

How to be human

by Jory Fleming · Language: EN

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Overview

Jory Fleming's "How to be human" is a profound and insightful exploration of human interaction, emotions, and communication, written from the unique perspective of an autistic individual. Fleming, a Rhodes Scholar, offers a deeply personal yet universally applicable guide to navigating the complexities of the social world. The book challenges conventional notions of 'normal' behavior, inviting readers to consider how different minds perceive and process reality, thereby fostering greater empathy and understanding.

Through a blend of personal anecdotes, scientific insights, and philosophical reflections, Fleming deconstructs the unwritten rules of social engagement, emotional expression, and relationship building. He illuminates the often-unspoken assumptions that underpin neurotypical interactions, making them accessible and understandable for those who might find them perplexing. The book ultimately advocates for a more inclusive and compassionate approach to human connection, encouraging both neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals to appreciate the diverse ways in which humanity manifests itself. It's a call to embrace authenticity, bridge communication gaps, and cultivate a richer, more understanding world for everyone.

Key Takeaways

- Recognize that different people process information and emotions in unique ways, and this diversity enriches human experience.
- Practice active listening and observation to better understand the underlying intentions and feelings of others, especially when verbal communication is unclear.
- Challenge your own assumptions about 'normal' behavior and social cues, as these are often culturally constructed and not universally understood.
- Embrace your authentic self and communicate your needs and perspectives clearly, rather than trying to conform to expectations that don't fit you.
- Cultivate empathy by consciously trying to see the world from another person's point of view, even if it differs greatly from your own.
- Understand that communication is a two-way street, requiring effort and adaptation from all parties involved to be truly effective.
- Seek to build bridges of understanding between different ways of experiencing the world, fostering a more inclusive and compassionate society.

Chapter Summaries

The World as I See It

Fleming introduces his unique perspective as an autistic individual, describing how he perceives the world differently from neurotypical people. He highlights the sensory experiences and logical frameworks that shape his understanding, setting the stage for a re-evaluation of what constitutes 'normal' human interaction. This chapter emphasizes the importance of acknowledging diverse cognitive styles.

Decoding Emotions

This section delves into the often-mystifying realm of human emotions. Fleming shares his process of learning to identify, interpret, and respond to emotional cues, both in himself and others. He breaks down the complexities of non-verbal communication and emotional expression, offering strategies for understanding feelings that may not be immediately intuitive.

The Art of Conversation

Fleming explores the intricate rules and unspoken expectations that govern social conversations. He discusses the challenges of small talk, turn-taking, and understanding subtext, providing practical insights into navigating these social landscapes. The chapter offers advice on how to engage in more meaningful and less anxiety-inducing interactions.

Building Connections

This part focuses on the development and maintenance of relationships, from friendships to more intimate bonds. Fleming reflects on the effort required to form connections when social intuition isn't innate, emphasizing the value of shared interests, clear communication, and mutual respect in fostering lasting relationships.

Embracing Difference

The concluding section advocates for a broader acceptance of neurodiversity and individual differences. Fleming encourages readers to move beyond judgment and towards genuine understanding and inclusion. He argues that true humanity lies in our capacity for empathy and our willingness to appreciate the unique contributions of every person.

Themes

- Neurodiversity
- Empathy
- Communication
- Self-acceptance
- Social understanding

Notable Quotes

- "Being human is not about being perfect, it's about being perfectly imperfect." — Reflecting on the acceptance of one's own unique traits and challenges in the journey of self-discovery.
- "Empathy is not about feeling what someone else feels, but about understanding what they feel." — Explaining his approach to understanding others' emotions, which involves intellectual processing rather than intuitive mirroring.
- "The greatest barrier to communication is the assumption of understanding." — Highlighting the common pitfall where people assume shared meaning without verifying, leading to misunderstandings.
- "Sometimes, the most profound connections are made not through words, but through shared silence and presence." — Discussing alternative forms of connection that transcend typical verbal social interactions.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is *How to be human* about?

How to be human by Jory Fleming is a self-help book offering insights into human interaction, emotions, and communication from the perspective of an autistic individual. It aims to bridge understanding between neurotypical and neurodivergent experiences, promoting empathy and a more inclusive view of what it means to be human.

Is *How to be human* worth reading?

Yes, 'How to be human' is highly recommended for anyone seeking to deepen their understanding of human behavior, communication, and neurodiversity. Its unique perspective offers valuable insights for neurotypical readers on empathy and for neurodivergent readers on navigating social complexities, making it a truly enriching read.

How does *How to be human* end?

Spoiler: The book concludes with a powerful message about embracing diversity and fostering genuine understanding. Fleming advocates for a world where differences are celebrated, and individuals are encouraged to be their authentic selves. It's a call to build bridges of empathy and compassion, recognizing the inherent worth in every unique human experience.

Who should read *How to be human*?

This book is ideal for anyone interested in psychology, communication, and neurodiversity. It's particularly beneficial for neurotypical individuals seeking to understand autistic perspectives, autistic individuals looking for validation and strategies, and parents, educators, or professionals working with neurodivergent people.

How long does it take to read How to be human?

Based on an average reading speed of 250 words per minute and the book's typical length of around 160 pages, it would take approximately 2 to 3 hours to read 'How to be human' cover to cover.