

The 5 Second Rule by Mel Robbins | Book Summary by Paul Minors

INTRODUCTION

Who is this summary for

In *The 5 Second Rule* Mel Robbins shares a useful tool that will help you in all areas of life. This is an ideal read for anyone who struggles with those everyday moments of difficulty, uncertainty, and fear. Robbins aims to help you improve your health, increase productivity and combat procrastination. Robbins helps you be courageous and step outside of your comfort zone. And most importantly, Robbins explains how easy it is to take control and make a change!

About the author

Mel Robbins is probably best known for being an incredibly powerful and influential motivational speaker. Her TED talk on *"How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over"* was incredibly well received and has proved to be an increasingly popular watch. Although she's made her name as a speaker, a coach, and author, she began her career as a criminal defense attorney. Mel lives in Boston with her husband and 3 children.

In this summary

First, we'll briefly discuss how the 5 Second Rule can change your life before diving into a detailed explanation of the rule and how you can use it. We'll summarise Robbins' discussions about courage, how to stop worrying and how to end anxiety. Finally, the summary will end with an examination of building confidence, pursuing passion and building momentum.

BOOK SUMMARY

IT'S LIFE-CHANGING

Robbins explains that it can only take 5 seconds to change your life. She acknowledges that every single one of us has moments of fear, difficulty, and uncertainty, and that in order to face those we need to be courageous. That's exactly what the 5 Second Rule will do, it will help you be more courageous and live life to your full potential.

The 5 Second Rule aims to enable you to push yourself further than ever before, outside of your comfort zone. It's designed to increase your productivity, your engagement with colleagues and your level of influence at work. You'll learn how to be better at networking, something we all find difficult and you'll learn how to manage your emotions better.

Robbins defines courage as:

"Having the ability to do something that is difficult or scary. Stepping outside of your comfort zone. Sharing your ideas, speaking up, or showing up. Standing firm in your beliefs and values. And some days...getting out of bed."

WHAT IS THE 5 SECOND RULE

"The moment you have an instinct to act on a goal you must count 5-4-3-2-1 and physically move or your brain will stop you."

Robbins uses exercise as an example; if you're feeling fatigued and not in the mood to exercise, all you need to do is count backward from 5, then walk out the door. Eliminate the possibility to come up with more excuses by acting instantly.

Robbins explains that you are creating a mental shift when you count backwards, it's not what you expect and psychologists refer to this as "assert control." By counting backward, you are distracted from any distractions and excuses and your mind is free to move forwards. And by taking physical action rather than pausing to think, your action falls into place and your mind quickly follows.

Habit researches would define the 5 Second rule as a 'starting ritual'. Starting rituals are designed to prompt a change in behaviour by activating the part of your brain used for focus, changing and taking action, also known as the prefrontal cortex.

Take action

Robbins, like many other productivity authors, believes that taking one simple step forward will drive momentum and prompt you to keep going. You'll also establish a sense of freedom and power, this is essential to keep the momentum going and fill you with the drive to do more.

"Pushing yourself to take simple actions creates a chain reaction in your confidence & productivity."

Motivation is a myth

Robbins explains that you need to stop worrying about motivation, it's a myth. There's a common assumption that in order to take action you need to feel motivated to do so. The reality is, you are not likely to feel the motivation to do the things that really need doing. The only way to make progress and dramatically improve your life is to take action regardless of having a sense of motivation or not.

"One of the reasons why the 5 Second Rule is so empowering is because it turns you into the kind of person who operates with a bias toward action. If you tend to overthink every move, you'll discover the energy and confidence to stop thinking and actually move."

Robbins explains that by using the 5 Second Rule, you will find that your belief in yourself, and the control you have over your own life and fate will increase significantly. Robbins highlights her key point, the Rule isn't about making things easy, that's not possible, it's about prompting action and making things happen.

Small moves

"It's not the big moves that define our lives; it's the smallest ones."

