full of moments that are ripe for investment.

ELEVATION

Chapter 3: Build Peaks

How do we create defining moments? We’ll begin with elevation. Moments of elevation are experiences that rise above the everyday. They are times to be savored, moments that make us feel engaged, joyful, amazed, motivated. They are peaks. No one reflecting on their life has ever wished there had been fewer.

Moments of elevation can be social occasions that mark transitions such as birthday parties, retirement parties, bar/bat mitzvahs, quinceaneras, and weddings.

Then there are other moments of elevation where we feel elevated by virtue of being “onstage,” so to speak, such as competing at sporting events, giving a presentation, performing in a play. The stakes are higher. We’re absorbed in the moment.

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Finally, there are moments of elevation that happen spontaneously which might be an unplanned road trip or a walk on a sunny day that leaves you smiling. It could even be the first touch of a lover's hand.

The neglect of peaks is particularly glaring in organizations—from churches to schools to businesses—where relentless routines tend to grind them down from peaks to bumps. In customer service, businesses tend to invest 80% of their effort in eliminating the negative experiences of unhappy customers. But, for example, an airline customer who gives a 7 (very positive) rating will spend about \$2,200 on air travel over the next year. A customer giving a 4 rating, on the other hand, will spend only \$800. Research suggests the happiest people in any industry tend to spend more, so moving a 4 to 7 generates more additional revenue than moving a 1 to a 4. Furthermore, there are dramatically more people in the “feeling positive” 4-6 zone than in “feeling negative” 1-3 zone. By focusing on the happy people you're creating more financial value per person *and* reaching more people at the same time. If you “Elevate the Positives,” you'll earn about 9 times more revenue than if you “Eliminate the Negatives.” Yet most executives are pursuing the negatives.

Can we create more moments of elevation? Absolutely. We can also learn to make an existing peak “peakier” by redesigning a birthday party or client presentation to make it more memorable. The recipe for building a moment of elevation is simple to conceive, but they can be maddeningly hard to bring to life.

How do you build peaks? To elevate a moment, do three things: First, boost sensory appeal (turn up the volume). Second, raise the stakes. Third, break the script (violate expectations). Moments of elevation need not have all three elements but most have at least two.

Chapter 4: Break the Script

Isn't “breaking the script” just surprise by a different name? Yes, surprise is what makes the moment memorable, but the takeaway isn't quite as simple as “Surprise people!” Surprise is cheap and easy but to break the script, you've first got to understand the script.

For instance, if a coffee shop owner decided to give away free biscotti every Friday, on the first Friday of the giveaway it would be a delightful surprise. But by the fourth Friday, the free biscotti would be an *expectation*. If the offer were ever discontinued, it's easy to imagine customers (ungrateful wretches!) actually complaining about it. One solution is to introduce a bit of randomness.

The principle of “breaking the script” helps to explain why we remember what we do, and it sheds light on one of the most interesting mysteries of memory which is the “reminiscence bump.” In a study, respondents predicted the “most important events” in the life of a new born baby. The ten most commonly cited events were:

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1. Having children
2. Marriage
3. Begin school
4. College
5. Fall in love
6. Other's death
7. Retirement
8. Leave home
9. Parents' death
10. First job

Did you notice a pattern? It's striking that 6 out of the 10 most important events all happen during a relatively narrow window of time, roughly ages 15 to 30.

Similarly, if you ask older people about their most vivid memories, research shows they tend to be drawn disproportionately from this same period, roughly ages 15 to 30. The key to this is thought to be "novelty." We remember our youth so well because it was a time for "firsts." This explains the common perception that time seems to accelerate as we get older. Our lives become more routine and less novel.

Now, that's a somewhat depressing realization. Have we really left our most memorable days behind us? Yes, probably. Variety is the spice of life. Learn to recognize your own scripts. Play with them. Poke at them. Disrupt them just enough to keep your life looking fresh. By breaking our own script, we can lay down a richer set of memories. We feel more comfortable when things are certain, but we feel most alive when they're not.

INSIGHT

Chapter 5: Trip Over the Truth

Moments of insight deliver realizations and transformations. Some insights are small but meaningful. At your favorite coffee shop, you sample coffees from South America and Africa and you notice how different the flavors are. That adds insight to a transactional experience. At a rehearsal dinner, you tell a funny story about the groom that also reveals something about his character. That adds insight to a social experience.

Sometimes larger moments of insight deliver a jolt. The emotions may be dark. *I'm no good at this, or, I don't believe in what I'm doing anymore.* Other moments of insight can be wildly positive. *This is the person I'm going to spend the rest of my life with,* or the "eureka!" moment of discovery.

