

Books

The 50th law - Robert Greene, 50 Cent

Foreword

This book is the full guide to living a hustler's life to the fullest. After observing Fifty (50 cent) and talking to him about past, I decided that the source of his power is utter fearlessness.

He feels supreme confidence in himself. Living in a world where most people are generally timid and conservative, he always has the advantage of being willing to do more, to take risks, and to be unconventional. Coming from an environment in which he never expected to live past the age of twenty-five, he feels like he has nothing to lose, and this brings him tremendous power.

This book is about particular philosophy that can be summed up as follows - your fears are a kind of prison that confines you within a limited range of action. The less you fear the more power you will have and the more fully you will live.

Introduction

In the nineteenth century people in advertising and journalism discovered that if they framed their stories and appeals with fear, they could capture our attention. It is emotion we find hard to resist to control, so they constantly shifted our focus toward new possible sources of anxiety.

They have been able to give us the feeling that we are fragile creatures in an environment full of danger - even though we live in a world infinitely safer and more predictable than anything our ancestors knew. With their help our anxieties only increased. Fear is not designed for such a purpose

It's function is to stimulate powerful physical responses, allowing an animal to retreat in time. After the event it is supposed to go away. Animal that cannot let go of its fears once the threat is gone will find it hard to eat or sleep.

We come to see almost every event in terms of risk. We exaggerate the dangers and our vulnerability. We are generally unaware of that phenomenon because we accept it as normal.

In times of trouble, this fearful attitude becomes particularly pernicious. Such moments are when we need to solve problems, deal with reality, and move forward, but fear is a call to retreat and retrench.

Fear creates its own self-fulfilling dynamic - as people give in to it, they lose energy and momentum. Their lack of confidence translates into inaction that lowers confidence levels even further on and on. The only thing we have to fear is fear itself - nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror, which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.

The edge is your attitude, which has the power to help shape your reality. If you view everything through a lens of fear, then you tend to stay in retreat mode. You can just as easily see a crisis or problem as a challenge, an opportunity to prove your mettle, the chance to strengthen and toughen yourself or a call to collective action.

We face certain challenges as well. The world has become more competitive. The economy has undeniable vulnerabilities and is in need of reinvention. As in all situations, the determining factor will be your attitude. How we choose to look at this reality.

There are two ways of dealing with fear - one passive the other active. In the passive mode we seek to avoid a situation that causes us anxiety. It could mean opting for everything to be safe and comfortable in our daily lives, so no amount of messiness can enter. When we are in this mode it is because we feel that we are fragile and would be damaged by an encounter with a thing we dread. The active variety is something most of us have experienced at some point in time: the risky or difficult situation that we fear is thrust upon us. Often in these moments we find inner strength that surprises us. What we feared is not so bad. Such moments are oddly therapeutic because we are finally confronting something real - not an imagined scenario fed to us by the media. The problem with those moments is that they don't last long or repeat themselves too often. They can quickly lose their value and return to passive avoidance mode.

When we live in relatively comfortable circumstances, the environment does not press us with obvious dangers, violence or limitations. Our main goal is to maintain

the comfort and security we have and so we become more sensitive.

Understand: no one is born this way. It is unnatural to not feel fear. It is a process that requires challenges and tests. What separates those who go under and those who rise above adversity is the strength of their will and their hunger for power. At some point this defensive position of overcoming fears converts to an offensive one - a fearless attitude. Soon it becomes their dominant mindset.

People who cannot suffer can never grow up, can never discover who they are.

He quickly developed a habit of not depending on other people to protect or shelter him. This meant that in every subsequent encounter in life in which he felt fear, he could turn only to himself. If he did not want to feel the emotion, he had to learn to overcome it.

On the streets, showing fear would make people lose respect for you. You would end up being pushed around and more likely to suffer violence because of your desire to avoid it. You had no choice - if you were any kind of power as a hustler you had to overcome this emotion. No one could read it in your eyes. This meant he would have to place himself again and again in situations that stimulates anxiety.

They find that the chaos of their times suits their temperament. They have grown up being unafraid of experimentation, hustling, and trying new ways of operating. They embrace the advances in technology that make others secretly fearful

The greatest fear people have is that of being themselves. They want to be 50 cent or someone else. They do what everyone else does even if it doesn't fit where and who they are. But you get nowhere that way; your energy is weak and no one pays attention to you. You are running away from the one thing that you own - what makes you different. I lost that fear.

We humans have generally little control over circumstances. The 50th law however, states that there is one thing we can actually control - the mindset with which we respond to these events around us. If we are able to overcome our anxieties and forge a fearless attitude towards life, something strange and remarkable can occur - that margin of control over circumstances increases.

People who practice the 50th law (that the one thing we can control is our mindset) in their lives share certain qualities - supreme boldness, unconventionality, fluidity, and sense of urgency.

A bold act requires high degree of confidence. People who are the targets of an audacious act or who witness it, cannot help but believe such confidence is real and justified. They respond instinctively by backing up, by getting out of the way, or by following the confident person.

Those who fearlessly express their difference compel our attention on a deeper level for a longer duration, which translates into power and control.

Underneath there is a deep fear of sticking out, and following our own path no matter what people think of us. The fearless types are able to conquer this fear. They fascinate us by how far they go with their unconventionality.

Those who follow the 50th law are not afraid of change and chaos; they embrace it by being as fluid as possible. Through their mind-set, they convert a negative (unexpected events) into a positive (opportunity).

Trying so hard to please people can actually end up pushing them away - it is hard to respect someone who has such an ingratiating attitude. If you are afraid to learn from your mistakes you will more than likely keep repeating them

The key to possessing the supreme power is to assume the active mode in dealing with your fears. This means entering the very arenas you normally shy away from: making the very hard decisions you have been avoiding, confronting people who are playing power games with you, thinking of yourself and what you need instead of pleasing others, making yourself change the direction of your life even though such thing is a very thing you dread.

You deliberately put yourself in difficult situations and examine your reactions. In each case, you notice the fear were exaggerated and that confronting them has been bracing effect of bringing you closer to reality.

Fifty had to confront his fears; you must choose too.

You must absorb the ideas from this book with open and fearless spirit, letting the ideas get under your skin and affect how you see the world. Do not be afraid to experiment with them.

Chapter 1 - See things for What They Are - Intense Realism

Introduction

This chapter explores the concept of **Intense Realism**. It encourages you to accept and embrace your circumstances, rather than wishing they were different. It warns against the dangers of a soft mind and promotes the power of reality. It urges you to become a keen observer of the world around you, to question everything, and to get to the root of problems. It emphasizes the importance of realism as the highest point of human rationality and warns against the pitfalls of clinging to delusions.

Main advices

Your task is to resist the temptation to wish it were all different; Instead you must fearlessly accept this circumstances, even embrace them. By focusing your attention on what is going on around you you will gain a sharp appreciation for what makes some people advance and other fall behind

Don't complain about the difficult circumstances. The hard life is a blessing if you know what you are doing.

The greatest danger we face is the mind going soft.

This is not time to get depressed or to dream, but to see the world as it is. No matter how ugly

Reality is my drug. The more I have or it, the more power I get and the higher I feel.

The world has become as grimy and dangerous as the streets of Southside Queen - a global, competitive environment in which everyone is a ruthless hustler. Those words apply to you as much as to Fifty: the greatest danger you face is your mind growing soft and your eye getting dull.

If things are going well, you become complacent, imagining that what you have now will continue forever. You stop paying attention. Before you know it, you end up overwhelmed by the changes going on and the younger people rising up around you, challenging your position.

Understand: you need this code even more than Fifty. His world was so harsh and violent it forced him to open his eyes for reality and never lose that connection. Your world seems cozier and less violent, less immediately dangerous. It makes you wander and your eyes mist over with dreams. The competitive dynamic (the

streets, the business world) is in fact the same, but your apparently comfortable environment makes it harder for you to see it.

Now it is time to stop drifting and wake up - to assess yourself, the people around you, and the direction in which you are headed in as cold and brutal a light as possible. Without fear

People can be full of book knowledge and crammed with information but have no real sense of what's going on around them. Realists are not afraid to look at the harsh circumstances of life. They sharpen their eye by paying keen attention to details, to people's intentions, to the dark realities hiding behind the glamorous surface. Like any muscle that is trained, they develop the capacity to see with more intensity.

At any moment in life you can convert to realism. It means every circumstance, every individual is different and your task is to measure that difference, then take appropriate action. Your eyes are fixed on the world, not on yourself and ego. What you see determines what you think and how you act.

The moment you believe in some cherished idea that you will hold on to no matter what your eyes and ears reveals to you, you are no longer a realist.

The genius of Lincoln was his ability to focus on reality and see things for what they were. He was a living testament to the power of realism.

It might seem that seeing so much of reality could make one depressed, but the opposite is the case. Having clarity about where you are headed, what people are up to, and what is happening in the world around you will translate into confidence and power, a sensation of lightness. Whenever things go wrong in life you will be able to right yourself faster than others, because you will quickly see what is really going on and how you can exploit even the worst moment.

Know the other, know yourself, and the victory will not be at risk; know the ground, know the natural conditions and the victory will be total.

Understand: as an individual you cannot stop the tide of fantasy and escapism sweeping a culture. But you can stand as an individual bulwark to this trend and create power for yourself. You were born with the greatest weapon in all of nature - the rational, conscious mind. It has the power to expand your vision far and wide.

Consider it war. You must fight this tendency as best as you can and move in the opposite direction. You must turn outward and become a keen observer of all that is around you. You are doing battle against fantasies that are thrown at you. You want clarity, not escape and confusion. Moving in this direction will instantly bring you power among so many dreamers.

Regard the following exercises for your mind - to make it less rigid, more penetrating and expansive, a sharper gauge of reality. Practice all of them as often as you can

His superiority, he realized, was that he knew that he knew nothing. This left his mind open to experiencing things as they are, the source of all knowledge

At some point, we feel like we know what we need to know; our opinions are certain and firm. We do this out of fear. We don't want our assumptions about life challenged

Let go of your preconceptions and even your most cherished beliefs. Experiment. Force yourself to hold the opposite opinion or see the world through your enemy's eye. Listen to people around you with more attentiveness. See everything as source for education - even the most banal encounters. Imagine that world is still full of mystery.

Your goal is to follow the path of Napoleon. You want to take in as much as possible with your own eyes. You communicate with people up and down the chain of command within your organization. You do not draw any barriers to your social interactions.

When you do not get to the root of problem, you cannot solve it in any meaningful manner. People like to look at the surfaces, get all emotional and react, doing things that make them feel better in the short term but do nothing for them in the long term. This must be the power and the direction of your mind whenever you encounter some problem - to bore deeper and deeper until you get at something basic at the root.

Always question why this particular event has happened, what the motives of the various actors are, who really is in control, who benefits by this action. Often it will revolve around money and power - that is what people are usually fighting over, despite the surface gloss they give to it.

It is the law of power, however, that the further and deeper we contemplate the future, the greater our capacity to shape it according to our desires. If you have a long term goal for yourself one that you have imagined in detail, then you are better able to make the proper decisions in the present.

Think of your own biggest mistakes or those of others. How could they have been foreseen? Generally there are signs that seem so obvious afterwards. Now imagine those very same signs that you are probably ignoring in the present.

The person who is too obviously friendly after too short period of time is often up to no good. Behavior that stands out and seems excessive is a sign. Don't get caught up in people's grand gestures and the public face they put on.

Their decision reveal a lot, and you can discern a pattern if you look at them closely. In general, looking at people through the lens of emotions will cloud what you see and make you misunderstand everything. What you want is sharp eye towards your fellow humans - one that is piercing, objective, and nonjudgemental.