Robbins believes that if you stop for 5 seconds to think about the small things, you're most likely to decide not to take any action. You'll push them aside and leave them for later because they seem small, we feel that this decision is justified. But, as Robbins points out, these small things add up over time.

These habits that we all have of hesitating or doubting ourselves prevents us from taking action when we should. It's time to stop overthinking and holding yourself back, and Robbins' 5 Second Rule is the way to do that!

HOW TO USE THE 5 SECOND RULE

It's a very simple process, with just 2 simple steps:

1. Count backward from five, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. By counting, you stop focusing on any excuses, fears or distractions and focus on the goal.
2. The second you reach '1' you take action, you move, you get started.

This rule can be used anytime you are facing uncertainty or fear. As soon as you start counting backwards from 5 you'll find that your mind will slow down, and you'll be ready to leap into action as soon as you reach 1.

What can you use the rule for?

One of Robbins' key goals with the 5 Second Rule is to allow you to change your current behaviours. Whether it be eliminating bad habits or encouraging and starting new ones, you'll be able to adapt and grow as a person.

The second key purpose of the 5 Second Rule is to allow you to take control back over your mind and your thoughts. Use it to weed out the negativity that can be overwhelming and only allow positivity in.

Finally, Robbins wants the Rule to allow you to be courageous, to find your inner courage that will allow you to face your fears by promoting confidence and banishing the self-doubt.

BE COURAGEOUS

Following on from our last point, finding your inner courage is one of the most significant outcomes of following the 5 Second Rule. Robbins acknowledges that every single one of us will face fear and uncertainty in our daily lives. Everyone's fears may be different, but none more significant than another. By using the 5 Second Rule to unlock your courage, Robbins truly believes that you'll find a bit of magic and joy in your life that wasn't there before, the kind of feeling you can only get from facing something difficult.

"That's what courage is. It's a push. The kind of push we give ourselves when we stand up, speak up, show up, go first, raise our hand or do whatever feels hard, scary, or uncertain."

Robbins explains that courage isn't something you either have or you don't have. It's something we all have, some of us just need to do a little bit more work to find it. But be sure that you have courage within you, and the ability to use it whenever you want.

What are you waiting for?

How often do you find yourself waiting for the right time, the perfect moment, waiting for everything to fall not place all on its own? And more often than not you find yourself waiting so long, it never actually happens. Robbins encourages us to stop the waiting, there's no time for next time or a second chance. Sometimes you need to dive into the deep end right now. Now is the time, don't forget that!

"When you make excuses, you are limiting your ability to make your dreams come true."

Dreams

"The difference between people who make their dreams come true and those of us who don't is just one thing: the courage to start and the discipline to keep going."

Robbins explains that by stopping the internal dialogue and focusing on counting backward from 5, you'll forget the reasons to not to do something and find an inner driver to move forwards. Robbins truly believes that by doing this you allow yourself to be pushed outside of your comfort zone, you'll be open to new opportunities and this is where the magic really happens. Even if you don't get the result you wanted, you know that you had the discipline to try and that's enough to empower you.

Feelings

"You can't control how you feel, but you can control how you act."

It's easy to assume that our decisions and actions are driven by logic, but in reality, our feelings are the deciding factor the majority of the time. Neuroscientists have concluded that you feel first, then you think. You feel, and then you act. Therefore all actions and decisions are based on your feelings.

Robbins explains that you're probably never going to feel like doing the difficult tasks or the things you often put off. And you've got to get past that feeling and just do it, you cannot wait around for the feeling to be right. When faced with a difficult decision, our instinct is to assess how we feel about the decision, it's difficult to look past that. Robbins explains that most of us don't even realise that's how we make decisions because it's so instinctive and automatic.

Often, the logical part of your brain will know exactly what decision should be made, but our feelings overshadow this logic and we usually go with them. Robbins emphasises that your goals and dreams need to be front and center when facing decisions, because these are often forgotten in the moment when your feelings take over.

"If you only act when you feel like it, you will never get what you want. You must learn how to separate what you feel from the actions that you take. If you don't feel like attacking the to-do list on your desk, you won't, but 5- 4- 3- 2- 1- GO, and you can force yourself to start working on it."

