

THE ONE THING, BY GARY KELLER WITH JAY PAPASAN*

SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS

Part 1: Six Myths That Take Us Off Course

1) Everything Matters Equally	<p><i>Why it is a myth:</i> We spend too much time doing tasks that are not central to our goals. The Pareto Principle suggests that 20% of effort leads to 80% of results.</p> <p><i>Instead:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on what matters most rather than on being busy. - When looking at a task list keep asking, "What matters most?" until you arrive at one thing. - Say no to everything else until you get your most important work done - Don't get stuck on checking things off the list.
2) Multitasking	<p><i>Why it is a myth:</i> The brain can't hold two things as its primary focus at the same time. Switching between tasks requires time for the brain to switch and reorient.</p> <p><i>Instead:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realize that distraction is natural and also that it can lead to poor choices, mistakes, and stress. - Figure out what matters most in given moment and give that your full attention.
3) A Disciplined Life	<p><i>Why it is a myth:</i> Discipline takes a mental toll. Habits are second nature.</p> <p><i>Instead:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use discipline to develop habits. - Build habits one at a time. - Allow enough time for a habit to stick before moving onto the next (66 days is average).
4) Willpower is Always on Will-Call	<p><i>Why it is a myth:</i> Willpower is a limited resource. It starts out strong and depletes over the course of a day. Lots of things tax our willpower.</p> <p><i>Instead:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide what matters most and save your willpower for that. - Eat well and regularly to fuel your brain which uses 1/5 of your daily calories. - Time important tasks for first thing in the day when willpower is strongest.
5) A Balanced Life	<p><i>Why it is a myth:</i> "Time on one thing means time away from another." By trying to do all things, everything gets shortchanged. Instead think about counterbalancing (like a pendulum that swings back and forth).</p> <p><i>Instead:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "View work as involving a skill or knowledge that must be mastered." Take what matters most to the extremes and be okay with whatever happens to the rest. - Our personal lives have multiple areas that require attention. Never go too long without counterbalancing the relationships, activities, and practices that you value so that they remain active parts of life.
6) Big is Bad	<p><i>Why it is a myth:</i> No one knows the limits of possibility. Small thinking will lead to small outcomes. Thinking small keeps you in a "fixed mindset."</p> <p><i>Instead:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set goals that are so far above the original goal that your actions to reach the big goal should guarantee the success of the smaller goal. - Imagine outcomes no one else has. - "Once you've asked a big question, imagine what life looks like with the answer." - Adapt a growth mindset and don't be afraid to fail.

* Keller, GW & Papasan J (2013). The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results. Bard Press.

Part 2: The Path to Productivity

Ask the focusing question: *What's the ONE THING I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?*

- Big picture – What's my one thing?
- Small focus – What's my one thing *right now*?
- Make it a habit to ask the focusing question for all areas of life: spiritual, physical health, personal life, key relationships, job, business, and finances.
- Set up reminders to help focus on the One Thing.

Seek answers that move you past the “doable” and “stretch” answers to the limits of “possibility.” Think big and specific. Look at current benchmarks and trends to become better at anticipating where things are heading.

Part 3: Extraordinary Results

Live with purpose.

- What drives you?
- What gets you excited?
- Pick something and start moving in that direction.
- Re-evaluate and course correct as you go.

Live by priority.

- You can only have one priority.
- Start with your long-term future goal and identify the steps you will need to take to get there by working backwards until you get to the one thing that is most important to do now.
- Write down your goals and revisit them often.

Live for productivity.

- Block time for uninterrupted work on your One Thing for the day.
- Protect this time as sacred.

Commit to your one thing adopting a mindset geared toward:

Mastery

- Never settle for “good enough.” Keep trying to learn and improve on what you are doing.

Entrepreneurship

- Explore new ways of doing tasks in order to break through your ceiling of natural ability.

Accountability

As developments occur, assess and acknowledge what's happening, recognize your part, and find a way to take action.

Four Thieves of Productivity

- 1) The inability to say “No”
- 2) Fear of chaos
- 3) Poor health habits
- 4) Environment doesn't support your goals