Look at your most recent actions as if they were the maneuvers of another person. Imagine how you could have done it all better - avoided unnecessary battles or confronted people who stood in your way. The goal is not to beat up on yourself but to have the capacity to adapt and change your behavior by moving closer to reality.

Realism is in fact the ideal we must aspire to, the highest point of human rationality.

People who cling to their delusions find it difficult, if not impossible, to learn anything worth learning.

Chapter 2 - Make everything your own - Self Reliance

Introduction

This chapter underscores the power of **Self Reliance**. It emphasizes the importance of being completely yourself and making your own decisions. It warns against the dangers of dependency and conformity, and promotes the pursuit of education and improvement. The chapter encourages you to see your uniqueness as a strength and to strive for ownership in all aspects of your life. It highlights the

importance of self-reliance in achieving power and warns against the pitfalls of quick fixes and easy solutions.

Main advices

The ultimate power in life is to be completely self reliant, completely yourself.

If you were weak, you looked for others to help you or for some crutch to lean on, such as drugs or alcohol. This is the path of doom. The only way to survive is to admit that you are on your own, learn to make your own decisions, and trust your judgements. Do not ask for what you need but take it.

I was born alone and I will die alone. I've got to do what's right for me and not live my life the way anybody else wants it.

You came into this life with the only real possessions that ever matter - your body, the time that you have to live, your energy, the thoughts and ideas unique to you, and your autonomy. But over the years you tend to give all of this away. You spend years working for others - they own you during that period. You come to respect your own ideas less and less, listening to experts, conforming to conventional opinions.

True ownership can come only from within. It comes from a disdain for anything or anybody that impinges upon your mobility, from a confidence in your own decisions, and from the use of your time in constant pursuit of education and improvement

If you do not own yourself first, you will continually be at mercy of people and circumstance, looking outward instead of relying on yourself and your wits. We are living through entrepreneurial revolution, comparable to the one that swept through Fifty's neighborhood in the 80's, but on global scale.

It is harder for us to realize that we are essentially alone in this world and in need of skills that Fifty had to develop for himself on the streets. Everyone in the world is governed by self interest. People naturally think first of themselves and their agendas.

You are more alone than you imagine. This should not be a source of fear but freedom. When you prove to yourself that you can get things on your own, then you experience a sense of liberation. You are no longer waiting for people to do this for you.

When Fifty was in jail he refused to have the usual entertainments in his cell - television, radio, pornographic magazines. He knew he would grow dependent on these weak pleasures and this would give the wardens something to take away from him.

Think of it this way: dependency is a habit that is so easy to acquire. We live in a culture that offers you all kind of crutches - experts to turn on, drugs to cure any psychological unease, mild pleasures to help pass or kill time, jobs to keep you just above water. It is hard to resist. But once you give in, it is like a prison you enter that you cannot ever leave.

It is a kind of exercise you must practice on a daily basis - weaning yourself from dependencies, listening less to others' voices and more to your own, cultivating new skills.

We will often be working for others, dutiful, fitting in or subsuming our personality to the group. That's the fear speaking and deluding us. If we give in to these fear, then we will spend our lives looking outward for salvation and never find it.

Your life must be progression towards ownership - first mentally of your independence, and then physically of your work, owning what you produce. Think of the following steps as a blueprint for how to move in this direction.

Never be a minion, always be the owner.

Almost all of us must begin our careers working for others, but it is always within our power to transform this time from something dead to something alive. If we make the same determination as - Vanderbilt - to be an owner and not a minion - than that time is used to learn as much as we can about what is going on around us - the political games, the nuts and bolts of this particular venture, the larger game going on in the business world, how we could do things better.

What you really value in life is ownership, not money. If ever there is a choice - more money or more responsibility - you must always opt for the latter. A lower-paying position that offers more room to make decisions and carve out little empires is infinitely preferable to something that pays well but constricts your movement.

Your goal in life must be to always move higher and higher up in the food chain, where you alone control the direction of your enterprise and depend on no one.

Make your enterprise a reflection of your individuality.

Understand you are one of the kind. Your character traits are a kind of chemical mix that will never be repeated in history. There are ideas unique to you, a specific rhythm and perspective that are your strenghts, not your weaknesses. You must not be afraid of your uniqueness and you must care less and less what people think of you.

Do not be taken in by this culture. Self help books and experts will try to convince you that you can have what you want by following a few simple steps. Things that come easy and fast will leave you just as fast. The only way to gain self reliance or any power is through great effort and practice. And this effort should not be seen as something ugly or dull; it is a process of gaining power over yourself that is the most satisfying at all, knowing that step by step you are elevating yourself above dependent masses.

Chapter 3 - Turn Shit into Sugar - Opportunism

Introduction

This chapter, titled **Turn Shit into Sugar - Opportunism**, emphasizes the power of perspective in transforming negative situations into positive opportunities. It encourages you to be inventive when resources are scarce and to view every setback as a potential advantage. The chapter warns against the dangers of fear and inaction, and promotes boldness and initiative in the face of adversity. It highlights the importance of mental alchemy in turning setbacks into opportunities and the power of high morale and energy in overcoming obstacles. The chapter concludes with the concept of "amor fati" or love of fate, urging you to accept all events as fated to occur and to see the positive reasons behind them.

Main advices

Every negative situation contains the possibility for something positive, an opportunity. It is how you look at it matters. Your lack of resources can be an advantage, forcing you to be more inventive with the little that you have

Even the worst shit that happens to you can be converted into gold if you are clever enough. All of the negative factors now facing him - little money, no connections, the price on his head - could be turned into their opposites,

advantages and opportunities. This is how he would confront this seemingly insurmountable obstacles now in his path

Every negative is a positive, the bad things that happen to me, I somehow make them good. That means you can't do anything to hurt me

Events in life are not negative or positive. They are completely neutral. The universe does not care about your fate; it is indifferent to the violence that may hit you or death itself. Things merely happen to you. It is your mind that chooses to interpret them as negative or positive. And because you have layers of fear that dwell deep within you, your natural tendency is to interpret temporary obstacles in your path as something larger - setbacks and crises. In such frame of mind you exaggerate the dangers.

If someone attacks and harms you in some way, you focus on the money or position you have lost in the battle. This causes you to grow cautious, to retreat, hoping to spare yourself more of these negative things. It is a time, you tell yourself to lay low and wait for things to get better. What you do not realize is that you are inadvertently making the situation worse. Your rival only gets stronger as you sit back.

What you need to do is to take the opposite approach. Instead of being discouraged and depressed by any kind of downturn, you must see this as a wake-up call, a challenge that will transform into an opportunity of power. Your energy levels rise. You move to the attack, surprising your enemies with boldness.

Mentally framing a negative event as a blessing in disguise makes it easier for you to move forward. It is a kind of mental alchemy, transforming shit into sugar

When setbacks occur, it is almost a personal affront of punishment. "How could this have happened?" we ask. We either blame other people or we blame ourselves. In both cases we lose valuable time and become unnecessarily emotional.

In places like the hood or any kind of materially impoverished environment, the response to hardship is much different. There, bad things happening assume a kind of normality. They are a part of daily life. The hustler thinks "I must make the most of what I have, even the bad stuff, because things are not going to get better on their own. It is foolish to wait; tomorrow may bring even worse shit"

The truth is that life is by nature harsh and competitive. No matter how much money or resources you have accumulated, someone will try to take them from you, or unexpected changes in the world will push you backward. These are not adverse circumstances but merely life as it is. You have no time to lose to fear and depression, and you do not have luxury of waiting

If the path is too smooth, they grow arrogant and make fatal mistake.

You must adopt an attitude that is opposite to how most people think and operate. When things are going well, that is precisely when you must be concerned and vigilant. You know it will not last and you will not be caught unprepared. When things are going badly, that is when you are most encouraged and fearless. Finally you have material to a powerful reversal, a chance to prove yourself. It is only out of danger and difficulty that you can rise at all.

In general, obstacles force your mind to focus and find ways around them. They heighten your mental powers and should be welcomed.

Move before you are ready. Most people wait too long to go into action generally out of fear. They want more money or better circumstances. You must go the opposite direction and move before you think you are ready.

Remember: as Napoleon said, the moral is to the physical as three to one - meaning the motivation and energy levels you or your army bring to the encounter have three times as much weight as your physical resources. With energy and high morale, a human can overcome almost any obstacle and create opportunity out of nothing.

Rome as amor fati, or love or fate. In this philosophy every event is seen as fated to occur. When you complain and rail against circumstances, you fall out of balance with the natural state of things; you wish things were different. What you must do instead is accept the fact that all events occur for a reason, and that it is within your capacity to see this reason as positive.

Chapter 4 - Keep moving - Calculated momentum

Introduction

In Chapter 4, "Keep Moving - Calculated Momentum," we explore the concept of embracing change and finding freedom in fluidity. We delve into the paradox of

control and how our attempts to micromanage often lead to a loss of control in the long run. We learn to see chaos not as a threat, but as a source of endless opportunities, and to navigate through it with an open spirit. Drawing inspiration from the adaptability of hustlers, we are encouraged to keep our thoughts moving, constantly inventing and experimenting. We discuss the importance of strategy, the dangers of rigidity, and the power of unpredictability. The chapter also highlights the role of emotions in our lives, emphasizing the need for emotional flow and the art of counterbalance.

Main advices

In the present there is constant change and so much we cannot control. If you try to micromanage it all, you lose even greater control in the long run. The answer is to let go and move with the chaos that presents itself to you- from within it, you will find endless opportunities.

What we find is that our desire to micromanage the world around us comes with a paradoxical effect - the harder we try to control things in our immediate environment, the more likely we are to lose control in the long run

The first and most important step is to let go of this need to control in such a direct manner. This means no longer see change and chaotic moments in life as something to fear, but rather as a source of excitement and opportunity.

Often what seems like chaos to us is merely a series of events that are new and hard to figure out. You cannot make sense of this apparent disorder if you are reactive and fearful, trying to make everything conform to patterns that exist only in our mind. By absorbing more of these chaotic moments with an open spirit, you can glimpse a pattern, a reason why they are occurring, and how you can exploit them.

With so many physical limitations, hustlers have learned to develop mental freedom. They cannot let their minds be bothered by all these hindrances. Their thoughts have to keep moving - creating new ventures, new hustles, new directions in music and clothes. This is why trends change so quickly in the hood, which often serves as the engine for new styles in culture at large

You face a world full of obstacles and limitations - a new environment where the competition is more global, complicated, and intense than before. Like the hustler,

you must find your freedom through the fluidity of your thoughts and your constant inventiveness.

You must be willing to experiment, trying several ventures without fear of failing here or there. It also means constantly trying to develop new styles, new directions you can take, freeing yourself up from any inertia that comes with age. In the world full of people that who are too conventional in their thinking, who respect the past far too much, such flow will inevitably translate into power and more room to move.

Strategy is the essence of human action - the bridge between an idea and its realization in the world. Too often these strategies become frozen into conventions, as people mindlessly imitate what worked before. By keeping your strategies attuned to the moment, you can be an agent of change, the one who breaks up these dead ways of acting gaining tremendous power in the process. Most people in life are rigid and predictable that makes them easy target. Your fluid unpredictable strategies will drive them insane. They cannot foresee your next move or figure you out. That is often enough to make them give way or fall apart.

Sometimes a feeling of urgency we have to get something done pushes us to act in a particularly energetic manner, and this starts a good run.

On the other hand, when a run of momentum ends, it is usually from something we do, a kind of conscious self sabotage. We react against this loosening up, out of some fear of where it could lead us.

Momentum in life comes from increased fluidity, a willingness to try more, to move in a less constricted fashion.

