Effortless

In short, *Effortless: Making It Easier to Do What Matters Most* is Greg McKeown's sequel to *Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less*. In *Essentialism*, it's about doing the right things. In *Effortless*, it's about doing them in the right way.

In breaking down the book into three segments (effortless state; effortless action; effortless results), business strategist McKeown provides a pathway to the effortless state where "…you are physically rested, emotionally unburdened, and mentally energized. You are completely present, attentive, and focused on what's important in that moment. You are able to do what matters most with ease."

As you review these **Book Notes** the percentages are high that you will identify several half-time adjustments about how you do what you do.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life

Title: ***Effortless:*** *Make It Easier to Do What Matters Most*

Author: Greg McKeown

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Book Description:

Do you ever feel like:

- • You're teetering right on the edge of burnout?
- • You want to make a higher contribution, but lack the energy?
- • You're running faster but not moving closer to your goals?
- • Everything is so much *harder* than it used to be?

As high achievers, we've been conditioned to believe that the path to success is paved with relentless work. That if we want to overachieve, we have to overexert, overthink, and overdo. That if we aren't perpetually exhausted, we're not doing enough.

But lately, working hard is more exhausting than ever. And the more depleted we get, the more effort it takes to make progress. Stuck in an endless loop of "Zoom, eat, sleep, repeat," we're often working twice as hard to achieve half as much.

Getting ahead doesn't have to be as hard as we make it. No matter what challenges or obstacles we face, there is a better way: instead of pushing ourselves harder, **we can find an easier path.**

Effortless offers actionable advice for **making the most essential activities the easiest ones**, so you can

achieve the results you want, without burning out.

Effortless teaches you how to:

- • Turn tedious tasks into enjoyable rituals
- • Prevent frustration by solving problems before they arise
- • Set a sustainable pace instead of powering through
- • Make one-time choices that eliminate many future decisions
- • Simplify your processes by removing unnecessary steps
- • Make relationships easier to maintain and manage
- • And much more

The effortless way isn't the lazy way. It's the smart way. It may even be the only way.

Not every hard thing in life can be made easy. But we can make it easier to do more of what matters most.

Book Quotes:

What he learned from this experience was this: When you simply can't try any harder, it's time to find a different path. LOCATION: 102

What about you? Do you ever feel as though you're running faster but not moving any closer to your goals? you want to make a higher contribution but lack the energy? you're teetering right on the edge of burnout? things are so much harder than they ought to be?…To try to pretend that a book can eliminate these hardships would be fanciful. I didn't write this book to downplay these burdens; I wrote it to help you lighten them. This book may not make every hard thing easy to approach and carry, but I believe it can make many hard things easier. LOCATION: 118

I was striving to model Essentialism. To live what I teach. But it wasn't enough. I could feel the cracks in an assumption I had always held to: that to achieve everything we want without becoming impossibly busy or overextended, we simply need to discipline ourselves to only say "yes" to essential activities and "no" to everything else. But now I found myself wondering: what does one do when they've stripped life down to the essentials and it's still too much? LOCATION: 154

Here is what I learned: I was doing all the right things for the right reasons. But I was doing them in the wrong way. LOCATION: 185

Essentialism was about doing the right things; Effortless is about doing them in the right way. LOCATION: 194

Motivation is not enough because it is a limited resource. To truly make progress on the things that matter, we need a whole new way to work and live. LOCATION: 202

Instead of trying to get better results by pushing ever harder, we can make the most essential activities the easiest ones. LOCATION: 203

What could happen in your life if the easy but pointless things became harder and the essential things became easier? If the essential projects you've been putting off became enjoyable, while the pointless distractions lost their appeal completely? Such a shift would stack the deck in our favor. It would change everything. It does change everything. That's the value proposition of Effortless. It's about a whole new way to work and live. A way to achieve more with ease—to achieve more because you are at ease. A way to lighten life's inevitable

burdens, and get the right results without burning out. LOCATION: 212

This book is organized into three simple parts: Part I reintroduces you to your Effortless State. Part II shows how to take Effortless Action. Part III is about achieving Effortless Results. LOCATION: 217

With residual results you put in the effort once and reap the benefits again and again. Results flow to you while you are sleeping. Results flow to you when you are taking the day off. Residual results can be virtually infinite. LOCATION: 247

Producing a great result is good. Producing a great result with ease is better. Producing a great result with ease again and again is best. That is what part III of the book shows how to do. LOCATION: 250

When your computer is running slowly, all you have to do is hit a few buttons to clear all the browsing data, and immediately the machine works smoother and faster. In a similar way, you can learn simple tactics to rid yourself of all the clutter slowing down the hard drive of your mind. By hitting a few buttons, you can be restored to your original Effortless State. LOCATION: 298

The Effortless State is one in which you are physically rested, emotionally unburdened, and mentally energized. You are completely present, attentive, and focused on what's important in that moment. You are able to do what matters most with ease. LOCATION: 314

