Here we are going to discuss the book “48 Laws of Power” by Robert Greene. Because we are limited by time, we are going to go through some of these laws following with a short explanation of each.

Note that, some of these laws also have a “reversal law” associated with them, so proceed carefully.

Law 1   
Never Outshine the Master   
Always make those above you feel comfortably superior. In your desire to please or impress them, do not go too far in displaying your talents or you might accomplish the opposite – inspire fear and insecurity. Make your masters appear more brilliant than they are and you will attain the heights of power.

Reversal:

You cannot worry about upsetting every person you come across, but you must be selectively cruel. If your superior is a falling star, there is nothing to fear from outshining him. Do not be merciful—your master had no such scruples in his own coldblooded climb to the top. Gauge his strength. If he is weak, discreetly hasten his downfall: Outdo, out-charm, outsmart him at key moments. If he is very weak and ready to fall, let nature take its course. Do not risk outshining a feeble superior—it might appear cruel or spiteful. But if your master is firm in his position, yet you know yourself to be the more capable, bide your time and be patient. It is the natural course of things that power eventually fades and weakens. Your master will fall someday, and if you play it right, you will outlive and someday outshine him.

Law 4   
Always Say Less than Necessary   
When you are trying to impress people with words, the more you say, the more common you appear, and the less in control. Even if you are saying something banal, it will seem original if you make it vague, open-ended, and sphinxlike. Powerful people impress and intimidate by saying less. The more you say, the more likely you are to say something foolish. 

Reversal:

There are times when it is unwise to be silent. Silence can arouse suspicion and even insecurity, especially in your superiors; a vague or ambiguous comment can open you up to interpretations you had not bargained for. Silence and saying less than necessary must be practiced with caution, and in the right situations.

Law 5   
So Much Depends on Reputation – Guard it with your Life   
Reputation is the cornerstone of power. Through reputation alone you can intimidate and win; once you slip, however, you are vulnerable, and will be attacked on all sides. Make your reputation unassailable. Always be alert to potential attacks and thwart them before they happen. Meanwhile, learn to destroy your enemies by opening holes in their own reputations.   
Then stand aside and let public opinion hang them.

Law 6

Court Attention at all Cost

Everything is judged by its appearance; what is unseen counts for nothing. Never let yourself get lost in the crowd, or then buried in oblivion. Stand out. Be conspicuous, at all cost. Make yourself a magnet of attention by appearing larger, more colorful, more mysterious, than the bland and timid masses.

Law 10

Infection: Avoid the Unhappy and Unlucky

You can die from someone else’s misery – emotional states are as infectious as disease. You may feel you are helping the drowning man but you are only precipitating your own disaster. The unfortunate sometimes draw misfortune on themselves; they will also draw it on you.

Associate with the happy and fortunate instead.

Law 19

Know Who You’re Dealing with – Do Not Offend the Wrong Person

There are many different kinds of people in the world, and you can never assume that everyone will react to your strategies in the same way. Deceive or outmaneuver some people and they will spend the rest of their lives seeking revenge. They are wolves in lambs’ clothing. Choose your victims and opponents carefully, never offend or deceive the wrong person.

Law 24

Play the Perfect Courtier

The perfect courtier thrives in a world where everything revolves around power and political dexterity. He has mastered the art of indirection; he flatters, yields to superiors, and asserts power over others in the most oblique and graceful manner. Learn and apply the laws of courtiership and there will be no limit to how far you can rise in the court.

Law 25

Re-Create Yourself

Do not accept the roles that society foists on you. Re-create yourself by forging a new identity, one that commands attention and never bores the audience. Be the master of your own image rather than letting others define it for you. Incorporate dramatic devices into your public gestures and actions – your power will be enhanced and your character will seem larger than life.

Law 29

Plan All the Way to the End

The ending is everything. Plan all the way to it, taking into account all the possible consequences, obstacles, and twists of fortune that might reverse your hard work and give the glory to others. By planning to the end you will not be overwhelmed by circumstances and you will know when to stop. Gently guide fortune and help determine the future by thinking far ahead.

