

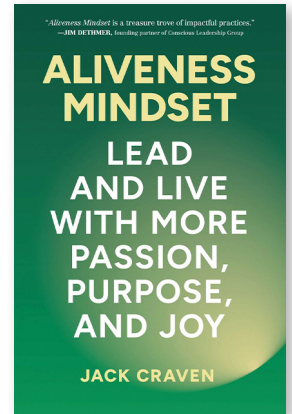


Executive Book Summaries[®]

Aliveness Mindset

Lead and Live with More Passion, Purpose, and Joy

by **Jack Craven**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

This book is designed for leaders who want to pursue “aliveness” and are willing to do whatever it takes to make those changes happen. It is for people who are fully committed, who want to live with more purpose and passion, and who desire to feel more alive every day. *Aliveness Mindset: Lead and Live with More Passion, Purpose, and Joy* by Jack Craven is for those who are willing to question beliefs that are limiting them and make critical shifts that will catapult them into the best versions of themselves.

The process can be messy. Even scary. It can be intimidating to be fully honest with yourself and with what you want and need in life. But, the principles outlined in this book work. They produce results. It doesn’t happen automatically or overnight, but if you focus on becoming more aware of yourself and more tenaciously devoted to the kind of life you want and need, things will change for the better.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Grasp how to identify, describe, and experience what makes you feel most alive.
- Learn the meaning behind “The Circle of Aliveness” and the seven key Aliveness Mindsets.
- Understand why the Aliveness Mindset is crucial to live a more fulfilling life.
- Find out how to “Live All In”, prioritizing how you want to feel daily and engage in actions that support this feeling.

PART I: INTRODUCING ALIVENESS

This is What I Want

When have you felt most alive? Truly alive. What does aliveness feel like to you? If you could extract the essence from those moments and memories, what specific words would you use to describe it?

If you're going to become more alive, you have to learn to identify, describe, and ultimately experience your own version of aliveness. Try to sum up your specific experience of aliveness in a few words. Jot down whatever words come to mind to describe how aliveness feels in your body, your emotions, and your mind. Now ask yourself, what if I could always feel that way, or feel that way more often? How would that change my life?

For many people, aliveness is a foreign concept because they've never been challenged to imagine a better quality of life than what they are experiencing. They have material and career goals, but those are superficial metrics of success. What about success on the inside? What about a lifestyle characterized by peace, joy, fulfillment, and positive energy?

You can take your personal version of aliveness into every aspect of your day-to-day life.

Aliveness is found at the intersection of what makes you feel most alive and how you approach your day-to-day life. If either of those is out of whack then it will be hard or even impossible to experience ongoing aliveness.

Aliveness is a state of being characterized by bringing the best version of yourself into your day-to-day experience through identifying and adopting mindsets and actions that align with your unique way of being fully alive.

The Circle of Aliveness

Aliveness is best represented by a circle. A circle centered on what I call your Optimal State.

Inner Circle: Optimal State

The first circle, the center of the whole shebang, is your Optimal State. This represents the bull's-eye of how we want to feel and what we want our daily experience to be. This is the goal and the intention behind all we do. This is you at your best.

Middle Circle: Aliveness Practice

This middle circle is intensely personal and practical.

Outer Circle: Aliveness Mindset

This circle consists of seven individual mindsets that together form one overarching philosophy or approach to life: an Aliveness Mindset. Together, these are the entry points for aliveness, because without these things, it will be nearly impossible to stay in your Optimal State.

The pursuit of aliveness is not linear, but circular and cyclical. The more you take ownership, the more you'll need to be open. The more open you are, the more aware you become. The more aware you become, the more honesty, courage, and tenacity you need.

More than a Nice Concept

Why should you pursue aliveness?

1. Because you deserve it. You deserve to feel alive, fulfilled, satisfied, and complete simply because you're human.
2. Because it will improve every area of your life in a holistic, integrated way. Aliveness is bringing the best version of yourself into your day-to-day experience of life.
3. Because the people in your world want and need you to experience it. You are connected to other people in so many ways, and your interactions and relationships with others will have a direct effect on your experience of life as well as theirs.
4. Because today matters. One of the toxic lies of "success," as our society often defines it, is that happiness lies on the other side of the next achievement. Goals are an essential part of life, they cannot be the point of your life or you'll always be pursuing what's next and never find a level of fulfillment that transcends what you do.