Many moments of insight are serendipitous. Lightning strikes, and there's no explaining why. You

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can't schedule epiphanies but these experiences are not wholly out of our control. We can *create* moments of insight. We can cause others to "trip over the truth." When we need to understand ourselves better, we can "stretch for insight."

Tripping over the truth is an insight that packs an emotional wallop. When you have a sudden realization, one that you didn't see coming, and one that you know viscerally is right, you've tripped over the truth. It's a defining moment that in an instant can change the way you see the world.

These kinds of sudden realizations such as people who joined and left a cult, alcoholics who become sober, or intellectuals who embraced communism and then recanted are often characterized by "crystallization of discontent," a dramatic moment when their bubble burst and an array of isolated misgivings and complaints become linked in a global pattern.

We help people trip over the truth *not* by sharing a discovery, but by creating situations where they can replicate the discovery so it becomes their insight. You can't appreciate the solution until you appreciate the problem. When we talk about "tripping over the truth," we mean *the truth about a problem or harm*. That's what sparks sudden insight. Sometimes, in life, we can't get our bearings until we trip over the truth.

Chapter 6: Stretch for Insight

Learning who we are, and what we want, and what we're capable of is a lifelong process. Self-understanding comes slowly. One of the few ways to accelerate it and to experience more crystallizing moments is to stretch for insight.

To stretch is to place ourselves in situations that expose us to the risk of failure. From stretching comes "self-insight" or a mature understanding of our capabilities and motivations. It's correlated with an array of positive outcomes, ranging from good relationships to a sense of purpose in life. Self-insight and psychological well-being go together.

What may be counterintuitive is that self-insight rarely comes from staying in our heads. Research suggests that *reflecting or ruminating* on our thoughts and feelings is an ineffective way to achieve true understanding. Studying our own *behavior* is more fruitful.

"Wouldn't I make a fabulous bakery owner?" "Could I hack it in Italy?" These are important questions but impossible to answer in one's head. Better to take a risk, try something, and distill the answer from experience rather than navel-gazing. Action leads to insight more often than insight leads to action.

Mentors can help us stretch further than we thought we could, and in the process they can spark defining moments. The formula for mentorship that leads to self-insight: *High standards + assurance + direction + support*.

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A study in a suburban junior high school had teachers divide student's essays into two piles. On some the teachers wrote a generic note: "I'm giving you these comments so that you'll have feedback on your paper." The other essays got "wise criticism": "I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know you can reach them." (*High standards + assurance.*) The students have the option to revise and resubmit their papers in the hopes of earning a better grade. 40% of the students with generic notes chose to revise their papers. But 80% of those with the wise criticism revised their papers and made more than twice as many corrections as the other students. Wise criticism is a push to stretch.

The promise of stretching is not success, it's learning. It's self-insight. It's the promise of gleaning the answers to some of the most vexing questions of our lives. What do we want? What can we do? Who can we be? What can we endure?

By stretching, we create moments of self-insight, that well-spring of mental health. We will never know our reach unless we stretch.

PRIDE

Chapter 7: Recognize Others

Moments of elevation lift us above the everyday. Moments of insight spark discoveries about our world and ourselves. Moments of pride capture us at our best showing courage, earning recognition, and conquering challenges.

How do you make a moment of pride? The recipe seems clear. You work hard, you put in the time, and as a result, you get more talented and accomplish more, and those achievements spark pride. It's as simple as that.

There's a lot of truth to that "roll up your sleeves" advice. But when you start thinking in moments, you notice that the advice misses several important points. First, regardless of how skilled we are, it's usually *having your skill noticed by others* that sparks the moment of pride. If you think about your own moments of pride in your career, our bet is that many of them were examples of recognition. You were either promoted, or you won an award, or you were praised.

It is simple and powerful to create defining moments for others through recognition. For example, the importance of recognition to employees is inarguable, but here's the problem: while recognition is a universal expectation, it's not a universal *practice*.

Research shows more than 80% of supervisors claim they frequently express appreciation to their subordinates, while less than 20% of the employees report that their supervisors express appreciation more than occasionally. Call it the recognition gap. This gap has consequences. One survey found that the top reason people leave their jobs is a lack of praise and recognition.

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Recognition experts have advice on how to escape this trap. Most recognition should be *personal*, not programmatic. (Anytime you say the phrase “Employee of the Month,” your employees will roll their eyes.) Recognition should be spontaneous, not part of a scheduled feedback session, and targeted at particular *behaviors*. Employees should feel *noticed* for what they’ve done. They enjoy hearing, “I saw what you did and I appreciate it.”