Reversal:

It is a cliché among strategists that your plan must include alternatives and have a degree of flexibility. That is certainly true. If you are locked into a plan too rigidly, you will be unable to deal with sudden shifts of fortune. Once you have examined the future possibilities and decided on your target, you must build in alternatives and be open to new routes toward your goal.

Law 33

Discover Each Man’s Thumbscrew

Everyone has a weakness, a gap in the castle wall. That weakness is usually an insecurity, an uncontrollable emotion or need; it can also be a small secret pleasure. Either way, once found, it is a thumbscrew you can turn to your advantage.

Reversal:

Playing on people’s weakness has one significant danger: You may stir up an action you cannot control.

In your games of power, you always look several steps ahead and plan accordingly. And you exploit the fact that other people are more emotional and incapable of such foresight. But when you play on their vulnerabilities, the areas over which they have least control, you can unleash emotions that will upset your plans. Push timid people into bold action and they may go too far; answer their need for attention or recognition and they may need more than you want to give them. The helpless, childish element you are playing on can turn against you.

The more emotional the weakness, the greater the potential danger. Know the limits to this game, and never get carried away by your control over your victims. You are after power, not the thrill of control.

Law 35

Master the Art of Timing

Never seem to be in a hurry – hurrying betrays a lack of control over yourself, and over time. Always seem patient, as if you know that everything will come to you eventually. Become a detective of the right moment; sniff out the spirit of the times, the trends that will carry you to power. Learn to stand back when the time is not yet ripe, and to strike fiercely when it has reached fruition.

Law 37

Create Compelling Spectacles

Striking imagery and grand symbolic gestures create the aura of power – everyone responds to them. Stage spectacles for those around you, then full of arresting visuals and radiant symbols that heighten your presence. Dazzled by appearances, no one will notice what you are really doing.

Law 39

Stir up Waters to Catch Fish

Anger and emotion are strategically counterproductive. You must always stay calm and objective. But if you can make your enemies angry while staying calm yourself, you gain a decided advantage. Put your enemies off-balance: Find the chink in their vanity through which you can rattle them and you hold the strings.

Reversal:

When playing with people’s emotions you have to be careful. Study the enemy beforehand: Some fish are best left at the bottom of the pond. The leaders of the city of Tyre, capital of ancient Phoenicia, felt confident they could withstand Alexander the Great, who had conquered the Orient but had not attacked their city, which stood well protected on the water. They sent ambassadors to Alexander saying that although they would recognize him as emperor they would not allow him or his forces to enter Tyre. This of course enraged him, and he immediately mounted a siege. For four months the city withstood him, and finally he decided that the struggle was not worth it, and that he would come to terms with the Tyrians. But they, feeling that they had already baited Alexander and gotten away with it, and confident that they could withstand him, refused to negotiate—in fact they killed his messengers. This pushed Alexander over the edge. Now it did not matter to him how long the siege lasted or how large an army it needed; he had the resources, and would do whatever it took. He remounted his assault so strenuously that he captured Tyre within days, burned it to the ground, and sold its people into slavery.

You can bait the powerful and get them to commit and divide their forces but test the waters first. Find the gap in their strength. If there is no gap—if they are impossibly strong—you have nothing to gain and everything to lose by provoking them. Choose carefully whom you bait, and never stir up the sharks.

Law 40

Despise the Free Lunch

What is offered for free is dangerous – it usually involves either a trick or a hidden obligation. What has worth, is worth paying for. By paying your own way you stay clear of gratitude, guilt, and deceit. It is also often wise to pay the full price – there is no cutting corners with excellence. Be lavish with your money and keep it circulating, for generosity is a sign and a magnet for power.

Reversal:

The powerful never forget that what is offered for free is inevitably a trick. Friends who offer favors without asking for payment will later want something far dearer than the money you would have paid them. The bargain has hidden problems, both material and psychological. Learn to pay, and to pay well.

