

# Commonplace book

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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction



We all want to be better people, shout at the kids less often, get some perspective at work and call our friends and family more. We have a picture of a better version of ourselves but we're still fallible, lazy, tired and busy. Best intentions fall away and we forget our better selves. To make our jobs a little easier we can listen to Marcus Aurelius who tells us that without a goal we can't live consistently (cf. 3.22). Thinking about the sort of qualities we want to show is a great first step but we need a little more help. Thinking about the sort of person we want to be and looking closely at the qualities they embody we can come up with a consistent goal, a set of high or even unattainable targets. Even with our goal, we'll still fail. Badly. But to get us through the tough spots We're going

to get help from philosophers, deities, sportsmen, fictional characters, artists and other people far smarter than us.

The hope here is that we can turn to this "manual" for help at times when we're losing our way, forgetting what's important to us and the promises we've made about the sort of person we want to become.

The set of qualities we're looking to develop here are inspired in part by the Modern Virtues page from the School of Life<sup>1</sup>, the majority of content is helpful quotes and aphorisms picked up from books and the internet. If you find one good idea in these pages it will be directly attributable to them (cf. 5.1).

Good luck, and, as our trusted advisor Seneca would say, live well.

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<sup>1</sup><http://bit.ly/1XoP0tE>





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## CHAPTER 2

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# Action



Without action of some kind our plans for improvement simply won't get very far. We need to look at the mammoth task in front of us and take that scary first step (and then the next). Taking action isn't always easy and choosing the right move (cf. 2.14) at the right time (cf. 4.2) can be stupefyingly hard. The hope is though that we won't be paralysed and we will make an impact on the things important to us.

We won't be successful all the time (in particular I'm not even be successful much of the time) but by persevering (cf. 2.9 and 6.1) we can chip away at the

habits (and even relationships (cf. 3.3)) that are slowing us down or even undoing good progress we've already made.

We need to remember what's important to us. Remember how much time we have and how we choose to spend it. Marcus often looks at how little life he's been allotted (and how much he thinks he has left) and it's a good reminder for people like us to just get on with it.

We also need to remember that people will see where we spend our time and the choices made. No matter what we say they will believe what they see (and don't see).

2.1: Action may not always bring happiness, but without action there is none

Benjamin Disraeli

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2.2: You may never know what results come from your action but if you do nothing there will be no result

Mahatma Ghandi

---

2.3: Each of us lives only now in this brief instant. The rest has been lived already or is impossible to see

Marcus Aurelius

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2.4: Do what nature demands. Get a move on if you have it in you and don't worry whether anyone will give you any credit for it. And don't go expecting Plato's "Republic" either, just be satisfied with even the smallest progress

Marcus Aurelius

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## 2.5: Action expresses priority

Mahatma Gandhi

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## 2.6: Fac aut tace

Do or be silent

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## 2.7: Code wins

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## 2.8: Demonstrate don't explicate

Robert Greene

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2.9: Quality is not an act. It is a habit.

Aristotle

---

2.10: How you do anything is how you do everything

Ryan Holiday

---

2.11: If I cannot do great things I can do small things in a great way

Martin Luther King Jr.

---

2.12: Stick to what's in front of  
you;  
Idea, action, utterance

Marcus Aurelius

---

2.13: It's amazing what you can  
accomplish if you don't care who  
gets the credit

Harry S Truman

---

2.14: To think is easy  
To act is hard  
But the hardest thing of all is to  
act in accordance with your think-  
ing

John Von Goethe

---



2.15: When you come to a fork in  
the road, take it

Yogi Bera

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2.16: Life is what happens while  
you are busy making other plans

John Lennon

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## 2.17: When you confront a problem you begin to solve it

cf. 11.11

Rudy Guilliani

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## CHAPTER 3

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# Focus



As hard as it can be to take action, it's even harder to maintain the level of focus we need to on the right things. To help us find the right things we should think about what impact our efforts can produce (cf. 6.14) and what price we'll have to pay. The sun will still hide behind the clouds on our day at the beach, the white van will still drive too close no matter how much we hope otherwise. Better to work on things we can control.

When we do identify the right things, we still squander our time and energy. We're too polite, putting ourselves and our priorities to one side to avoid offending people (cf. 3.2 and 6.23), we make great gains on Twitter and Facebook while we let our Amazing Book Idea gather dust (cf. 3.11), we spend hours mindlessly scrolling around crappy sensationalist journalism when we could be reading an immersive novel (cf. 5.1) or working on our

beloved hobby (cf. 11.1).

Epictetus reminds us that we need to gut things from our lives which take us away from the tricky but important business of improvement. We can be sure that nothing truly terrible will happen if we stop using social media. We can be confident that life will carry on if we leave the "mind numbing spirit crushing game shows<sup>1</sup>" to someone else. There are so many ways to spend our time, we need to be careful not to waste it and that can require significant effort. Asking ourselves whether what we're doing right now is truly important to us (cf. 3.13) is an incredibly useful habit to develop.

Maybe we should call someone who's important to us and focus solely on that for starters.

Let's take 15 minutes. The advice and guidance on the next few pages will still be here when we get back.