All of the greatest innovations in history come from an openness to discovery, one idea, leading to another, sometimes coming from unrelated fields. You must develop this spirit and the same insatiable hunger for knowledge.

What you want is for these endless emotions that assail you during the day to wash over you, to never hold on to one single emotion for very long. You are able to let go of any kind of obsessive feeling.

Forgetting is a skill you must develop in order to have emotional flow. If you cannot help but to feel anger or disgust in the moment, make it a point to not let it remain the following day. When you hold on to emotions like that, it is as you put blinders in your eyes. For that amount of time, you see and feel only what this emotion

dictates. Your mind stop on feelings of failure, disappointment, and mistrust, giving you that awkwardness of someone out of tune with the moment. Without realizing it, all of your strategies become infected by these feelings, pushing you off course.

You must learn the art of counterbalance. When you are fearful, force yourself to act in a bolder fashion than usual. When you feel inordinate hate, find some object of love or admiration that you can focus on with intensity. One strong emotion tends to cancel out the other and help you move past it

You want a more balanced life, with fewer highs and lows. This not only help you keep moving and overcoming petty obstacles, but it also affects people's perceptions of you. They come to see you as someone who has grace under pressure, a steady hand and they will turn to you as a leader. Maintaining such steadiness will keep that positive flow in motion.

Whenever you feel rooted and established in place, that is when you should be truly afraid

Chapter 5 - Know when to be bad - Aggression

Introduction

In this chapter, we explore the critical role of assertiveness and strategic aggression in overcoming life's adversities. It underscores that mere talent and good intentions are not enough in a world that often responds to indifference and hostility with aggression.

The chapter encourages readers to conquer their fears of confrontation and to assert themselves, even at the risk of displeasing others. It posits that inner strength and self-respect are vital, and these traits can be cultivated through experience and strategic assertiveness.

The text also highlights the importance of recognizing and responding appropriately to aggression from others. It suggests that direct confrontation is not always the best approach, and sometimes, indirect strategies can be more effective.

Finally, the chapter discusses the concept of moral flexibility in competitive situations, suggesting that occasional deviation from conventional morality can be

a necessary strategy for success. It draws parallels between individuals and leaders, or "princes", who must know when and how to be "bad" or aggressive to protect and advance their interests.

Main advices

You will always find yourself among the aggressive and the passive aggressive who seek to harm you in some way. You must get over any general fears you have of confronting people or you will find it extremely difficult to assert yourself in the face of those who are more cunning and ruthless

Talent and good intentions are never enough in this world. You need to be fearless and strategic. When you face people's indifference or outright hostility you have to be aggressive and push them out of your way by any means necessary, and not worry about some people disliking you

The way I learned it, the kid in the school yard who doesn't want to fight always leave with a black eye. if you indicate you'll do anything to avoid trouble, that's when you get trouble.

We are generally much more skittish when it comes to confrontation. We often take it personally if someone overtly disagrees with us or expresses an opinion contrary to our own. We are also more afraid of saying something that could possibly offend those around us, as if their egos were too fragile. The culture tends to elevate as its ideal a spirit of cooperation. Being democratic and fair means getting along with others, fitting in, and not ruffling feathers.

When dealing with the aggressors and passive aggressors around us we can be quite naive. We want to believe that people are basically peaceful and desire the same thing as ourselves. We often learn too late that this is not the case

What you want is to feel strong and secure from within. You are willing to occasionally displease people and you are comfortable in taking on those who stand against your interest. This inner strength, however does not come naturally. What is required is some experience. This means that in your daily life you must assert yourself more than usual. You strategize and push for something you want instead of waiting for someone to give it to you.

In the hood, people don't have the luxury of worrying about whether people like them. Resources are limited everyone is angling for power and trying to get what

they can. It is a rough game and there is no room for being naive or waiting for good things to happen

We need to get rid of fear and guilt we might have for asserting ourselves. It serves no purpose except keep us down

They sense your lack of self respect and they feel justified in mistreating you.

You must demonstrate to them that there are lines that cannot be crossed. They will pay a price for trying to push you around

The world has become infinitely more competitive than anything our parents or grandparents have known. To get ahead in this world we must be willing to occasionally bend that moral code, to play with appearances, to hedge the truth and make ourselves look better, to manipulate a person or two to secure our position.

A prince or leader must first and foremost be effective in his actions and to do so he must master the art of knowing when and how to be bad. This requires some fearlessness and flexibility. When the situation calls for it, he must be the lion - aggressive and direct in protecting his state, or grabbing something to secure its interests

This should be the model for us as well. We are all now princes competing with thousands of rival "states". We have our aggressive impulses, our desires for power. These impulses are dangerous. If we act upon them unconsciously or awkwardly we can create endless problems for ourselves. We must learn to recognize the situations that require assertive yet controlled action, and which mode of attack fox or lion is suitable

It is best to fight the aggressive and passive aggressive types in an indirect manner, concealing your intentions and doing what you can behind the scenes hidden from public to create obstacles and sow confusion. Instead of reacting, you must give aggressors some space to go further with their attacks, getting them to expose themselves in the process and provide you plenty of juicy targets to hit.

You cannot get emotional and drown into endless intrigues of passive aggressors. If you respond indirectly, with kind of passive aggression yourself, you play into their hands they are better in this game than you are

In facing an unjust situation you have two options. You can loudly proclaim your intentions to defeat people behind it making yourself look good and noble in the process. But in the end this tends to polarize the public and it makes your intentions obvious. If the enemy is crafty this makes it almost impossible to defeat them. Or if it is results you are after you must learn to play the fox. Letting go of your moral purity. You resist the pull to get emotional and you craft strategic maneuvers designed to win a public spot.

Resist the temptation to feel any guilt. You need to create as much distance as possible, so you cannot inveigle these emotions into you.

The problem with confrontational moments and why we often seek to avoid them is that they churn up a lot of unpleasant emotions. We feel personally aggrieved that someone is trying to hurt or harm us. This makes us wonder about ourselves and feel insecure. Did we deserve this in some way? If we go through a few of these unpleasant moments, we become increasingly skittish. But this is really the problem of perception. In our own inner turmoil we tend to exaggerate the negative intentions of our opponents. In general we take conflicts far too personally. People have problems and traumas that they carry with them from their childhood on.

Most often when they do something to harm or block us, it is really not directed to us personally. It comes from some unfinished business from the past, or deep insecurities. We happen to cross their path at the wrong moment. It is essential that you develop the reverse perspective: life naturally involves conflicting interests. People have their own issues their own agendas and they collide with yours. Instead of taking this personally or concerning yourself with people's intentions, you must simply work to protect and advance yourself in this competitive game, this bloody arena.

When you have to resort to something that is not conventionally moral, it is just another maneuver you are executing in the game. Nothing to feel guilty about. You accept human nature and the idea that people will resort to aggression

Chapter 6 - Lead from the front - Authority

Introduction

Chapter 6, titled "Lead from the Front - Authority," explores the essence of effective leadership. It emphasizes the importance of leading by example, maintaining high standards, and making tough decisions with confidence. The chapter discusses how leaders must continually prove their worth through actions, not resting on past achievements or titles. It highlights the need for leaders to be audacious, inspiring, and authentic, earning respect through their actions. The chapter also underscores the necessity of long-term vision and the ability to stay focused amidst distractions. It concludes by encouraging leaders to view themselves as authors of a new order, constantly driving the group forward. This chapter serves as a guide for those who aspire to lead with authority and authenticity.

Main advices

They see you working harder than anyone holding yourself to highest standards, taking risks with confidence and making tough decisions. This inspires them and binds the group together. In these democreative times you must practice what you preach

People continually take from you. They doubt your powers and challenge you

In this world you cannot relax or rest on your name your past achievements or your title. You have to fight to impose the difference and compel people to follow your lead.

Among the group there are inevitably a few who rise to the position displaying extraordinary leadership skills that no one has suspected were in them. We find in this group people like Napoleon Bonaparte, Mahatma Gandhi and Winston Churchill. What links this people together is not some mysterious skill or bit of knowledge but rather a quality of character a temperament that reveals the essence of the art. They are fearless.

A leader who is audacious out in front and setting the tone and agenda for the group sparks the higher level of energy and confidence. Such a person on top does not need to yell or push people around those below want to follow his or her lead because it is strong and inspiring.

Leaders who work harder than anyone else, who practice what they preach who are not afraid to be accountable for tough decisions or to take risks will find they have created a well of respect that will pay great dividends down the road. They

can ask for sacrifices, punish troublemakers and make occasional mistakes all without facing the usual grumbling and doubts

If you are authentic as tough as you seem to be then you will earn the respect that will make people back off and make your life that much easier.

You start with nothing in this world. Any titles, money or privilege you inherit are actually hindrances. They delude you into believing you are owed respect. If you continue to impose your will because of such privileges, people will come to disdain and despise you. Instead only your actions can prove your worth. They tell people who you are. You must imagine you are continually being challenged to show that you deserve the position you occupy. In a culture full of fakery and hype, you will stand as someone authentic and worthy of respect

To be a leader it often requires making tough choices, getting people to do things against their will. If you have chosen soft, pleasing, compliant style of leadership, out of fear of being disliked, you will find yourself with less and less room to compel people to work harder or make sacrifices

A group of any size must have goals and long-term objectives to function properly. But human nature serves as a great impediment to it. We are naturally consumed by immediate battles and problems. We find it difficult if not unnatural to focus with depth on the future.

Thinking ahead means being emotionally attached to this idea so when a thousand distractions and interruptions seem to push you off course, you have the strength and purpose to keep at it.

You must have the strength to stamp the ground with your own personality and vision giving it a core and an identity. If you lose sight of the larger picture then only bad thing happen.

Your level of excitement and self belief will convince people that you know where you are going and should be followed.

As a leader you must view yourself as an author creating new order, writing a new act in some drama. You never rest on your laurels or past achievements. Instead you are constantly taking action that moves the group forward and brings positive result that record speaks for itself.

Chapter 7 - Know your environment from the inside out

- Connection

Introduction

Chapter 7, titled "Know Your Environment from the Inside Out - Connection," explores the importance of understanding and connecting with your audience. It emphasizes the need to think from the perspective of the public first, rather than focusing solely on personal ideas. The chapter discusses the dangers of isolating oneself from diverse thoughts and cultures, and the power that comes from embracing diversity and understanding others' perspectives. It highlights the significance of direct interaction with the public and the value of feedback in refining one's work. The chapter also underscores the importance of fearlessness, openness, and sensitivity in navigating the modern world's melting pot of changing tastes and social networks. Ultimately, it advocates for a deep, empathetic understanding of human nature and social factors, gained not through detached study, but through active involvement and participation. This chapter serves as a guide to harnessing the power of connection in an increasingly interconnected world

Main advices

Most people think first of what they want to express or make, then find the audience for their idea. You must work the opposite angle. Thinking first of the public. You need to keep your focus on their changing needs, the trends that are washing through them. Beginning with their demand to create.

The public is never wrong. When people don't respond to what you do, they are telling you something loud and clear. You are just not listening

We live in our heads with the same thoughts and ideas over and over cocooned from the outside world. When we are confronted with people or individuals who have different values and belief system, we feel threatened. Our first move is not to understand them but to demonize them. Alternatively we may choose to look at them through the prism of our own values and assume they share them. We mentally convert the other into something familiar. They may come from a completely different culture but after all they must want the same things we do. This a failure of our minds to move outward and understand, to be sensitive to

nuance. Everything must be white or black, clean or unclean. Understand: the opposite approach is the way to power in this world

It begins with fundamental fearlessness. You do not feel afraid or affronted by people who have different ways of thinking or acting. You do not feel superior to those on the outside. In fact you are excited by such diversity. Your first move is to open up your spirit to these differences to understand what makes the other tick, to gain a feel of people's inner lives. How they see the world. In this way you continually expose yourself to wider and wider circles of people building connections to these various networks. The source of your power is your sensitivity and closeness to this social environment. You can detect trends and changes in people's tastes well before anyone else.