Law 42

Strike the Shepherd and the Sheep Will Scatter

Trouble can often be traced to a single strong individual – the stirrer, the arrogant underling, the poisoned of goodwill. If you allow such people room to operate, others will succumb to their influence. Do not wait for the troubles they cause to multiply, do not try to negotiate with them – they are irredeemable. Neutralize their influence by isolating or banishing them. Strike at the source of the trouble and the sheep will scatter.

Reversal:

“Any harm you do to a man should be done in such a way that you need not fear his revenge,” writes Machiavelli. If you act to isolate your enemy, make sure he lacks the means to repay the favor. If you apply this Law, in other words, apply it from a position of superiority, so that you have nothing to fear from his resentment.

Law 43

Work on the Hearts and Minds of Others

Coercion creates a reaction that will eventually work against you. You must seduce others into wanting to move in your direction. A person you have seduced becomes your loyal pawn. And the way to seduce others is to operate on their individual psychologies and weaknesses. Soften up the resistant by working on their emotions, playing on what they hold dear and what they fear. Ignore the hearts and minds of others and they will grow to hate you.

Law 44

Disarm and Infuriate with the Mirror Effect

The mirror reflects reality, but it is also the perfect tool for deception: When you mirror your enemies, doing exactly as they do, they cannot figure out your strategy. The Mirror Effect mocks and humiliates them, making them overreact. By holding up a mirror to their psyches, you seduce them with the illusion that you share their values; by holding up a mirror to their actions, you teach them a lesson. Few can resist the power of Mirror Effect.

Law 47

Do not go Past the Mark you Aimed for; In Victory, Learn when to Stop

The moment of victory is often the moment of greatest peril. In the heat of victory, arrogance and overconfidence can push you past the goal you had aimed for, and by going too far, you make more enemies than you defeat. Do not allow success to go to your head. There is no substitute for strategy and careful planning. Set a goal, and when you reach it, stop.

Reversal:

As Machiavelli says, either destroy a man or leave him alone entirely. Inflicting half punishment or mild injury will only create an enemy whose bitterness will grow with time, and who will take revenge. When you beat an enemy, then, make your victory complete. Crush him into nonexistence. In the moment of victory, you do not restrain yourself from crushing the enemy you have defeated, but rather from needlessly advancing against others. Be merciless with your enemy, but do not create new enemies by overreaching.

There are some who become more cautious than ever after a victory, which they see as just giving them more possessions to worry about and protect. Your caution after victory should never make you hesitate, or lose momentum, but rather act as a safeguard against rash action. On the other hand, momentum as a phenomenon is greatly overrated.

You create your own successes, and if they follow one upon the other, it is your own doing. Belief in momentum will only make you emotional, less prone to act strategically, and more apt to repeat the same methods. Leave momentum for those who have nothing better to rely upon.

Law 48

Assume Formlessness

By taking a shape, by having a visible plan, you open yourself to attack. Instead of taking a form for your enemy to grasp, keep yourself adaptable and on the move. Accept the fact that nothing is certain and no law is fixed. The best way to protect yourself is to be as fluid and formless as water; never bet on stability or lasting order. Everything changes.

Reversal:

Using space to disperse and create an abstract pattern should not mean forsaking the concentration of your power when it is valuable to you. Formlessness makes your enemies hunt all over for you, scattering their own forces, mental as well as physical. When you finally engage them, though, hit them with a powerful, concentrated blow. That is how Mao succeeded against the Nationalists: He broke their forces into small, isolated units, which he then could easily overwhelm with a strong attack. The law of concentration prevailed.

When you play with formlessness, keep on top of the process, and keep your long term strategy in mind. When you assume a form and go on the attack, use concentration, speed, and power. As Mao said, “When we fight you, we make sure you can’t get away.”

Thank you!

You can find all the 48 laws and the reversal laws in this blog post: <https://survival8.blogspot.com/2019/06/48-laws-of-power-robert-greene-book.html>