Show Up or Shut Up

You will have to be brave, wise, strong, and creative. You will have to take some risks. You will have to have a few hard conversations and maybe even disappoint some people—at least at first. You will have to look inward to discover the aliveness within you.

PART II: ALIVENESS MINDSET

It's All in Your Head

Reactivity is one of the greatest enemies leaders face, and openness is the antidote.

Is it possible that wrong mindsets are hindering your experience of aliveness? Could you be harboring ways of thinking about yourself, your job, your problems, other people, or life in general that are draining your energy and impeding your progress toward the best version of you? Could you have a mindset problem? We all have mindset problems.

This is why the Circle of Aliveness starts with the Aliveness Mindset. Changing how you think is the entry point into your aliveness.

Start with Your Mind

Renowned psychologist and researcher Carol Dweck has spent decades conducting groundbreaking research about how the way we think influences our leadership and lifestyle. These ways of thinking are mindsets, and they are remarkably powerful.

What we choose to think and believe becomes reality. We can use mental fortitude to frame our present situation in a positive light. That, in turn, positively affects our experience of the situation.

When it comes to aliveness, we have to start with our mind. Until we address the unhealthy ways of thinking and seeing the world, it's nearly pointless to address our behaviors and emotions. Conversely, once we adopt the right mindsets, our actions, thoughts, words, feelings, decisions, and relationships fall more naturally into place. Bottom line: keep an open mind.

The Aliveness Mindset

The Aliveness Mindset is made up of seven individual mindsets that frame and empower the Circle of Aliveness. These include ownership, openness, awareness, authenticity, courage, tenacity, and love.

Thinking about how you think is one of the most impactful tools you have to transform your life. It is a tool you always have access to because it exists inside of you and is completely within your control.

LOOK IN THE MIRROR

ALIVENESS MINDSET 1: OWNERSHIP

If you blame other people for what you don't like about your life, you take away your power to change it. A mindset of ownership is essential to aliveness because it gives you back your autonomy. This approach is "Look in the Mirror" leadership. Own what you have done to create the current results in your life.

ACCESSING THE ENERGY WITHIN ALIVENESS MINDSET 2: OPENNESS

Research indicates that an open mind coupled with humility facilitates learning, adaptation to diverse environments, and innovation. Reactivity is one of the greatest enemies leaders face, and openness is the antidote.

Why? Because reactivity is an automatic reaction, which means you do it without thinking about it. Being open, on the other hand, engages intentionality and reflexivity. We all experience fear, worry, anxiety, and stress.

But we also all have the opportunity to live above those things. To replace control with curiosity. To shift our mental posture from the heels of our feet to the balls of our feet.

Openness is a decision to engage the rational part of your brain. You move from unconscious reaction to conscious action.

Anxiety can be an indication that something inside of you is out of alignment. Instead of ignoring or suppressing it, work with fear and anxiety by engaging openness. How?

Step 1: Don't ignore it; listen to it. What if, instead of ignoring fear, you listened to it?

Step 2: Don't kill it; tame it. Your thoughts and emotions are your responsibility, and outside circumstances don't have the right to control them.

Step 3: Don't let it use you; use it instead.

THE FIRST STEP TO (ANY) CHANGE ALIVENESS MINDSET 3: AWARENESS

This takes intentionality. Once you decide to analyze what you are thinking or feeling, you can often identify problem areas within a matter of seconds. What are you feeling? What are you afraid of? What is triggering you? What could you do to recover your aliveness?

Your day should begin with an awareness of you at your best, of how you want to feel throughout your day, and of what you need to do to create that experience for yourself. That means taking a few moments every morning and as needed throughout the day to intentionally engage with an aliveness mentality.

Awareness is the starting point for all change. Take time to become aware. Take time to truly see and understand. Be aware of the situation at hand, but even more importantly, be aware of you.