In such a melting pot as the modern world, with people's taste changing at a faster pace than ever before, our success depends on our ability to move outside ourselves and connect to social networks. At all costs you need to continually force yourself outward. You must reach a point where any sense of losing connection to your environment translates into a feeling of vulnerability and peril.

Few people have the wisdom to prefer criticism that would do them good, to the praise that deceives them.

If you have little access to the public you are trying to reach but you feel that the ideas in your head cannot fail to be interesting, then it almost inevitably comes as something too personal, the product of someone who is too alienated. In either case what is really dominating the spirit of work is fear. To interact closely with the public and get its feedback might mean having to adjust your "brilliant" ideas, your preconceived notions. This might challenge your tidy vision of the world. You might disguise this with a snobbish veneer, but it is the age old fear of other

Understand: in this day to reach people you must have access to their inner lives their frustrations aspirations resentments. To do so you must crush as much distance as possible between you and your audience. You enter their spirit and absorb it from within.

Any kind of group tends to close itself off from the outside world. It is easier to operate in this way. From within this bubble people will delude themselves into thinking they have insight into how their audience or public feels. They read the papers, various reports, the poll numbers etc. But all of this information tends to be

highly filtered. It is much different when you interact directly with the public and hear in the flesh their criticism and feedback.

Alone in our minds we can imagine we have all kinds of powers and abilities. Our egos can inflate to any size. But when we produce something that fails to have the expected impact, we are suddenly faced with a limit. We are not as brilliant or skilled as we had imagined. In such case our tendency is to blame others for not understanding it or getting in our way.

Instead of turning inward consider people's coolness to your idea and their criticism as a kind of mirror they are holding up to you. A physical mirror turns into an object you can see yourself as others see you. Your ego cannot protect you. The mirror does not lie. You use it to correct your appearance and avoid ridicule.

When your work does not communicate with others, consider it your own fault. You did not make your ideas clear enough and you failed to connect with your audience emotionally. This will spare you any bitterness or anger that might come from people's critiques. You are simply perfecting your work through the social mirror.

Knowledge of human nature and social factors the kind that is often most valuable to us depends on knowing people and networks from the inside on getting a feel for what they are experiencing. This can be gained by an intense involvement and participation as opposed to the pseudoscientific pose of the intellectual addicted to studies, citations and numbers all designed to back up their preconceptions.

A really intelligent man feels what other man only know.

Chapter 8 - Respect the Process - Mastery

Introduction

In a world that craves instant gratification, Chapter 8 serves as a compelling manifesto for the virtue of patience and the pursuit of mastery. It challenges the reader to resist the allure of quick fixes and to embrace the slow, often arduous journey of skill acquisition. This chapter is a call to arms against the modern-day plagues of boredom and distraction, urging us to find fulfillment in the disciplined and deliberate practice of our crafts. It posits that true power and success are the fruits of a steadfast commitment to the process, a process that demands

resilience in the face of monotony and a willingness to engage deeply with our work. As we navigate through the nuances of mastery, we are reminded that the greatest achievements are not just in reaching our goals but in the transformative experience of getting there.

Main advices

The fools in life want things fast and easy money, success, attention. Boredom is their great enemy and fear. Whatever they manage to get slips through their hands as fast as it comes in. You on the other hand want to outlast your rivals. You are building the foundation for something that can continue to expand. To make this happen, you will have to serve an apprenticeship. You must learn early on to endure the hours of practice and drudgery, knowing that in the end all of this will translate into a higher pleasure. Mastery of a craft and of yourself. Your goal is to reach the ultimate skill level an intuitive feel for what must come next

You can get whatever you want through sheer persistence rather than violence and force. Progressing step by step is the only way to succeed in anything

Most people can't handle boredom. That means they can't stay on one thing until they get good at it. And they wonder why they are unhappy.

Confronted with such freedom as we have nowadays, the mind has a tendency to gravitate towards anxieties about the future. Possible problems and dangers. Such empty time faintly echoes the eternal emptiness of death itself. And so with this new emotion that assailed our ancestors came a desire that haunts us to this day. To escape boredom at all cost, to distract ourselves from these anxieties.

This is the pattern that boredom has created for the human animal ever since: we look outside of ourselves for diversions and grow dependent on them. These entertainment have a faster pace than the time we spend at work. Work then is experienced as something boring, slow and repetitive. Anything challenging requiring effort is viewed the same way its not fun its not fast. If we go far enough in this direction, we find it increasingly difficult to muster the patience to endure hard work that is required to master any kind of craft. It becomes harder to spend time alone. Life becomes divided between what is necessary (time at work) and what is pleasurable (distractions and entertainment).

In the past these extremes of boredom assailed mostly those in upper classes. Now it is something that plagues almost all of us.

It goes as follows. You have some large goal that you wish to achieve in your life something that you feel that you are destined to create. If you reach that goal it will bring far greater satisfaction than the evanescent thrills that come from outside events. To get there you will have to learn a craft. Educate yourself and develop the proper skills.

All human activities involves a process of mastery. You must learn the various steps and procedures involved proceeding to higher and higher levels of proficiency. This requires discipline and tenacity the ability to withstand repetitive activity, slowness and the anxiety that comes with such a challenge.

One you start down this path two things will happen. First having the larger goal will lift your mind out of the moment and help you endure the hard work and drudgery. Second as you become better at this task or craft it becomes increasingly pleasurable. You see your improvement you see connections and possibilities you hadn't noticed before. Your mind becomes absorbed in mastering it further and in this absorption you forget all your problems, fears for the future or people's nasty games

Most often than not our jobs is something we endure. We live for our time off and dream of the future. We are not engaged in the daily activity of the job with our mental powers because it is not as exciting as the life outside work. We develop less and less tolerance for dull moments and repetitive activity. If we happen to lose our job or want something else, we suddenly have to confront the fact that we do not have the requisite patience to make the proper change.

Before it is too late we must wake up and realize that real power and success can come only through mastering the process, which in turn depends on a foundation of discipline that we are constantly keeping sharp.

The fearless types in history inevitably display in their lives a higher tolerance than most of us for repetitive and boring tasks

Many people cannot handle the boredom this might entail. They fear starting out on such an arduous process. They prefer their distractions dreams and illusions, never aware of the higher pleasures that are there for those who master themselves and the craft

Today we reached a dangerous point in which this elemental wisdom is being forgotten. Much of this is due to the destructive side of technology

We are by nature creatures of impatience. It has always been hard for us to want something and not have the capacity to get it. The increased speed from technology accentuates the childish aspect of our character. The slow accumulation of knowledge seems unnecessarily boring.

We lose a sense of process. In such an atmosphere charlatans sprout like weeds. They offer the age old myth of the quick transformation the shortcut to power, beauty, and success in the form of books, cds, seminars, ancient secrets brought back to life. And they find many suckers on which they prey

This new pattern of thinking and learning is not progress. It creates a phenomenon that we shall call short circuit. To reach the end of anything to master a process requires time, focus, and energy. When people are so distracted, their minds constantly moving from one thing to another, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain concentration on one thing for a few hours, let alone months or years.

Understand that the real secret the real formula for power in this world lies in accepting the ugly reality that learning requires a process and this in turn demands patience and the ability to endure drudge work. It is not sexy or seductive at first glance but this truth is based on something real and substantial. An age old wisdom that will never be overturned. The key is the level of your desire. If you are really after power and mastery, then you will absorb this idea deeply and engrave it in your mind. There are not shortcuts. You will distrust anything that is fast and easy. You will be able to endure the initial months of repetitive labor, because you have an overall goal in mind. This will prevent you from short circuiting knowing many things but mastering none of them.

Too often the our concept of learning is to absorb ideas from the books. To do what other tell us to do and perhaps to do some controlled exercises. But this is an incomplete and fearful concept of learning cut off from the practical experience. We are creatures who make things. We don't simply imagine them. To master any kind of process you must learn through trial and error. You experiment, you take some hard blows and you see what works and doesn't work in real time. You expose yourself and your work to public scrutiny.

Understand: when you enter a group as a kind of a job or a career, there are all kinds of rules that govern behavior. Values of good and bad. Power networks that must be respected. Patterns to be followed for successful action. If you do not

patiently observe and learn them well you will make all kinds of mistakes without knowing why or how.

If you find yourself confronting an unjust and corrupt system, it is much more effective to learn its codes from the inside and discover its vulnerabilities. Knowing how it works you can take it apart for good.

Often when you begin a project of any kind it is from the wrong end. You tend to think first of what you want to accomplish imagining the glory and the success it will bring you if it succeeds. You then proceed to make this concept come to life. But as you go forward, you often lose patience because the small steps to get there are not as nearly exciting as the ambitious visions in your head. You must try instead the opposite approach which can lead to very different results. You have a project you wish to bring to life but you begin by immersing yourself in the details of the subject or field. You look at the materials you have to work with, the tastes of your target audience and the latest technical advances in the field.

To force yourself past any obstacle or temptation you must be persistent. As children we all had this quality because we were single minded. You must rediscover and redevelop this character trait. First you must understand the role that your energy level plays in mastering a process and bringing something to completion.

Try to look at boredom from the opposite perspective. As a call for you to slow yourself down to stop this searching for endless distractions. This might mean forcing yourself to spend time alone overcoming the childish inability to sit still.

Chapter 9 - Push beyond your limits - Self Belief

Introduction

In this chapter we embark on a transformative journey to redefine the essence of self-perception and its profound impact on our lives. This chapter delves into the power of self-belief and the boundless potential it unlocks. It challenges readers to transcend their perceived limitations, to aim higher, and to cultivate a robust sense of self-worth that is impervious to external opinions.

The narrative confronts the often-unconscious constraints imposed by societal judgments and the opinions of others, urging a rebellion against these external

forces to reclaim one's unique identity. It underscores the significance of self-belief as a catalyst for change, propelling individuals towards greatness and enabling them to rise above adversity.

Through introspection and defiance of societal expectations, this chapter inspires a fearless pursuit of one's ambitions, advocating for a life led by conviction rather than conformity. It is a call to embrace the unknown, to harness the power of will, and to author one's own destiny with unwavering confidence and a sense of personal liberty.

"Push beyond your limits - Self Belief" is not just a chapter; it's a manifesto for those who dare to dream big and are ready to forge their path, undeterred by the doubts and limitations imposed by the world.

Main advices

Your sense of who you are will determine your actions and what you end up getting in life. If you see your reach as limited. That you are mostly helpless in the face of so many difficulties that it is best to keep your ambitions low then you will receive the little that you expect. Knowing this dynamic you must train yourself for the opposite. Ask for more, aim high, and believe that you are destined for something great. Your sense of self worth comes from you alone never the opinion of others

Your opinion of yourself becomes your reality. If you have all these doubts then no one will believe in you and everything will go wrong. If you think the opposite the opposite will happen. It's that simple

You tend to accept this personality as something very real and established. But much of this identity is shaped and constructed by outside forces the opinions and judgements of hundreds of other people who have crossed your path over the years.

Many of these criticisms and opinions are not objective at all. People want to see certain qualities in you. They project onto their own fears and fantasies. They want you to fit a conventional pattern. It is frustrating and often frightening for people to think they cannot figure something out.

