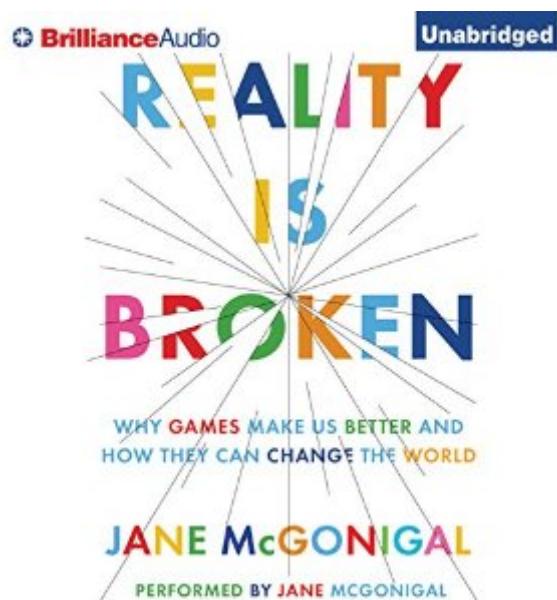


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# Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better And How They Can Change The World



## **Synopsis**

In today's society, games are fulfilling real human needs in ways that reality is not. Hundreds of millions of people globally - 174 million in the United States alone - regularly inhabit game worlds because they provide the rewards, stimulating challenges, and epic victories that are so often lacking in the real world. Instead of futile handwringing about this exodus from reality, world-renowned game designer Jane McGonigal argues that we need to figure out how to make the real world-our homes, our businesses and our communities-engage us in the way that games do. Drawing on positive psychology and cognitive science, McGonigal reveals how game designers have hit on core truths about what makes us happy, from social connection to having satisfying work to do. Game designers intuitively understand how to optimize human experience. Reality is Broken shows that games can teach us essential lessons about mass collaboration, creating emotional incentives, and increasing engagement that will be relevant to everyone.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

McGonigal has written a fun and readable book. She has found a niche here -- the idea that video games express our best selves -- and her enthusiasm on the subject is downright infectious. I kept thinking that she is one of those people in the center of her social network. One of those people that convinces her friends to get out of the house and try new, quirky, interesting things. She makes life fun by making it a game. It's nearly impossible not to get caught up in her enthusiasm. There are two sides to this enthusiasm. First of all, she has managed to convince people, on a grand scale, that

video games can be a force for good. She has actually gone out and done things to reform the way we think about video games by creating ones that tap the potential to be useful in the world. She and game designers like her may well be a force that sees this grand idea through to the end. On the other hand, there's a nagging feeling (the devil on my shoulder) that tells me that this idea is overstated and undersupported. The "science" here really doesn't (and couldn't, when it comes down to it) say that the world is better off as a direct result of video games. In short-term laboratory experiments, there are some interesting results. But the comparison groups here are what beg the question -- playing video games makes you more optimistic as compared to what? Because playing a role playing game for a few minutes makes you more confident in talking to the opposite sex immediately afterward does not mean that playing WoW for 22 hours a week is going to jazz up your sex life.

I suspect my reactions to this book may be different than the majority of readers, as I assume most readers will be dedicated gamers or those who are close to someone who is a serious gamer and want to know more about it.\*First the positives about this book. I appreciate that Jane McGonigal brings a fresh perspective and intelligence to looking at games. She draws from research in a variety of quarters which often are elucidating. For example, despite reading many smart popularized books on behavioral and cognitive brain issues, I hadn't read anything about why teasing (or self-deprecating humor) is an effective way of building camaraderie. And of course, she does a good job building a long and detailed case for what games have to offer. Since that has been discussed in detail in many other reviews, I won't say much about it.

The Negatives Sometimes I felt there was too much detail, even after a simple point was made. I listened to the audio book, so I can't cite chapter and verse, but one example I remember is that she mentioned something about rock stars and reeled off a long list of stars, finishing with the line "to name a few." Well, actually, you named way more than few. I know this may sound like nitpicking, but it was indicative of an overall sense of wishing she'd make her point and move on more rather than give LOTS of examples. My lack of interest in specifics about particular games may be coming into play. Plus the fact when listening to an audio book, you can't skim effectively. So take that criticism in context to your own interests and form of "reading" this book.

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