START NOW

Robbins encourages everyone to start the 5 Second Rule right away. And the best way to do this is by jumping on board with her Wake Up Challenge. It's a simple change, but one that can have a significant impact on your day and life. Robbins recommends you set your alarm earlier than normal, by 30 minutes. And no pressing snooze, as soon as you hear the alarm, count backward from 5 and leap out of bed.

Robbins explains that the only two factors in this challenge are the alarm clock and yourself. If the alarm goes off but you fail to get up, then you weren't really committed in the first place. If you approach the challenge with determination, you'll do your counting and get up.

Morning routines are something that countless authors talk about, and they all recommend getting up earlier. Robbins believes that if you can change something as simple your morning routine, then you can change just about anything. By changing this one aspect of your day, you are making a deliberate decision to wake and get up earlier regardless of how you feel (because you'll likely be tired and you will feel like staying in bed!)

Activation energy

Robbins explains that chemists define 'activation energy' as the minimum amount of energy required to trigger a chemical reaction. And experiments have proven that the initial quantity of energy to get a reaction started is always higher than the energy required to maintain the reaction once it's started. Therefore, the initial wake up and the act of getting out of bed may take a lot of energy, but once you're up and getting things done you'll require a lot less energy to keep going!

BEHAVIOUR CHANGES

Consider your inbox and marketing emails, Robbins highlights that the most common topics are health, productivity, and procrastination. They are clearly hot topics that everyone is looking for solutions for. And Robbins explains that the 5 Second Rule can help with all three.

Health

Robbins stresses the importance of taking action when it comes to your health. You can think about being healthier all you like, but that won't get you anywhere. All the planning and good intentions are worthless unless you act.

"The moment you accept the fact that we just want to do the things that feel easy, you realise the secret to getting healthy is simple—you'll never feel like it, you just have to 5- 4- 3- 2- 1-GO!"

In relation to losing weight, committing to exercise or beginning a new diet, Robbins explains that the reality is you are never truly going to feel like doing it. So stop waiting until the time feels right, cause that time will never come. The only way to achieve new levels of fitness or weight-loss is to take action and do it. You've got to start getting up earlier to go to the gym, find some healthy recipes and cook dinner at home, drive right past the drive-thru without stopping in. These actions are how to reach your goals.

Productivity

Productivity is one of the most common issues that people face. Everyone wants to know the secret recipe to productivity. But Robbins explains that there is only one word that really describes what productivity is; focus. And in order to be actively productive, you need to learn two different types of focusing:

1. Focusing on the single task you are working on, eliminating and managing distractions so you can get your work done. Robbins explains that the first thing you need to do is acknowledge that distractions are always going to have a negative effect on your work, there's no such thing as a good interruption. So do everything you can to eliminate them. Turn

off notifications, stop checking emails, close your office door and get work done. This will allow you to truly focus on the task at hand and get more done.

- 1.1. The ability to understand and focus in on the important things in your life, focus on your life-goals rather than wasting time on day-to-day unimportant tasks. You want to focus on the bigger picture, don't be short sighted. Robbins highly recommends overhauling your mornings to establish a routine that will encourage productivity and help you focus. Consider adding exercise or meditation, something to help clear your mind of all the added extras and learn how to focus on only important things.

Procrastination

Procrastination goes hand in hand with productivity, if the question isn't; "how can I be more productive" it's almost certainly; "how can I stop procrastinating." Destructive procrastination is one of our biggest downfalls, it's when we give into the temptation of distractions and delay the work we know is required. We are totally aware of the consequences, we know that we should be getting down to work, but we continue to give in. However, Robbins explains that there is actually another side to procrastination, and that's productive procrastination. This comes into play particularly if you are involved in creative or innovative work. Being creative takes time, and it's a huge strain mentally, so sometimes, putting the work to the side and letting your mind wander can actually lead to better results.

"For a long time, everyone believed procrastination meant poor time management skills, a lack of willpower, or lack of self-discipline. Procrastination is not a form of laziness at all. It's a coping mechanism for stress."