Understand: you are in fact mystery to yourself. You began life as someone completely unique a mix of qualities that will never be repeated in the history of

universe.

As a child you had no real power to resist this process but as an adult you could easily rebel and rediscover your individuality. You could stop deriving your sense of identity and self worth from others.

In essence you are afraid of yourself and what you could become.

You must experiment and feel the sensation of not concerning yourself with what others think or expect of you.

You do not advance or retreat with their opinions in mind

We barely understand the role that will power plays in our actions. When you raise your opinion of yourself and what you are capable of it has a decided influence on what you do. For instance you feel more comfortable taking some risk, knowing that you are always able to get back up on your feet if it fails. Taking this risk will then make your energy level rise. You have to meet the challenge or go under and you will find untapped revisions of creativity within you.

They have to convince themselves first that they are worth much more and can rise as far as they want, through willpower. The intensity of their ambition becomes the deciding factor. It has to be supremely high. This is why the most ambitious and confident figures in history often emerge from the most impoverished and arduous of circumstances.

Ambition has almost become a dirty word. It reeks of insecurity and evil deeds to reach to the top. People who want power so badly must have psychological problems or so we think. Much of this social prudery around the idea of power and ambition comes from an unconscious guilt and desire to keep other people down,

If you come from relative prosperity you are more than likely tainted with some of this prejudice and you must extirpate it as much as possible. If you believe ambition is ugly and needs to be disguised or repressed, you will have a tip toe around others making a show of false humility in two minds every time you contemplate some necessary power move. If you see ambition as beautiful, as the driving force behind all great human accomplishments then you will have no guilt in raising your level of ambition as high as you want and pushing aside those who block your path.

Understand: people will constantly attack you in life, One of their main weapons will be your instill in your doubts about yourself, your worth your abilities, your potential. They will often disguise this as their objective opinion but invariably it has a political purpose they want to keep you down. You are continually prone to believe this opinions, particularly if your self image is fragile. In every moment of life you can defy and deny people this power

If someone like Frederick Douglas could forge this attitude amin the most unfree of circumstances, then we should surely be able to find our own way to such inner strength.

Liberty is not something that people grant us a privilege or right. It is a state of mind that we must work on to attain and hold on to, with much effort. It is something active not passive.

If you had some terribly painful experience in the past, you could choose to let that pain sit there and you soak in it. On the other hand you could decide to convert it to anger, a cause to promote or some form of action . Or you could simply drop it and move on, relishing the freedom and power that that brings you. No one can take away these options or force your response. It is all up to you.

Understand: the day you were born you became engaged in a struggle that continues to this day and will determine your success or failure in life. You are an individula with ideas and skills that make you unique. But people are constantly trying to fit you into narrow categories that make you more predictable and easier to manage. They want to see you as shy or outgoing, sensitive or tough. If you succumb to this pressure, then you may gain some social acceptance but you will lose the unconventional parts of your character that are the source of uniqueness and power. You must resist this process at all costs seeing peoples neat and tidy judgements as a form of confinement.

Understand: people judge you by appearances, the image you project through your actions words and style. If you do not take control of this process then people will see and define you the way they want to often to your detriment. You mingth think that being consistent with this image will make others respect and trust you, but in fact it is the opposite. Over time you seem predictable and weak. Consistency is an illusion anyway. Each passing day bring challenges within you. You must not be afraid to express these evolutions. The powerfur learn early in

like that they have the freedom to mold their image, fitting their needs and moods of the moment.

You must follow this path and find great pleasure in reinventing yourself as if you were the author of your own drama.

We as humans depend on our conscious rational thinking which gives us greater freedom of action, the ability to alter our behavior according to circumstance. And yet that animal part of our own nature that compulsion to repeat the same things tends to dominate our way of thinking. We succumb to mental patterns which makes our actions repetitive as well.

What often prevent us from using the mental fluidity and freedom that we naturally possess are the physical routines in our lives. We see the same people and do the same things and allow our minds to follow these patterns. The solution then is to break this up. For instance we could deliberately indulge in some random even irrational act perhaps doing the very opposite of what we would normally do in our day to day life. By taking an action we have never done before, we place ourselves in unfamiliar territory our minds naturally awaken to the novel situation.

We should practice this when we feel particularly blocked and uncreative. In such moments it is best to be ruthless with ourselves and our patterns

The story of Jeanne d'Arc demonstrates a simple principle: the higher your self belief, the more your power to transform reality. Having supreme confidence makes you fearless and persistent allowing you to overcome obstacles that most stop most people in their tracks. It makes others believe in you as well. And the most intense form of self-belief is to feel a sense of destiny impelling you forward.

It is always easy to rationalize your own doubts and conservative instincts, particularly when times are tough. You will convince yourself that it is foolhardy to take any risks that it is better to wait for when circumstances are more propitious. But this is a dangerous mentality. It signifies an overall lack of confidence in yourself that will carry over to better times. You will find it hard to rouse yourself out of your defensive posture.

While others retrench and retreat, you must think of taking risks trying new things and looking at the future that will come out of the present crisis.

You must always be prepared to place a bet on yourself, on your future, by heading in directions that others seem to fear. This means you believe that if you

fail you have the inner resources to recover. This belief acts as a kind of mental safety net. When you move ahead on some new venture or direction your mind will snap to attention, your energy will be focused and intense. By making yourself feel the necessity to be creative, your mind will rise to occasion

For most of us ego and egotism express something negative. Egotistical people have an oversized opinion on themselves. Instead of considering what is important for society, a group, a family, they think first and foremost of themselves and act upon this. Their vision is narrowed to the point of seeing everything in reference to their needs and desires. But there is another way to look at it. We all have an ego, a sense of who we are. And this ego or self relationships is either strong or weak.

People with weak ego do not have a secure sense of their worth or potential. They pay extra attention to the opinions of others. They might perceive anything as a personal attack or affront. They need constant attention and validation from others. To compensate for and disguise this fragility they will often assume an arrogant aggressive front. This needy, dependent self obsessed variety of ego is what we find irritating and boring.

A strong ego however is completely different. People who have a solid sense of their own value and who feel secure about themselves have the capacity to look at the world with greater objectivity. They can be more considerate and thoughtful because they can get outside of themselves. People with a strong ego set up boundaries. Their sense of pride will not allow them to accept manipulative or hurtful behavior. We generally like to be around such types. Their confidence and strength is contagious. To have such a strong ego should be ideal for all of us.

So many people who attain the heights of power in this culture celebrities for instance have to make a show of false humility and modesty as if they got as far as they did by accident not by ego or ambition. They want to act as if they are no different from anyone else and are almost embarrassed by their power and success. These are all signs of weak ego. As an egotist of the strong variety, you trumpet your individuality and take great pride of your accomplishments. If others can not accept that, or judge you as arrogant that is their problem, not yours.

Chapter 10 - Confront your mortality - The Sublime

Introduction

Chapter 10, titled "Confront Your Mortality - The Sublime," delves into the profound concept of mortality and how its acceptance can lead to a fearless and fulfilling life. It explores the idea that by acknowledging and embracing our inevitable end, we can gain a sense of urgency, purpose, and proportion in life. This chapter discusses the philosophy of Stoicism, the art of dying, and the transformation of fear into an active, positive force. It emphasizes the importance of living fully, valuing the impermanence of life, and not being held back by fear. The chapter also introduces the concept of 'sublime time', urging us to lift our heads out of the present moment and contemplate the vastness of time and constant change. It concludes with the powerful perspective that life and death are not separate but intertwined, and by accepting this, we can live fearlessly.

Main advices

In the face of our inevitable mortality we can do one of two things. We can attempt to avoid the thoughts at all costs, clinging to the illusion that we have all the time in the world. Or we can confront this reality, accept and even embrace it, converting our consciousness of death into something positive and active. In adopting such a fearless philosophy we gain a sense of proportion, become able to separate what is petty from what is truly important, knowing our days to be numbered we have a sense of urgency and mission. We can appreciate life all the more for its impermanence. If we can overcome the fear of death then there is nothing left to fear

Whenever you feel you have too much to lose, you held on to others or take deals out of fear you end up losing a lot more. The key in life is to always be willing to walk away. In this way people often come back to you on your terms, fearing what they might lose in the process.

Clinging to people or situations out of fear is like desperately holding on to life on even worse terms and he had now moved far beyond such point. He was not afraid of death, so how could he be afraid of anything anymore?

50 cent: People talk about my getting shot like it represented something special. They act like they are not facing the same thing. But some day everybody has to face a bullet with his or her name on it

We therefore indulge in all kinds of fantasies and illusions, struggling to keep out of our minds any kind of hard or unavoidable reality. We cling to jobs, relationships, and comfortable positions, all to elude the feeling of separation. We grow overly conservative because any kind of risk might entail adversity, failure or pain. We keep ourselves surrounded by others to drown out the thought of our essential aloneness. We may not be consciously aware of this but in the end we expend an immense amount of psychic energy in these repressions. The fear of death does not go away. It merely returns in smaller anxieties and habits that limit our enjoyment of life.

The fearless approach requires you to accept the fact that you have only so much time to live and that life itself inevitably involves levels of pain and separation. By embracing this you embrace life itself and accept everything about it. Depending on a belief in an afterlife or drowning yourself in the moment to avoid pain is to despise reality, which is to despise life itself. When you choose to affirm life by confronting your mortality, everything changes. What matters to you now is to live your days well, as fully as possible. You could choose to do this by pursuing endless pleasures, but nothing becomes boring more quickly than having to search for new distractions. If attaining certain goals becomes your greatest source of pleasure, then your days are filled with purpose and direction and whenever death comes, you have no regrets.

You do not fall into nihilistic thinking about the futility of it all, because that is a supreme waste of the brief time you have been given. You now have a way of measuring what matters in life compared to the shortness of your days, petty battles and anxieties have no weight. You have a sense of urgency and commitment what you do you must do well with all your energy not with a mind shooting off in a hundred directions.

You convert the terrified denial type relationship to death into something active and positive finally released from pettiness, useless anxieties and fearful, timid responses.

The core of stoicism is learning the art of how to die, which paradoxically teaches you how to live

Emperor Claudius banished Seneca to the island of Corsica where he would languish essentially alone for 8 long years. Seneca had been familiar with Stoic philosophy but now on this barely inhabited island he would have to practice in

real life. It was not easy. He found himself indulging in all kinds of fantasies and falling into despair. It was a constant struggle, reflected in his many letters to friends back in Rome. But slowly he conquered all of his fears by conquering his fear of death.

He practiced all kinds of mental exercises, imagining painful forms of death and possible tragic endings. He would make them familiar and not frightening. He used a sense of shame to fear his mortality would mean he abhorred nature itself, which decreed the death of all living things, and that would mean he was inferior to the smallest animal that accepted its death without complaint.

In A.D. 65 Seneca was implicated in a plot to kill the emperor and the officer was sent to, in the Roman style, order Seneca to kill himself. His ensuing suicide was horrifically difficult. He sliced the veins in his arms and ankles, sat in the hot bath to make the blood flow faster and even drank poison. The death was slow and incredibly painful but he maintained his calmness to the end, making sure that everyone would see that his death matched his life and his philosophy.

Seneca understood to free yourself from fear you must work backward. You start with the thought of your mortality. You accept and embrace this reality. You think ahead of inevitable moment of your death and determine to face it as bravely as possible. The more you contemplate your mortality the less you fear it. It becomes a fact that you no longer have to repress. By following this path you know how to die well and so you can now begin to teach yourself to live well

You will not cling to things unnecessarily. You will be dependent and self reliant unafraid to be alone. You will have a certain lightness that comes with knowing what matters. You can laugh at what others take so seriously. The pleasures of the moment are heightened because you know their impermanence and you make the most of them. And when your time to die comes as it will some day you will not cringe and cry for more time because you have lived well and have no regrets

Understand: to keep death out we bathe our minds with banality and routines we create the illusion that it is not around us in any form. This gives us a momentary peace but we lose all sense of connection to something larger, to life itself.