THE BEST YOU IS THE REAL YOU ALIVENESS MINDSET 4: AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity refers to the degree to which your life aligns with your true self rather than conforming to societal expectations or external pressures. Author Brené Brown defines it as “the daily practice of letting go of who we think we are supposed to be and embracing who we are.” An authenticity mindset means you pay attention to the stories you tell yourself and the excuses you make to give up too soon. What belief or story are you using to convince yourself that the things you want the most can’t happen?

If you want to understand yourself better, pay attention to what excites and what frustrates you. Your emotions are meant to work together, and they are meant to motivate you toward positive change.

OVERCOMING FEAR ALIVENESS MINDSET 5: COURAGE

You can’t eradicate fear and anxiety, so don’t make that your focus. Instead, listen to them long enough to learn from them, to hear what they are trying to tell you—then choose courage. The ambiguity of life means that in order to achieve and remain in a state of aliveness, you will always need courage.

What does courage look like for you, and where do you need to engage it? Don’t confuse courage with adrenaline. In contrast, aliveness feels more like effortless play. We have infinite energy when we are alive, and courage is a natural result.

PLAY THE LONG GAME ALIVENESS MINDSET 6: TENACITY

Tenacity is the quality of being persistent, determined, and unwilling to give up or be discouraged in the face of challenges or obstacles. When it comes to aliveness, a tenacious mindset is one that has a strong and unwavering commitment to remaining in aliveness—or to recovering it if it’s been lost.

In the pursuit of aliveness, you have to play the long game. You can’t expect quick fixes or easy answers because usually the things that need to change are within you, and that kind of soul-searching and honesty doesn’t happen without some resistance.

CONNECTION IS EVERYTHING ALIVENESS MINDSET 7: LOVE

A mindset of love is about more than having warm, fuzzy feelings toward people. Author Bell Hooks wrote, “Affection is only one ingredient of love. To truly love we must learn to mix various ingredients—care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication.”

In your pursuit of aliveness, include your heart. Don’t neglect this vital element of human connection and interdependency. Be intentional about leaning into love, into generosity, into sharing, into connection.

Let’s look at a few of the ways love can help protect you.

1. Love is a protection against ego.
2. Love is a protection against isolation.
3. Love is a protection against fear and anxiety.

PART III: ALIVENESS PRACTICE

Feel It: Your Personal Brand of Aliveness

Have you considered what aliveness feels like for you? This is the heart and soul of the aliveness journey. You can’t pursue what you can’t define.

Learning to Listen to Yourself

Learning about your aliveness starts with feeling it. Before you can define it, before you can analyze it, before you can create it—you have to feel it.

Your Personal Brand of Aliveness

As you strive to connect with your personal “brand” of aliveness, focus on engaging the mindsets of: ownership, openness, awareness, authenticity, courage, tenacity, and

When you choose how you want to feel each day, you are effectively choosing how you want to feel about your life.

love. They will help you discover your aliveness and remain in that state.

Lock it In: Your Anchoring Mindsets

Introducing Anchoring Mindsets

Anchoring Mindsets are highly personalized. They are essential components of your value system and your inner motivations. When you identify them and learn to intentionally engage your AMs, they help move you toward aliveness, regardless of how difficult of a challenge you might be facing.

They are a stabilizing force, a source of strength and protection when life is difficult and aliveness seems hard to hold on to.

Discovering Your Anchoring Mindsets

So how do you identify the Anchoring mindsets that are so important to you? Discover your AMs by looking inward and paying attention to what is inside you already.

Below are questions to help you explore and name your Anchoring Mindsets.

1. What elements are common to my memories of aliveness?
2. What thoughts calm me, energize me, or otherwise move me toward aliveness?
3. What do I naturally feel, do, and prioritize when I don't feel threatened?
4. What is sabotaging my aliveness, and how do I try to counteract that?
5. What do other people say about me when they are praising me?

Live It: Aligned with Aliveness

Many of us lead a reactive life based on our calendar and schedule. There is another way to live. You can be focused and intentional, making life happen in a way that places

you in your genius zone and in the flow. To do that, you have to learn how to align your actions with what creates aliveness for you.

Prioritize How You Want to Feel, Not What You Want to Do

This means every day, you look at your schedule through the lens of how you want to feel throughout the day. This is a critical mindset shift you must make too. It runs counter to the hyper-efficiency teaching most of us grew up with, but it leads to greater sustainability, satisfaction—and, ironically, efficiency.