What if the biggest thing keeping us from doing what matters is the false assumption that it has to take tremendous effort? What if, instead, we considered the possibility that the reason something feels hard is that we haven't yet found the easier way to do it? LOCATION: 351

Our brain is wired to resist what it perceives as hard and welcome what it perceives as easy. This bias is sometimes called the cognitive ease principle, or the principle of least effort. It's our tendency to take the path of least resistance to achieve what we want. LOCATION: 354

Here is what I learned: trying too hard makes it harder to get the results you want. LOCATION: 386

Effortless Inversion means looking at problems from the opposite perspective. It means asking, "What if this could be easy?" It means learning to solve problems from a state of focus, clarity, and calm. It means getting good at getting things done by putting in less effort. LOCATION: 398

When we remove the complexity, even the slightest effort can move what matters forward. LOCATION: 466

Our rituals are habits we have put our thumbprint on. Our rituals are habits with a soul. They have the power to transform a tedious task into an experience that creates joy. LOCATION: 621

Have you ever found that the more you complain—and the more you read and hear other people complain—the easier it is to find things to complain about? On the other hand, have you ever found that the more grateful you are, the more you have to be grateful for? LOCATION: 665

When you focus on something you are thankful for, the effect is instant. It immediately shifts you from a lack state (regrets, worries about the future, the feeling of being behind) and puts you into a have state (what is going right, what progress you are making, what potential exists in this moment). It reminds you of all the resources, all the assets, all the skills you have at your disposal. LOCATION: 669

When you focus on what you lack, you lose what you have. LOCATION: 684

BJ Fogg, founder of the Behavior Design Lab at Stanford University, says that to create a new habit we simply

need to look for something we already do and then attach a new behavior to it. He calls this a habit recipe, the simplest version of which is: “After [X] I will [Y].” We can apply this idea to make gratitude a habit, by using the following recipe: After I complain I will say something I am thankful for. LOCATION: 711

To be in the Effortless State is to be aware, alert, and present, even in the face of fast-moving information and the endless onslaught of distractions. And that’s no small thing, because in that state of heightened attention we see differently. We are able to laser in on the things that are important. We notice things that were always right under our noses but that we missed before. LOCATION: 1015

When we’re fully present with people, it has an impact. Not just in that moment either. The experience of feeling like the most important person in the world even for the briefest of moments can stay with us for a disproportionate time after the moment has passed. There is a curiously magical power of presence. LOCATION: 1058

The greatest gift we can offer to others is not our skill or our money or our effort. It is simply us. LOCATION: 1086

What is the Effortless State? The Effortless State is an experience many of us have had when we are physically rested, emotionally unburdened, and mentally energized. You are completely aware, alert, present, attentive, and focused on what’s important in this moment. You are able to focus on what matters most with ease. LOCATION: 1106

Past a certain point, more effort doesn’t produce better performance. It sabotages our performance…Economists call this the law of diminishing returns: after a certain point, each extra unit of input produces a decreasing rate of output. LOCATION: 1153

Haven’t you found that when you do your very best work, the experience feels effortless? You act almost without thinking. You make things happen without even trying to make things happen. You are in the zone, in flow, in peak performance. LOCATION: 1171

I define “done” as the point just before the effort invested begins to be greater than the output achieved. LOCATION: 1218

To avoid diminishing returns on your time and effort, establish clear conditions for what “done” looks like, get there, then stop. LOCATION: 1220

A Done for the Day list is not a list of everything we theoretically could do today, or a list of everything we would love to get done. These things will inevitably extend far beyond the limited time available. Instead, this is a list of what will constitute meaningful and essential progress. As you write the list, one test is to imagine how you will feel once this work is completed. Ask yourself, “If I complete everything on this list, will it leave me feeling satisfied by the end of the day? Is there some other important task that will haunt me all night if I don’t get to it?” If your answer to the second question is yes, that is a task that should go on the Done for the Day list. LOCATION: 1254

For many years I have been inspired by the idea that, whether we’re aware of it or not, each one of us has an essential mission in life. We all harbor a sense of purpose, unique purpose, and it is our life’s work to figure out what that is and to achieve it. It’s the question “What does ‘done’ look like?” writ large. LOCATION: 1265

Universally, the single question that can save you untold headaches and get you moving on priority projects that seem overwhelmingly hard or complex is as follows: What are the minimum steps required for completion? LOCATION: 1420

The Effortless State is an experience many of us have had when we are physically rested, emotionally unburdened, and mentally energized. You are completely aware, alert, present, attentive, and focused on what's important in this moment. You are able to focus on what matters most with ease. LOCATION: 1733

Linear results are limited: they can never exceed the amount of effort exerted. What many people don't realize, however, is that there exists a far better alternative…Residual results are completely different. With residual results you exert effort once and reap the benefits again and again. Results continue to flow to you, whether you put in additional effort or not. Results flow to you while you are sleeping. Results flow to you when you are taking the day off. Residual results can be virtually infinite. LOCATION: 1822