Becoming aware of the Sublime around us to convert our fears into something meaningful and active to counter the repressions of our culture

Whenever life feel particularly dull or confining we can force ourselves to leave familiar ground. This could mean travelling to some particularly exotic location,

attempting something physically challenging, or simply embark on a new venture in which we are not certain we can succeed.

When we finish the voyage or task and come to safe ground we feel as if we are reborn. We feel that slight pull of handkerchief. We now have a heightened appreciation for life and a desire to live it more fully

There are two kinds of time we can experiment. The banal and the sublime variety. banal time is extremely limited in scope. It consist of the present moment and stretches out a few weeks ahead of us, ocassionaly further. Locked in banal time we tend to distort evenets we see things as being far more important than they are unaware that in a few weeks or a year what stirs us all up will not matter. The sublime variety is an intimation of the reality of the utter vastness of time and the constant changes that are going on. It requires that we lift our heads out of the moment and engage in the kinds of meditations. We imagine the future centuries from now or what was happening in this very spot millions of years ago. We become aware that everything is in a state of flux. Nothing is permanent

Conteplating sublime time has innumerable positive effects. It makes us feel a sense of urgency to get things done now, gives us a better grasp of what really matters and instils a heightened appreciation of the passage of time, the poignancy and beauty of all things that fade away.

Reversal of perspective. In our normal perspective we see death as something diametrically opposed to life, a separate event that ends our days. As such it is a thought what we must dread, avoid and repress. But this is false an idea that is actually born out of fear. Life and death are inextricably intertwined, not separate. The one cannot exist without the other. From the moment we are born we carry out death withing ourselves as a continual possibility. If we try to avoid or repress the thought, keep death on the outside we are cutting ourselves from life as well. If we are afraid of death then we are afraid of life. We must turn this perspective around and face reality from within, finding a way to accept and embrace death as a part of being alive.

50 cent: When I nearly died it made me think. This can happen again any second. I better hurry and do what I want. I started to live like I never lived before. When the fear of death is gone then nothing can bother you and nobody can stop you.

Mediations - Marcus Aurelius

Foreword

"Meditations" is a series of personal writings by Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, composed during his military campaigns between 170 and 180 AD. This work is a collection of his reflections, musings, and philosophical exercises on how to lead a virtuous life, maintain self-discipline, and achieve inner peace amidst the challenges of ruling an empire. Written as private notes, "Meditations" provides timeless insights into Stoic philosophy, emphasizing the importance of rationality, resilience, and the acceptance of fate.

Main advices

"To do my own work, mind my own business, and have no time for slanderers."
Not to be obsessed with quail-fighting or other crazes like that. To hear
unwelcome truths.

"And to be the same in all circumstances—intense pain, the loss of a child, chronic
illness."

Kindness.

"To show intuitive sympathy for friends, tolerance to amateurs and sloppy
thinkers."

"To investigate and analyze, with understanding and logic, the principles we ought
to live by."

"Not to be constantly correcting people, and in particular not to jump on them
whenever they make an error of usage or a grammatical mistake or mispronounce
something, but just answer their question or add another example,"

"Not to be constantly telling people (or writing them) that I'm too busy, unless I
really am. Similarly, not to be always ducking my responsibilities to the people
around me because of "pressing business.""

"To love my family, truth and justice. It was through him that I encountered
Thrasya, Helvidius, Cato, Dion and Brutus, and conceived of a society of equal
laws, governed by equality of status and of speech, and of rulers who respect the
liberty of their subjects above all"

"And to help others and be eager to share, not to be a pessimist,"

Self-control and resistance to distractions.

Optimism in adversity—especially illness.

Doing your job without whining.

"He never exhibited rudeness, lost control of himself, or turned violent. No one

ever saw him sweat. Everything was to be approached logically and with due consideration, in a calm and orderly fashion but decisively, and with no loose ends."

"I had someone—as a ruler and as a father—who could keep me from being arrogant and make me realize that even at court you can live without a troop of bodyguards, and gorgeous clothes, lamps, sculpture—the"

"The gods did all they could—through their gifts, their help, their inspiration—to ensure that I could live as nature demands. And if I've failed, it's no one's fault but mine. Because I didn't pay attention to what they told me—to what they taught me, practically, step by step."

"That when I became interested in philosophy I didn't fall into the hands of charlatans, and didn't get bogged down in writing treatises, or become absorbed by logic-chopping, or preoccupied with physics."

"The people I deal with today will be meddling, ungrateful, arrogant, dishonest, jealous, and surly. They are like this because they can't tell good from evil. But I have seen the beauty of good, and the ugliness of evil, and have recognized that the wrongdoer has a nature related to my own—not of the same blood or birth, but the same mind, and possessing a share of the divine."

"And so none of them can hurt me. No one can implicate me in ugliness. Nor can I feel angry at my relative, or hate him. We were born to work together like feet, hands, and eyes, like the two rows of teeth, upper and lower."

Throw away your books; stop letting yourself be distracted. That is not allowed.

"Stop allowing your mind to be a slave, to be jerked about by selfish impulses, to kick against fate and the present, and to mistrust the future."

"Discard your thirst for books, so that you won't die in bitterness, but in cheerfulness and truth, grateful to the gods from the bottom of your heart."

"there is a limit to the time assigned you, and if you don't use it to free yourself it will be gone and will never return."

"Concentrate every minute like a Roman—like a man—on doing what's in front of you with precise and genuine seriousness, tenderly, willingly, with justice. And on freeing yourself from all other distractions. Yes, you can—if you do everything as if it were the last thing you were doing in your life, and stop being aimless, stop letting your emotions override what your mind tells you, stop being hypocritical, self-centered, irritable."

"You see how few things you have to do to live a satisfying and reverent life? If you can manage this, that's all even the gods can ask of you."

"Yours is almost used up, and instead of treating yourself with respect, you have entrusted your own happiness to the souls of others."

"Ignoring what goes on in other people's souls—no one ever came to grief that way. But if you won't keep track of what your own soul's doing, how can you not be unhappy?"

"But the man motivated by desire, who is mastered by pleasure, seems somehow more self-indulgent, less manly in his sins. Theophrastus is right, and philosophically sound, to say that the sin committed out of pleasure deserves a harsher rebuke than the one committed out of pain."

You could leave life right now. Let that determine what you do and say and think.

"If the gods exist, then to abandon human beings is not frightening; the gods would never subject you to harm. And if they don't exist, or don't care what happens to us, what would be the point of living in a world without gods or Providence? But they do exist, they do care what happens to us, and everything a person needs to avoid real harm they have placed within him."

"death and life, success and failure, pain and pleasure, wealth and poverty, all these happen to good and bad alike, and they are neither noble nor shameful—and hence neither good nor bad."

"And what dying is—and that if you look at it in the abstract and break down your imaginary ideas of it by logical analysis, you realize that it's nothing but a process of nature, which only children can be afraid of. (And not only a process of nature but a necessary one.)"

"The present is all that they can give up, since that is all you have, and what you do not have, you cannot lose."

"Duration: momentary. Nature: changeable. Perception: dim. Condition of Body: decaying. Soul: spinning around. Fortune: unpredictable. Lasting Fame: uncertain. Sum Up: The body and its parts are a river, the soul a dream and mist, life is warfare and a journey far from home, lasting reputation is oblivion. Then what can guide us? Only philosophy. Which means making sure that the power within stays safe and free from assault, superior to pleasure and pain, doing nothing randomly or dishonestly and with imposture, not dependent on anyone else's doing something or not doing it."

"And above all, that it accepts death in a cheerful spirit, as nothing but the dissolution of the elements from which each living thing is composed."

"But getting the most out of ourselves, calculating where our duty lies, analyzing what we hear and see, deciding whether it's time to call it quits—all the things you need a healthy mind for ... all those are gone. So we need to hurry. Not just because we move daily closer to death but also because our understanding—our grasp of the world—may be gone before we get there. 2. We should remember that even Nature's inadvertence has its own charm, its own attractiveness."

"If it's for another life, well, there's nowhere without gods on that side either. If to nothingness, then you no longer have to put up with pain and pleasure, or go on dancing attendance on this battered crate, your body—so much inferior to that which serves it. One"

"Don't waste the rest of your time here worrying about other people—unless it affects the common good. It will keep you from doing anything useful. You'll be too preoccupied with what so-and-so is doing, and why, and what they're saying, and what they're thinking, and what they're up to, and all the other things that throw you off and keep you from focusing on your own mind."

"You need to avoid certain things in your train of thought: everything random, everything irrelevant. And certainly everything self-important or malicious. You need to get used to winnowing your thoughts, so that if someone says, "What are you thinking about?" you can respond at once (and truthfully) that you are thinking this or thinking that."

"And it would be obvious at once from your answer that your thoughts were straightforward and considerate ones—the thoughts of an unselfish person, one unconcerned with pleasure and with sensual indulgence generally, with squabbling, with slander and envy, or anything else you'd be ashamed to be caught thinking."

"Someone like that—someone who refuses to put off joining the elect—is a kind of priest, a servant of the gods, in touch with what is within him and what keeps a person undefiled by pleasures, invulnerable to any pain, untouched by arrogance, unaffected by meanness, an athlete in the greatest of all contests—the struggle not to be overwhelmed by anything that happens."

"not worrying too often, or with any selfish motive, about what other people say. Or do, or think."

"How to act: Never under compulsion, out of selfishness, without forethought, with misgivings."

No surplus words or unnecessary actions.

"Never regard something as doing you good if it makes you betray a trust, or lose

your sense of shame, or makes you show hatred, suspicion, ill will, or hypocrisy, or a desire for things best done behind closed doors."

"concentrate on this, your whole life long: for your mind to be in the right state—the state a rational, civic mind should be in."

Neither servility nor arrogance.

Neither excuses nor evasions.

"Your ability to control your thoughts—treat it with respect. It's all that protects your mind from false perceptions—false to your nature, and that of all rational beings."

"It's what makes thoughtfulness possible, and affection for other people, and submission to the divine."

"Forget everything else. Keep hold of this alone and remember it: Each of us lives only now, this brief instant. The rest has been lived already, or is impossible to see."

Nothing is so conducive to spiritual growth as this capacity for logical and accurate analysis of everything that happens to us.

"If you do the job in a principled way, with diligence, energy and patience, if you keep yourself free of distractions, and keep the spirit inside you undamaged, as if you might have to give it back at any moment— If you can embrace this without fear or expectation—can find fulfillment in what you're doing now, as Nature intended, and in superhuman truthfulness (every word, every utterance)—then your life will be happy. No one can prevent that."

"Keep your philosophy ready too—ready to understand heaven and earth. In everything you do,"

"No random actions, none not based on underlying principles."

What's there to complain about? People's misbehavior? But take into consideration: that rational beings exist for one another; that doing what's right sometimes requires patience; that no one does the wrong thing deliberately; and the number of people who have feuded and envied and hated and fought and died and been buried. ... and keep your mouth shut.

And remember all you've been taught—and accepted—about pain and pleasure.

"Above all, no strain and no stress. Be straightforward. Look at things like a man, like a human being, like a citizen, like a mortal."

"That things have no hold on the soul. They stand there unmoving, outside it. Disturbance comes only from within—from our own perceptions."

That everything you see will soon alter and cease to exist. Think of how many

changes you've already seen.

"The world is nothing but change. Our life is only perception."