Studies show a personal expression of gratitude can create moments of recognition that recipients remember and cherish for years afterward. If you knew that you could make a positive difference in someone’s life, that you could create a memory for them that would last for years, and that it would take only a trivial amount of time on your part, would you do it? Well, now you know it. Will you do it?

Chapter 8: Multiply Milestones

Milestones are a way of giving people easy victories on the way to a destination. The Boy Scouts understand this idea well. The Scouts’ Merit Badge program, active for more than 100 years, is a great example of introducing multiple milestones and celebrating each one. The Merit Badges are presented to the Scout at a “Court of Honor,” where the Scouts are recognized in front of their peers. That’s a peak. Similarly, karate students who earn belts often receive them at public award ceremonies.

The common goal to “get in shape” is ambiguous and unmotivating. Pursuing it puts you on a path with no clear destination and no intermediate moments to celebrate. Preparing to run a 5K race, on the other hand, can provide elements of elevation and connection and pride and finishing the 5K is a peak. *“Three months ago, I couldn’t run 100 yards without heaving, and now I’m the kind of person who can finish a race!”*

Many Americans aspire to learn another language, but “learning Spanish” is one of those amorphous goals that should give us pause. There’s no destination and no intermediate levels. The typical way of pursuing this goal is to squeeze in a long series of study sessions until we “know” Spanish. But we can make this process more exciting and more productive if we *level up*.

Level 1: Order a meal in Spanish.

Level 2: Have a simple conversation in Spanish with a taxi driver.

Level 3: Look at a Spanish newspaper and understand at least one headline.

Level 4: Watch and follow the action in a Spanish television cartoon.

Level 5: Read a kindergarten-level book in Spanish.

Destination: Have a full, normal conversation with Fernando in accounting.

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We all love milestones. The desire to hit milestones elicits a concerted final push of effort. Success comes from pushing to the finish line. What milestones do is compel us to make that push, because (a) they're within our grasp, and (b) we've chosen them precisely because they're worth reaching for.

Milestones define moments that are conquerable and worth conquering. Here's the best part. We're not stuck with just one finish line. By multiplying milestones, we transform a long, amorphous race into one with many intermediate "finish lines." As we push through each one, we experience a burst of pride as well as a jolt of energy to charge toward the next one.

Chapter 9: Practice Courage

The desegregation of the lunch counters in Nashville in 1960 was one of the first big successes of the civil rights moment. It was a victory built on the courage of a group of students who were willing to face humiliation, injury, and incarceration to protest immoral treatment. For the students involved, taking a seat at those lunch counters was a defining moment in their lives. Their efforts grew into a defining moment for the nation.

What's less well known about this story is that the demonstrators didn't just *show* courage. They *practiced* it. They *rehearsed* it. James Lawson, a Methodist minister, traveled to India to learn nonviolent resistance from disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. He moved to Nashville and held workshops to train protestors. He taught them how to dress and behave. He had the students engage in role-plays at a mocked-up lunch counter. He had some of his white friends insult and manhandle the students. The simulated attacks were brutal but essential. Lawson wanted to inoculate the students with the instinct of resistance which means the ability to suppress the natural urges to fight back or run away.

By the time the students took their places at the real lunch counters in downtown Nashville, they were ready. They were disciplined, polite, and unflappable. They were afraid, of course, but they had learned to restrain their fear. Mark Twain once said, "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear."

Moments when we display courage make us proud. We never know when courage will be demanded, but we can practice acting courageously to ensure we're ready. Successful practice of courageous performance lets up "preload" our responses. Courage isn't just suppressed fear. It's also the knowledge of how to act in the moment.

In business schools, ethics education is often dominated by the question, "What is the right thing to do?" People often know the right thing to do. The hard part is acting on that judgment. The key is practice by identifying situations where an ethical issue might arise, then you literally script out your possible response or action. The focus should be, "*How* can I get the right thing done?"

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Courage is contagious so our moments of action can be a defining moment for others. From historic protests to everyday acts, from the civil rights moment to an employee asking a tough question are all moments that require courage. It is hard to be courageous, but it's easier when you've practiced and when you stand up, others will join you.

Think of the idea that your moment of courage might be a defining moment for someone else. It can be a signal to them that red is red, that wrong is wrong, and that it can be righted if we stand together against it.

CONNECTION

Chapter 10: Create Shared Meaning

Defining moments are moments of elevation, insight, and pride. Moments of pride come when you distinguish yourself as an individual. There are also *social* moments. They're more memorable because others are present and moments of connection deepen our relationships with others. Not all social moments are defining moments, of course. For groups, defining moments arise when we create shared meaning by highlighting the mission that binds us together and supersedes our differences. Then we are made to feel united.