Prioritizing your feelings or your experience of aliveness implies two things at the same time.

1. Choose to Carry Aliveness into Your Day

This means changing how you think: your mindsets, your expectations, your inner dialogue.

2. Choose to Structure Your Day to Support Aliveness

This means changing what you do on a practical level: ruthlessly restructuring your calendar, choosing what meetings to be at, having conversations with people whose underperformance is draining your energy or who need to perform at a higher level, and so on.

Productivity Is the By-product, Aliveness Is the Goal

Focus on experience. This is your life, and you get to live it only once. When you choose how you want to feel about each day, you are effectively choosing how you want to feel about your life. The significance of that cannot be overstated.

PART IV: OPTIMAL STATE

How Do I Know?

Your Optimal State is not something you can name, define, and perfect in a fifteen-minute exercise. It's a state of aliveness, which means you're describing the ongoing condition of experiencing feelings that are uniquely important to you.

Understanding Your Optimal State

1. Optimal State is an experience, not an action.
2. Optimal State is your personal brand of aliveness.
3. Optimal State is you at your best.
4. Optimal State is a place you spend a lot of time.
5. Optimal State is not always possible, but you can always move closer to it.

Flowing in Aliveness

Flow is a psychological state of complete absorption and focus on an activity. Distractions fade away, and you have a sense of clarity and natural concentration. Flow is often connected to a sense of control over your actions and a belief in your ability to overcome obstacles. This autonomy and self-efficacy give you a sense of empowerment and increase your motivation.

Can you think of times where time stood still, the world around you faded away, and the energy to face a challenge came from within? Don't assume those moments are the exception. They should be the norm.

Aliveness is the Rule, Not the Exception

Your Optimal State is not just a goal to strive for; it's a place to stay. To live in and live from. And if you do stray from this place of aliveness for whatever reason (which we all do), you should try to return as soon as possible.

Take a minute to think about what place or object could represent staying in your OS. Maybe there's a real place that could provide a visual connection for you, such as the beach, a forest trail, or a cabin where you always vacation; or maybe a different metaphor comes to mind.

Removing Aliveness Blocks

Since your aliveness is distinctive to you, your blocks are as well. If you pay attention to your feelings throughout your day-to-day experiences, you will generally be able to pick up on the situations or triggers that most affect you.

Accelerants

Accelerants are small, practical actions that help you activate, sustain, extend, and maximize your aliveness. These are actionable, schedulable things that you can turn to at any time.

Living All In (LAI) Tools

If you don't have a plan for when you get reactive, it's nearly impossible to minimize reactivity in the moment.

The fifteen LAI (Living All In) tools are tips and strategies to help you discover and remain in your Optimal State.

1. Identify reactivity
2. Identify resistance
3. Breathing
4. Meditating
5. Self-compassion
6. Self-distancing
7. Rehearsing OS and AMs
8. Accelerants
9. Inner coach
10. Reframing
11. Whole-body yes
12. Journaling
13. Look back
14. Wall of gratitude
15. Kindness and connection

THE FUTURE IS ALIVE

Embracing aliveness is about recognizing and nurturing the moments when you feel most alive and bringing that essence into your daily life.

By identifying your Optimal State and adopting practices and mindsets that align with your personal version of aliveness, you can transform your daily experiences into a more fulfilling and vibrant existence.

Remember, the pursuit of aliveness is not linear but a continuous, cyclical process that requires courage, openness, and a commitment to personal growth. By focusing on how you want to feel and aligning your actions to support those feelings, you can achieve a more holistic and integrated sense of success and well-being.

“Take nothing for granted. It's great to be alive.” Lin Brehmer, a well-loved DJ at Chicago classic rock station WXRT for over three decades.



Jack Craven has always shaped his professional journey around his passions. Starting out as a trial lawyer with the Chicago State’s Attorney’s office, he moved into private practice and later took on the role of CEO for his family’s business for nearly two decades. Yet, his move into executive coaching stands out as the most challenging — and rewarding — chapter of his career. It was during this time that Jack created his “Living All In” philosophy. He has utilized his extensive professional and personal growth journey to empower individuals to discover deeper purpose, joy, and happiness in their lives.

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