Choose not to be harmed—and you won't feel harmed. Don't feel harmed—and you haven't been.

It can ruin your life only if it ruins your character. Otherwise it cannot harm you—inside or out.

"The tranquillity that comes when you stop caring what they say. Or think, or do. Only what you do. (Is this fair? Is this the right thing to do?)"

"Not to be driven this way and that, but always to behave with justice and see things as they are."

"Because most of what we say and do is not essential. If you can eliminate it, you'll have more time, and more tranquillity. Ask yourself at every moment, "Is this necessary?"

"What is "eternal" fame? Emptiness. Then what should we work for? Only this: proper understanding; unselfish action; truthful speech. A resolve to accept whatever happens as necessary and familiar, flowing like water from that same source and spring."

Constant awareness that everything is born from change. The knowledge that there is nothing nature loves more than to alter what exists and make new things like it. All that exists is the seed of what will emerge from it.

Suppose that a god announced that you were going to die tomorrow "or the day after." Unless you were a complete coward you wouldn't kick up a fuss about which day it was—what difference could it make? Now recognize that the difference between years from now and tomorrow is just as small.

To be like the rock that the waves keep crashing over. It stands unmoved and the raging of the sea falls still around it.

It's unfortunate that this has happened. No. It's fortunate that this has happened and I've remained unharmed by it—not shattered by the present or frightened of the future. It could have happened to anyone. But not everyone could have remained unharmed by it. Why treat the one as a misfortune rather than the other as fortunate? Can you really call something a misfortune that doesn't violate human nature?

So remember this principle when something threatens to cause you pain: the thing itself was no misfortune at all; to endure it and prevail is great good fortune.

"Take the shortest route, the one that nature planned—to speak and act in the healthiest way. Do that, and be free of pain and stress, free of all calculation and

pretension."

"have to go to work—as a human being. What do I have to complain of, if I'm going to do what I was born for—the things I was brought into the world to do? Or is this what I was created for? To huddle under the blankets and stay warm?" —But it's nicer here.... So you were born to feel "nice"? Instead of doing things and experiencing them? Don't you see the plants, the birds, the ants and spiders and bees going about their individual tasks, putting the world in order, as best they can? And you're not willing to do your job as a human being? Why aren't you running to do what your nature demands? —But we have to sleep sometime.... Agreed. But nature set a limit on that—as it did on eating and drinking. And you're over the limit. You've had more than enough of that. But not of working. There you're still below your quota. You don't love yourself enough. Or you'd love your nature too, and what it demands of you. People who love what they do wear themselves down doing it, they even forget to wash or eat. Do you have less respect for your own nature than the engraver does for engraving, the dancer for the dance, the miser for money or the social climber for status?"

"If an action or utterance is appropriate, then it's appropriate for you. Don't be put off by other people's comments and criticism. If it's right to say or do it, then it's the right thing for you to do or say."

"Practice the virtues you can show: honesty, gravity, endurance, austerity, resignation, abstinence, patience, sincerity, moderation, seriousness, high-mindedness. Don't you see how much you have to offer—beyond excuses like "can't"? And yet you still settle for less. Or"

"Some people, when they do someone a favor, are always looking for a chance to call it in. And some aren't, but they're still aware of it—still regard it as a debt. But others don't even do that. They're like a vine that produces grapes without looking for anything in return. A horse at the end of the race ... A dog when the hunt is over ... A bee with its honey stored ... And a human being after helping others. They don't make a fuss about it. They just go on to something else, as the vine looks forward to bearing fruit again in season. We should be like that. Acting almost unconsciously. —Yes. Except conscious of it. Because it's characteristic of social beings that they see themselves as acting socially. And expect their neighbors to see it too! That's true. But you're misunderstanding me."

"Just as you overhear people saying that "the doctor prescribed such-and-such for him" (like riding, or cold baths, or walking barefoot ...), say this: "Nature prescribed illness for him." Or blindness. Or the loss of a limb. Or whatever. There

"prescribed" means something like "ordered, so as to further his recovery." And so too here. What happens to each of us is ordered. It furthers our destiny."

"Look at the accomplishment of nature's plans in that light—the way you look at your own health—and accept what happens (even if it seems hard to accept). Accept it because of what it leads to: the good health of the world, and the well-being and prosperity of Zeus himself, who would not have brought this on anyone unless it brought benefit to the world as a whole. No nature would do that—bring something about that wasn't beneficial"

"Not to feel exasperated, or defeated, or despondent because your days aren't packed with wise and moral actions. But to get back up when you fail, to celebrate behaving like a human—however imperfectly—and fully embrace the pursuit that you've embarked on."

"That's exactly how pleasure traps us, isn't it? Wouldn't magnanimity be preferable? Or freedom? Honesty? Prudence? Piety? And is there anything preferable to thought itself—to logic, to understanding? Think of their surefootedness. Their fluent stillness. 10."

"What am I doing with my soul? Interrogate yourself, to find out what inhabits your so-called mind and what kind of soul you have now. A child's soul, an adolescent's, a woman's? A tyrant's soul? The soul of a predator—or its prey?" The things you think about determine the quality of your mind. Your soul takes on the color of your thoughts.

"Anywhere you can lead your life, you can lead a good one."

"Nothing happens to anyone that he can't endure. The same thing happens to other people, and they weather it unharmed—out of sheer obliviousness or because they want to display "character." Is wisdom really so much weaker than ignorance and vanity?"

"If it does not harm the community, it does not harm its members. When you think you've been injured, apply this rule: If the community isn't injured by it, neither am I. And if it is, anger is not the answer. Show the offender where he went wrong. 23."

"Keep in mind how fast things pass by and are gone—those that are now, and those to come. Existence flows past us like a river: the "what" is in constant flux, the "why" has a thousand variations. Nothing is stable, not even what's right here. The infinity of past and future gapes before us—a chasm whose depths we cannot see. So it would take an idiot to feel self-importance or distress. Or any indignation,"

either. As if the things that irritate us lasted.

"So other people hurt me? That's their problem. Their character and actions are not mine. What is done to me is ordained by nature, what I do by my own."

"To live with the gods." And to do that is to show them that your soul accepts what it is given and does what the spirit requires—the spirit God gave each of us to lead and guide us, a fragment of himself. Which is our mind, our logos."

"If the smoke makes me cough, I can leave. What's so hard about that? Until things reach that point, I'm free. No one can keep me from doing what I want. And I want what is proper to rational beings, living together."

"Why do other souls—unskilled, untrained—disturb the soul with skill and understanding? —And which is that? The one that knows the beginning and the end, and knows the logos that runs through all things and that assigns to all a place, each in its allotted span, throughout the whole of time."

"Wait for it patiently—annihilation or metamorphosis. —And until that time comes—what? Honor and revere the gods, treat human beings as they deserve, be tolerant with others and strict with yourself. Remember, nothing belongs to you but your flesh and blood—and nothing else is under your control. 34."

"Two characteristics shared by gods and men (and every rational creature): i. Not to let others hold you back. ii. To locate goodness in thinking and doing the right thing, and to limit your desires to that."

"Not to be overwhelmed by what you imagine, but just do what you can and should."

"I was once a fortunate man but at some point fortune abandoned me. But true good fortune is what you make for yourself. Good fortune: good character, good intentions, and good actions."

"Just that you do the right thing. The rest doesn't matter. Cold or warm. Tired or well-rested. Despised or honored. Dying ... or busy with other assignments. Because dying, too, is one of our assignments in life. There as well: "to do what needs doing.""

The best revenge is not to be like that.

The mind is that which is roused and directed by itself. It makes of itself what it chooses. It makes what it chooses of its own experience.

"That's what we need to do all the time—all through our lives when things lay claim to our trust—to lay them bare and see how pointless they are, to strip away the legend that encrusts them."

"What's left for us to prize? I think it's this: to do (and not do) what we were

designed for. That's the goal of all trades, all arts, and what each of them aims at: that the thing they create should do what it was designed to do. The nurseryman who cares for the vines, the horse trainer, the dog breeder—this is what they aim at. And teaching and education—what else are they trying to accomplish?"

"So that's what we should prize. Hold on to that, and you won't be tempted to aim at anything else."

"Not to assume it's impossible because you find it hard. But to recognize that if it's humanly possible, you can do it too."

"If anyone can refute me—show me I'm making a mistake or looking at things from the wrong perspective—I'll gladly change. It's the truth I'm after, and the truth never harmed anyone. What harms us is to persist in self-deceit and ignorance."

"When you deal with irrational animals, with things and circumstances, be generous and straightforward. You are rational; they are not."

"Think how much is going on inside you every second—in your soul, in your body. Why should it astonish you that so much more—everything that happens in that all-embracing unity, the world—is happening at the same time?"

They're drawn toward what they think is good for them. —But it's not good for them. Then show them that. Prove it to them. Instead of losing your temper.

"Death. The end of sense-perception, of being controlled by our emotions, of mental activity, of enslavement to our bodies."

Disgraceful: for the soul to give up when the body is still going strong.

"To escape imperialization—that indelible stain. It happens. Make sure you remain straightforward, upright, reverent, serious, unadorned, an ally of justice, pious, kind, affectionate, and doing your duty with a will. Fight to be the person philosophy tried to make you."

Revere the gods; watch over human beings. Our lives are short. The only rewards of our existence here are an unstained character and unselfish acts.

I am composed of a body and a soul. Things that happen to the body are meaningless. It cannot discriminate among them. Nothing has meaning to my mind except its own actions. Which are within its own control. And it's only the immediate ones that matter. Its past and future actions too are meaningless.

"It's normal to feel pain in your hands and feet, if you're using your feet as feet and your hands as hands. And for a human being to feel stress is normal—if he's living a normal human life. And if it's normal, how can it be bad?"

"Keep reminding yourself of the way things are connected, of their relatedness. All things are implicated in one another and in sympathy with each other. This event

is the consequence of some other one. Things push and pull on each other, and breathe together, and are one."

"You take things you don't control and define them as "good" or "bad." And so of course when the "bad" things happen, or the "good" ones don't, you blame the gods and feel hatred for the people responsible—or those you decide to make responsible. Much of our bad behavior stems from trying to apply those criteria. If we limited "good" and "bad" to our own actions, we'd have no call to challenge God, or to treat other people as enemies."

"If the gods have made decisions about me and the things that happen to me, then they were good decisions. (It's hard to picture a god who makes bad ones.) And why would they expend their energies on causing me harm? What good would it do them—or the world, which is their primary concern? And if they haven't made decisions about me as an individual, they certainly have about the general welfare. And anything that follows from that is something I have to welcome and embrace. And if they make no decisions, about anything—and it's blasphemous even to think so (because if so, then let's stop sacrificing, praying, swearing oaths, and doing all the other things we do, believing the whole time that the gods are right here with us)—if they decide nothing about our lives ... well, I can still make decisions. Can still consider what it's to my benefit to do. And what benefits anyone is to do what his own nature requires. And mine is rational. Rational and civic."

"Keep this constantly in mind: that all sorts of people have died—all professions, all nationalities."

You don't have to turn this into something. It doesn't have to upset you. Things can't shape our decisions by themselves.

Practice really hearing what people say. Do your best to get inside their minds. No one can keep you from living as your nature requires. Nothing can happen to you that is not required by Nature.

"Evil: the same old thing. No matter what happens, keep this in mind: It's the same old thing, from one end of the world to the other. It fills the history books, ancient and modern, and the cities, and the houses too. Nothing new at all. Familiar, transient."

"Surrounded as we are by all of this, we need to practice acceptance. Without disdain. But remembering that our own worth is measured by what we devote our energy to."

"Focus on what is said when you speak and on what results from each action."