What is it about certain moments that *strengthen* relationships? How do we create more of them? To create moments of connection, we can bring people together to share synchronizing moments. We can invite them to share in a purposeful struggle. (If you want to be part of a group that bonds like cement, take on a really demanding task that's deeply meaningful). Most of all, we can find ways to connect people to a larger sense of meaning.

Moments of shared meaning don't instill the pride of individual accomplishment, but the profound sense of connection that comes from subordinating ourselves to a greater mission. People are connected tightly together as they realize that what they're doing is important and urgent.

Purpose is defined as the sense that you are contributing to others, that your work has broader meaning. Passion is the feeling of excitement or enthusiasm you have about your work. One researcher found that people who were passionate about their jobs were still poor performers if they lacked a sense of purpose. Purpose trumps passion.

Passion is individualistic. It can energize us but also isolate us, because my passion isn't yours. But by contrast, purpose is something people can share. It can knit groups together. Organizational leaders can learn to cultivate purpose to unite people who might otherwise drift in different directions, chasing different passions. Purpose can be cultivated in a moment of insight and connection.

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Once you have purpose and understand the ultimate contribution you're making, it allows you to transcend the task list. Understanding the purpose of your work allows for innovation and improvisation. A sense of purpose also seems to spark "above and beyond" behaviors.

Chapter 11: Deepen Ties

We are accustomed to thinking about relationships in terms of time. The longer the relationship endures, the closer it must grow. But relationships don't proceed in steady, predictable increments. There's no guarantee that they will deepen with time.

When you and your uncle make the same small talk every Thanksgiving, it's not a surprise that 10 years later, you don't feel any closer. Conversely, have you ever met someone and felt instantly that you liked and trusted them? If we can create the right kind of moment, relationships can change in an instant. What is it about certain moments that deepens our ties to others? What, in short, is the "circuitry" of a successful relationship?

The "central organizing principle" of relationship science can be captured in one sentence: Our relationships are stronger when we *perceive* that our *partners* are *responsive* to us. Responsiveness encompasses three things.

Understanding: My partner knows how I see myself and what is important to me.

Validation: My partner respects who I am and what I want.

Caring: My partner takes active and supportive steps in helping me meet my needs.

We want our partners to see us the way we see ourselves, and we want them to accept us and to help us get what we want. It's incredibly selfish, but it's reciprocal selfishness since our partner expects the same.

What does non-responsiveness look like? You walk in the door, distraught, and your partner doesn't even notice (anti-understanding). When you describe a new interest or passion, your partner seems uninterested or dismissive (anti-validation). In a situation where a hug or a soothing comment would go a long way, you get a blank face (anti-caring).

Nonresponsive is corrosive. It deprives us of our individuality as we're not seen or treated as special. When you find yourself infuriated by poor service, for instance, chances are it's because of a lack of responsiveness. So if we want more moments of connection, we need to be more responsive to others.

Responsiveness doesn't necessarily lead to intimacy. Here's how it happens. One person reveals

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something and waits to see if the other person will share something back. The reciprocity, if it comes, is a sign of understanding, validation, and caring. *I've heard you, I understand and accept what you're saying, and I care for you enough to disclose something about myself.* A defining moment of connection can be both brief and extraordinary.

Chapter 12: Making Moments Matter

Once you realize how important moments can be, it's easy to spot opportunities to shape them. A bit of attention and energy can transform an ordinary moment into an extraordinary one.

What's the *payoff* for all these moments? Think of all the tangible outcomes that have been created by better moments such as more revenue, greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, more motivated employees, and more effective employees. There are also many payoffs more personal in nature such as happiness, closer relationships, and self-transformation.

Defining moments lead to countless positive and measurable outcomes, but in our judgement they are not the means to an end. They are the ends. Creating more memorable and meaningful experiences is a worthy goal for your work, for the people you care about, and for you personally, independent of any secondary impacts.

What teacher would not want to design a lesson that students still reflect on years later? What service executive would not want to create a peak experience for customer? What parents would not want to make memories for their kids which will endure for decades? That's the charge for all of us. Defy the forgettable flatness of everyday work and life by creating a few precious moments.

Some defining moments are orchestrated while others are *plunged into*. For some people, what looks like a moment of serendipity is actually a moment of intentionality. The shock of an insight comes with the realization that they could *take action* and willfully jolt their lives in a new direction by quitting a job, taking a class, deciding to travel, or just making a change. They are not receiving a moment; they are seizing it.

This is what we hope you take away from this book. Stay alert to the promise that moments hold. What if we didn't just *remember* the defining moments of our lives but *made* them?

We can be the designers of moments that deliver elevation and insight and pride and connection. These extraordinary minutes and hours and days are what make life meaningful and they are ours to create.