Reading a book is among the most high-leverage activities on earth. For an investment more or less equivalent to the length of a single workday (and a few dollars), you can gain access to what the smartest people have already figured out. Reading, that is, reading to really understand, delivers residual results by any estimate. LOCATION: 2010

Knowledge may open the door to an opportunity, but unique knowledge produces perpetual opportunities. LOCATION: 2057

Alfred North Whitehead, the British mathematician turned American philosopher, once said, "Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations we can perform without thinking about them"—another way of saying, "As many essential steps and activities as possible should be automated." LOCATION: 2147

The beauty of the checklist is that the thinking has been done ahead of time. It's been taken out of the equation. Or rather, it has been baked into the equation. So instead of getting these essential things right occasionally, we get them right every time. LOCATION: 2181

When you have trust in your relationships, they take less effort to maintain and manage. You can quickly split work between team members. People can talk about problems when they come up, openly and honestly. Members share valuable information rather than hoard it. Nobody minds asking questions when they don't understand something. The speed and quality of decisions go up. Political infighting goes down. You may even enjoy the experience of working together. And you perform exponentially better, because you're able to focus all your energy and attention on getting important things done, rather than on simply getting along. LOCATION: 2312

When you have low trust on teams, everything is hard. Just sending a text or an email is exhausting as you weigh up every word for how it might be taken. When the response comes back you may experience a jolt of anxiety. Every conversation feels like it's a grind. When you don't trust that someone will deliver, you will feel you need to check up on them: remind them of deadlines, hover over them, review their work. Or you won't delegate anything at all, assuming you're better off just doing it yourself. The work can start to stall altogether. You can't have a high-performing team without high levels of trust. LOCATION: 2316

The key to getting Effortless Results in and across teams is to have systems in place to ensure that the engine is constantly well oiled. LOCATION: 2330

The best way to leverage trust to get residual results is simply to select trustworthy people to be around. LOCATION: 2332

Hiring someone trustworthy starts a simple and obvious first step, but one that many routinely overlook: making sure you are hiring someone honest and honorable, someone you can trust to uphold a high standard when nobody's looking. But hiring someone who is trustworthy is also about hiring someone conscientious,

someone you can trust to uphold their responsibilities, to use good judgment, to do what they say they're going to do when they say they're going to do it and to do it well. It's someone you don't have to supervise or micromanage, someone who understands the team's goals and who cares as much as you do about the quality of the essential work to be done. LOCATION: 2342

Warren Buffett uses three criteria for determining who is trustworthy enough to hire or to do business with. He looks for people with integrity, intelligence, and initiative, though he adds that without the first, the other two can backfire. LOCATION: 2347

The Effortless State is an experience many of us have had when we are physically rested, emotionally unburdened, and mentally energized. You are completely aware, alert, present, attentive, and focused on what's important in this moment. You are able to focus on what matters most with ease. LOCATION: 2533

Instead of asking, "Why is this so hard?," invert the question by asking, "What if this could be easy?" LOCATION: 2536

When faced with work that feels overwhelming, ask, "How am I making this harder than it needs to be?" LOCATION: 2540

Do not do more today than you can completely recover from by tomorrow. LOCATION: 2555

Train your brain to focus on the important and ignore the irrelevant. LOCATION: 2561

Effortless Action means accomplishing more by trying less. You stop procrastinating and take the first obvious step. You arrive at the point of completion without overthinking. You make progress by pacing yourself rather than powering through. You overachieve without overexerting. LOCATION: 2567

Set an effortless pace: slow is smooth, smooth is fast. LOCATION: 2593

You've continued to cultivate your Effortless State. You've started to take Effortless Action with clarity of objective, tiny, obvious first steps, and a consistent pace. You are achieving the results you want, more easily. But now you want those results to continue to flow to you, again and again, with as little additional effort as possible. You are ready to achieve Effortless Results. LOCATION: 2599

Learn principles, not just facts and methods. LOCATION: 2604

Stand on the shoulders of giants and leverage the best of what they know. LOCATION: 2606

Achieve far-reaching impact by teaching others to teach. LOCATION: 2610

Tell stories that are easily understood and repeated. LOCATION: 2613

Free up space in your brain by automating as many essential tasks as possible. LOCATION: 2615

Use checklists to get it right every time, without having to rely on memory. LOCATION: 2616

Leverage trust as the engine oil of frictionless and high-functioning teams. LOCATION: 2621

Make the right hire once, and it will continue to produce results again and again. LOCATION: 2622

Follow the Three I's Rule: hire people with integrity, intelligence, and initiative. LOCATION: 2623

Catch mistakes before they happen; measure twice, so you only have to cut once. LOCATION: 2630

Whatever has happened to you in life. Whatever hardship. Whatever pain….They pale in comparison to the power you have to choose what to do now. LOCATION: 2702

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.