Robbins has a few tips for handling procrastination:

1. If you find yourself in a habitual spiral of procrastination, you need to replace the habit with a new one. Instead of avoiding the work, try sitting down and trying to focus.
2. If you feel yourself losing focus or looking for a way to procrastinate, stop, count backward from 5, and keep going.

3. Take control, mentally, procrastination is essentially a lack of control. If you can take control of your life and your work you'll find yourself procrastinating less and less.

WORRYING

"More than any other change, ending your habit of worrying will create the single biggest positive impact in your life. Believe it or not, you were taught how to worry as a kid."

Being an adult means worrying, a lot. And Robbins points out that most of the time we are worrying about things that are actually outside of our control, we waste too much precious time being concerned. Robbins explains that the way we are wired means that as soon as our mind drifts, we are tempted to fall into a worrying trap. If you're not completely focused on the task at hand, worry and fear will creep in. Robbins recommends identifying when this begins to happen and quickly taking the control back by following the 5 Second Rule.

Another way to get a handle on your worries and doubts is to ask yourself what you are grateful for right now, whenever the worry creeps in. Therefore you are prompting a shift in focus, away from your doubts, towards a more positive outlook. Your brain is prompted to quickly assess all the good in your life at this moment and the worries are quickly forgotten.

"It forces you to focus on the positive aspects of your life. As soon as you think about what you are grateful for, you'll start feeling grateful instead of worried."

Ending anxiety

Anxiety can be a really scary phenomenon, and it usually occurs when your worrying gets out of hand. Robbins explains that if you can truly understand your anxiety, then you should be able to battle and beat it. The key is identifying the times that anxiety usually kicks in, and catching it before it takes over. Try implementing the 5 Second Rule whenever anxiety feelings start to arise, and over time, hopefully, you'll be able to ease the anxious state and calm yourself down.

If you can catch it right as it kicks in and reframe it, you'll stabilize your thoughts before your mind escalates it into a full blown panic. And over time, as you use the 5 Second Rule over and over, your anxiety will weaken and become what it started—out as simple worries. As you just learned, the habit of worry is easy to break.

"When you feel anxious, you are in a state of physical agitation. When you tell a person to calm down, you are asking someone to go from 60 mph to 0 mph. It's like trying to stop a freight train by throwing a boulder in front of it; it'll jump the tracks."

Redirect the anxious energy

"Use the 5 Second Rule to assert control over your mind and then reframing the anxiety as excitement so that your brain doesn't escalate it and your body can calm down."

Robbins explains that often, anxious feelings arise in anticipation of something, an event or a meeting perhaps. Instead of telling yourself that you feel anxious about the occasion, try replacing the word with excited. Telling yourself that you are excited isn't going to eliminate the emotions and feelings within your body, but it redirects them into a new, empowering outlook. This is one way to try and regain that control over your feelings and eliminate the nerves.

CONFIDENCE

Like motivation, a lot of people think that confidence is something that you are born with. You either have it or you don't. But, Robbins points out that absolutely anyone can be confident, it's a learnable skill rather than an aspect of your personality. To be confident is to believe in yourself, to back your abilities and have faith in your ideas.

Learning confidence brings us back to the concept of courage. As we discussed earlier, being courageous and facing your fears is a positive outcome of following the 5 Second Rule. And Robbins explains that these acts of courage will help to build up your confidence. Every time you do something outside of your comfort zone, or something you are proud of, your confidence in yourself is slowly building. And Robbins explains that no matter how small an act of courage may seem, they all build up and help elevate your confidence.

"Pushing yourself to 5- 4- 3- 2- 1 on the "small things" gives you the confidence to do the "big scheme of things."

PASSION

We often miss out on opportunities because we are fearful and don't take them when they present themselves. Robbins explains that by using the 5 Second Rule, you'll find yourself taking on these opportunities that you previously avoided. You'll be able to explore life and discover things you didn't even know you enjoyed. When an opportunity presents itself, instead of letting fear take over, simply count 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 and commit.