Know what the one aims at, and what the other means."

"Forget the future. When and if it comes, you'll have the same resources to draw on—the same logos."

"No matter what anyone says or does, my task is to be good. Like gold or emerald or purple repeating to itself, "No matter what anyone says or does, my task is to be emerald, my color undiminished.""

"The mind in itself has no needs, except for those it creates itself. Is undisturbed, except for its own disturbances. Knows no obstructions, except those from within."

"Well-being is good luck, or good character."

Frightened of change? But what can exist without it? What's closer to nature's heart? Can you take a hot bath and leave the firewood as it was? Eat food without transforming it? Can any vital process take place without something being changed? Can't you see? It's just the same with you—and just as vital to nature.

"My only fear is doing something contrary to human nature—the wrong thing, the wrong way, or at the wrong time."

"To feel affection for people even when they make mistakes is uniquely human. You can do it, if you simply recognize: that they're human too, that they act out of ignorance, against their will, and that you'll both be dead before long. And, above all, that they haven't really hurt you. They haven't diminished your ability to choose."

"When people injure you, ask yourself what good or harm they thought would come of it. If you understand that, you'll feel sympathy rather than outrage or anger. Your sense of good and evil may be the same as theirs, or near it, in which case you have to excuse them."

"Treat what you don't have as nonexistent. Look at what you have, the things you value most, and think of how much you'd crave them if you didn't have them. But be careful. Don't feel such satisfaction that you start to overvalue them—that it would upset you to lose them."

"Discard your misperceptions. Stop being jerked like a puppet. Limit yourself to the present. Understand what happens—to you, to others. Analyze what exists, break it all down: material and cause. Anticipate your final hours. Other people's mistakes? Leave them to their makers."

To direct your thoughts to what is said. To focus the mind on what happens and what makes it happen.

Care for other human beings. Follow God.

"Unendurable pain brings its own end with it. Chronic pain is always endurable: the intelligence maintains serenity by cutting itself off from the body, the mind remains undiminished. And the parts that pain affects—let them speak for themselves, if they can."

"And why should we feel anger at the world? As if the world would notice!"

"It's like this, gentlemen of the jury: The spot where a person decides to station himself, or wherever his commanding officer stations him—well, I think that's where he ought to take his stand and face the enemy, and not worry about being killed, or about anything but doing his duty."

"Is it not possible that a real man should forget about living a certain number of years, and should not cling to life, but leave it up to the gods, accepting, as women say, that 'no one can escape his fate,' and turn his attention to how he can best live the life before him?" 47."

"Look at the past—empire succeeding empire—and from that, extrapolate the future: the same thing. No escape from the rhythm of events. Which is why observing life for forty years is as good as a thousand. Would you really see anything new?"

"Everywhere, at each moment, you have the option: to accept this event with humility to treat this person as he should be treated to approach this thought with care, so that nothing irrational creeps in."

"Don't pay attention to other people's minds. Look straight ahead, where nature is leading you—nature in general, through the things that happen to you; and your own nature, through your own actions. Everything has to do what it was made for."

"Now, the main thing we were made for is to work with others. Secondly, to resist our body's urges."

Think of yourself as dead. You have lived your life. Now take what's left and live it properly.

"Look at who they really are, the people whose approval you long for, and what their minds are really like. Then you won't blame the ones who make mistakes they can't help, and you won't feel a need for their approval. You will have seen the sources of both—their judgments and their actions."

"For times when you feel pain: See that it doesn't disgrace you, or degrade your intelligence—doesn't keep it from acting rationally or unselfishly."

"pain is neither unbearable nor unending, as long as you keep in mind its limits and don't magnify them in your imagination. And keep in mind too that pain often comes in disguise—as drowsiness, fever, loss of appetite.... When you're bothered

by things like that, remind yourself: "I'm giving in to pain."

"didn't make himself the slave of other people's ignorance, didn't treat anything that nature did as abnormal, or put up with it as an unbearable imposition, didn't put his mind in his body's keeping. 67."

Nature did not blend things so inextricably that you can't draw your own boundaries—place your own well-being in your own hands. It's quite possible to be a good man without anyone realizing it. Remember that.

"To live life in peace, immune to all compulsion. Let them scream whatever they want. Let animals dismember this soft flesh that covers you. How would any of that stop you from keeping your mind calm—reliably sizing up what's around you—and ready to make good use of whatever happens?"

"Perfection of character: to live your last day, every day, without frenzy, or sloth, or pretense."

The gods live forever and yet they don't seem annoyed at having to put up with human beings and their behavior throughout eternity. And not only put up with but actively care for them.

It's silly to try to escape other people's faults. They are inescapable. Just try to escape your own.

"You've given aid and they've received it. And yet, like an idiot, you keep holding out for more: to be credited with a Good Deed, to be repaid in kind. Why?"

"So you know how things stand. Now forget what they think of you. Be satisfied if you can live the rest of your life, however short, as your nature demands. Focus on that, and don't let anything distract you. You've wandered all over and finally realized that you never found what you were after: how to live."

"Alexander and Caesar and Pompey. Compared with Diogenes, Heraclitus, Socrates? The philosophers knew the what, the why, the how. Their minds were their own. The others? Nothing but anxiety and enslavement."

"The first step: Don't be anxious. Nature controls it all. And before long you'll be no one, nowhere—like Hadrian, like Augustus."

"The second step: Concentrate on what you have to do. Fix your eyes on it. Remind yourself that your task is to be a good human being; remind yourself what nature demands of people. Then do it, without hesitation, and speak the truth as you see it. But with kindness. With humility. Without hypocrisy."

"Nature's job: to shift things elsewhere, to transform them, to pick them up and move them here and there. Constant alteration. But not to worry: there's nothing new here. Everything is familiar. Even the proportions are unchanged."

"No time for reading. For controlling your arrogance, yes. For overcoming pain and pleasure, yes. For outgrowing ambition, yes. For not feeling anger at stupid and unpleasant people—even for caring about them—for that, yes."

"Apply them constantly, to everything that happens: Physics. Ethics. Logic."

"When you have to deal with someone, ask yourself: What does he mean by good and bad? If he thinks x or y about pleasure and pain (and what produces them), about fame and disgrace, about death and life, then it shouldn't shock or surprise you when he does x or y."

"Remember: you shouldn't be surprised that a fig tree produces figs, nor the world what it produces. A good doctor isn't surprised when his patients have fevers, or a helmsman when the wind blows against him."

"Remember that to change your mind and to accept correction are free acts too. The action is yours, based on your own will, your own decision—and your own mind."

"If it's in your control, why do you do it? If it's in someone else's, then who are you blaming? Atoms? The gods? Stupid either way. Blame no one. Set people straight, if you can. If not, just repair the damage. And suppose you can't do that either. Then where does blaming people get you? No pointless actions."

"Even the sun will tell you, 'I have a purpose,' and the other gods as well. And why were you born? For pleasure? See if that answer will stand up to questioning."

"Stick to what's in front of you—idea, action, utterance."

This is what you deserve. You could be good today. But instead you choose tomorrow.

"To erase false perceptions, tell yourself: I have it in me to keep my soul from evil, lust and all confusion. To see things as they are and treat them as they deserve. Don't overlook this innate ability."

"To speak to the Senate—or anyone—in the right tone, without being overbearing. To choose the right words."

"You have to assemble your life yourself—action by action. And be satisfied if each one achieves its goal, as far as it can. No one can keep that from happening. —But there are external obstacles...."

"But if you accept the obstacle and work with what you're given, an alternative will present itself—another piece of what you're trying to assemble. Action by action.
33."

"To accept it without arrogance, to let it go with indifference."

"You have torn yourself away from unity—your natural state, one you were born to

share in. Now you've cut yourself off from it."

"We have various abilities, present in all rational creatures as in the nature of rationality itself. And this is one of them. Just as nature takes every obstacle, every impediment, and works around it—turns it to its purposes, incorporates it into itself—so, too, a rational being can turn each setback into raw material and use it to achieve its goal."

"Don't let your imagination be crushed by life as a whole. Don't try to picture everything bad that could possibly happen. Stick with the situation at hand, and ask, "Why is this so unbearable? Why can't I endure it?" You'll be embarrassed to answer."

Then remind yourself that past and future have no power over you. Only the present—and even that can be minimized. Just mark off its limits.

People find pleasure in different ways. I find it in keeping my mind clear. In not turning away from people or the things that happen to them. In accepting and welcoming everything I see. In treating each thing as it deserves.

Give yourself a gift: the present moment.

"External things are not the problem. It's your assessment of them. Which you can erase right now. If the problem is something in your own character, who's stopping you from setting your mind straight? And if it's that you're not doing something you think you should be, why not just do it?"

"But there are insuperable obstacles. Then it's not a problem. The cause of your inaction lies outside you. —But how can I go on living with that undone? Then depart, with a good conscience, as if you'd done it, embracing the obstacles too."

"Nothing but what you get from first impressions. That someone has insulted you, for instance. That—but not that it's done you any harm. The fact that my son is sick—that I can see. But "that he might die of it," no. Stick with first impressions. Don't extrapolate. And nothing can happen to you. Or extrapolate. From a knowledge of all that can happen in the world."

"No carelessness in your actions. No confusion in your words. No imprecision in your thoughts. No retreating into your own soul, or trying to escape it. No overactivity. They kill you, cut you with knives, shower you with curses. And that somehow cuts your mind off from clearness, and sanity, and self-control, and justice? A man standing by a spring of clear, sweet water and cursing it. While the fresh water keeps on bubbling up. He can shovel mud into it, or dung, and the stream will carry it away, wash itself clean, remain unstained. To have that. Not a cistern but a perpetual spring. How? By working to win your freedom. Hour by

hour. Through patience, honesty, humility."

Very important

"Not to know what the world is is to be ignorant of where you are. Not to know why it's here is to be ignorant of who you are. And what it is. Not to know any of this is to be ignorant of why you're here. And what are we to make of anyone who cares about the applause of such people, who don't know where or who they are?"

"You want praise from people who kick themselves every fifteen minutes, the approval of people who despise themselves."

The existence of evil does not harm the world. And an individual act of evil does not harm the victim. Only one person is harmed by it—and he can stop being harmed as soon as he decides to.

"Fear of death is fear of what we may experience. Nothing at all, or something quite new. But if we experience nothing, we can experience nothing bad. And if our experience changes, then our existence will change with it—change, but not cease."

To enter others' minds and let them enter yours.

"And moreover, to fear pain is to fear something that's bound to happen, the world being what it is—and that again is blasphemy."

"While if you pursue pleasure, you can hardly avoid wrongdoing—which is manifestly blasphemous."

"Don't look down on death, but welcome it. It too is one of the things required by nature. Like youth and old age. Like growth and maturity. Like a new set of teeth, a beard, the first gray hair. Like sex and pregnancy and childbirth. Like all the other physical changes at each stage of life, our dissolution is no different."

To do harm is to do yourself harm. To do an injustice is to do yourself an injustice—it degrades you.

And you can also commit injustice by doing nothing.

"Objective judgment, now, at this very moment. Unselfish action, now, at this very moment. Willing acceptance—now, at this very moment—of all external events. That's all you need."

"Convince them not to. If you can. And if not, remember: the capacity for patience was given us for a reason. The gods are patient with them too, and even help them to concrete things: health, money, fame.... Such is the gods' goodness."

"Work: Not to rouse pity, not to win sympathy or admiration. Only this: Activity. Stillness."

"Today I escaped from anxiety. Or no, I discarded it, because it was within me, in my own perceptions—not outside."

"Enter their minds, and you'll find the judges you're so afraid of—and how judiciously they judge themselves."