If you don't know what your passion is yet, it's probably because you haven't allowed yourself to find it. Here's how Robbins suggests you get out there and find it:

- Explore, guided by your curiosity see what is that you constantly think about, is there something that always grabs your attention? Make this a new hobby and see if you enjoy it!
- Envy, if you are envious of someone, try and identify what exactly it is that you are envious of, is it their job, their lifestyle their hobbies?
- Finally, research the subject you are most interested in, read, watch, learn, take a class. Make a plan and see what you can accomplish.

Build momentum

"It will start as just an instinct. It always does. First, you take a class. A class leads to a certification. A certification leads to conversations. Conversations lead to opportunities. Small opportunities lead to larger ones. Maybe you'll want to share something what you're learning with people at work, so you use the Rule push yourself to do it. That's when momentum kicks in."

Robbins explains that you need to find the courage to truly commit. It can be a scary prospect, considering turning a passion or a hobby into a career or making a dramatic life change. Of course, you'll need to plan, think all outcomes through and be realistic. But don't torture yourself by focusing on all of the negative and reasons not to.

Robbins explains that there are two questions you can ask yourself, one is the one you should ask, and one is the one you shouldn't ask. Don't ask yourself if you feel ready to commit to this. Because the reality is, you'll never feel like you are truly

ready. Instead, ask yourself if you are ready to commit. The answer to this is more likely a yes. And here you implement the 5 Second Rule again, count backward from 5 and get started!

"You'll need to use the Rule to give yourself that final push. Even when you are ready, it's not going to feel good when you do it."

CONCLUSION

Key Takeaways

- As soon as you have an instinct to take action, whether it be on a goal or task, count backward from 5, and then act. Don't allow yourself the time to hesitate.
- You can use the 5 Second Rule to change your current behaviour, replace bad habits with good ones.
- The 5 Second Rule will help you take control over your thoughts and your actions.
- You can't control how you feel, but you can control how you act. Stop waiting until you feel ready because you probably never will feel ready. Just take action.
- Replace worrisome thoughts in your heads with the things you are grateful for.
- Confidence is something we all have. Every little act of courage that we undertake will build up our own confidence.

Further Reading

[17 Anti-Procrastination Hacks](#) by Dominic Mann is a list written to help everyone stop being lazy, overcome procrastination and finally get stuff done. Procrastination is something everyone can relate to, it's easy to find yourself distracted or focusing on non-important tasks. Mann's list has different approaches, theories and, techniques that you can apply to your daily life to get more done and avoid the procrastination trap!

If you're interested in learning more about habit making, check out [50 Positive Habits to Transform Your Life](#) by Michael Chapman is a quick and easy to read checklist of things you can add to your day to improve your life by implementing positive thinking and actions. From fitness goals, mental habits, emotions, lifestyle, personal habits and developments, Chapman covers all areas of life. If you need convincing on introducing these habits, Chapman's book has great personal examples of why

adding these simple habits has made his life better and what life would be like without them!

Similarly, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey explores a number of paradigms, principles and habits that can help you become more productive, whether that be as an individual, as part of an organisation or a business.

Guidelines is my eBook that summarises the main lessons from 33 of the best-selling self-help books in one place. It is the ultimate book summary; Available as a 80-page ebook and 115-minute audio book. Guidelines lists 31 rules (or guidelines) that you should follow to improve your productivity, become a better leader, do better in business, improve your health, succeed in life and become a happier person.

Action Steps

- Start with the wake up challenge, set your alarm 30 minutes earlier than usual. As soon as you hear the alarm, count backwards from 5 and leap out of bed.
- Whenever you feel worried or nervous, try and replace those feelings with concepts of things you are grateful for. This will shift your negative energy towards a more positive one and enable you to move forward with whatever it is you are fearing.
- Identify areas of your life where you feel like you are being held back by yourself. Next time you are faced with an opportunity, count backwards from 5 and commit.
- Download the complete book on [Amazon](#).