<sup>1</sup>Renton, Trainspotting

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### 3.1: Call your mom

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3.2: Don't spend time with people you don't like

Prue Leith

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3.3: You are whatever the company you keep is

Lord Chesterfield

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3.4: Let your mind dwell on examples of honor

Cicero

---

3.5: Steer clear of lifers, the toxic and charlatans.  
You become who you know

Ryan Holiday

---

3.6: Never wrestle with pigs, you both get dirty and the  
pig likes it

cf. 3.17

George Bernard Shaw

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3.7: You can do anything.  
but you can't do everything.

cf. 3.11

David Allen

---

3.8: Reaching your true potential involves choice.  
How exactly you choose to excel is up to you

Brian Colbert

---

3.9: No random actions, none not based on underlying  
principles

Marcus Aurelius

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3.10: If you're not doing what you love, you're wasting  
your time

Billy Joel

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3.11: You're better off not giving  
the small things more time than  
they deserve

Marcus Aurelius

---



3.12: Slow down and remember this;  
Most things make no difference.  
Being busy is a form of laziness.  
Lazy thinking and indiscriminate action.

cf. 3.13

Tim Ferriss

See: efficacy hacks<sup>2</sup> and a not to do list<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup><http://bit.ly/1EDPJUQ>

<sup>3</sup><http://bit.ly/1EDPu2H>





3.13: If you seek tranquillity, do less or (more accurately) do what's essential because most of what we say and do is not essential. Ask yourself at every moment "is this necessary?"

Marcus Aurelius

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3.14: as doing efficiently that  
which should not be done at  
all. Peter Drucker

---

3.15: If you wish to improve,  
be content to appear clueless or  
stupid in extraneous matters

Epictetus

---

3.16: Hard work is simply the  
refuge of people how have nothing  
better to do

Oscar Wilde

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3.17: Never try to teach a pig to  
sing.  
It wastes time and annoys the pig.

cf. 3.6

Robert Heinlein

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### 3.18: Parkinson's Law:

A task will swell in (perceived) importance and complexity in relation to the time allocated for its completion.

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3.19: And so I'll treat them as the  
law that binds us requires.  
With kindness and with justice.  
And the inconsequential things?  
I'll do my best to treat them as  
they deserve.

Marcus Aurelius

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3.20: The cucumber is bitter?  
The throw it out.  
There are brambles in the path?  
Then go around them.

cf. 3.2

Marcus Aurelius

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### 3.21: Ask yourself:

- is this thought necessary?
  - is it destructive to those around me?
  - is it really what you think?
  - is it just self indulgent?
-



3.22: If you don't have a consistent goal in life, how can you live it in a consistent way?

Marcus Aurelius

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3.23: They should try to subordinate things to themselves not themselves to things.

cf. 11.19

Horace

---

3.24: The things you used to own.  
Now they own you

Jack, Fight Club

---

3.25: Never look back unless you're planning to go that way.

Henry David Thoreau

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3.26: It's a long road there's no turning back

Funki Porcini

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3.27: In six months you will have discarded most of what you claim is important right now.

Ryan Holiday

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3.28: Sometimes the hard stuff is hard because you shouldn't do it in the first placeTim Ferriss

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3.29: A man is successful if he gets up in the morning, goes to bed at night and in between does what he wants to.

cf. 3.10

Bod Dylan

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## 3.30: NoMFuP

Malcolm Tucker

Handy to remind ourselves what we should be paying attention to.



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## CHAPTER 4

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# Patience



We know how important action is, but acting rashly, without care and attention can do serious harm to ourselves and can undo the good progress we've made towards our aims.

In many ways for our "handbook" knowing where we're headed is more important than getting there quickly, especially when you consider that we may not even arrive. So we should consider that the manner in which we undertake the journey is at least as important as the destination.

To some patience can look like a lack of engagement or a lack of commitment but there's often more harm done through an emotional (over) reaction (cf. 4.4) and certainly we're only likely to waste time and do everything badly if we act or speak angrily (cf. 4.13).

We know that we are expected to play the game with limited (or even inaccurate) information but we should take time to reflect

and consider what we do know before committing to a course of action. We also need to be open to changing our plans as more facts are revealed (cf. 7.11).

Acting in good faith after a consideration of the facts and taking counsel where we can will mean that even when the landscape changes and the actions we took weren't right in retrospect we can still stand by them in the light of what we knew at the time (cf. 8.10). Dive in, on the other hand, and we can blunder from one poorly understood situation to the next and end up in an even weaker position than if we'd have spent some time before rushing off.

It's a lot of effort to be patient enough to maintain a level of control so that we can act correctly, we don't fly into a rage, we don't make snap judgements and we don't let ourselves be carried away by the crowd.

With a little help we can be sure we're up to it.





4.1: Ask yourself this question:  
Am I in charge of this situation or  
is this situation in charge of me?

Anthony De Mello

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4.2: Do not make war unless victory may be gained;  
If there is a prospect of victory move;  
If there is no prospect of victory do not move.

Sun Tzu

---

4.3: Impatience: perhaps the single greatest pitfall

Robert Greene

---

4.4: How much more damage grief and anger do than the things that caused them.

Marcus Aurelius

---

4.5: There are always more of them before they are counted.

cf. 6.19

Ulysses S Grant

---

4.6: The senses don't deceive,  
judgement deceives.

John Von Goethe

---

4.7: It is more important to know  
where you're going than to get  
there quickly

cf. 3.22

Isocrates

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## 4.8: Never content with a man who has nothing to lose.

cf. 4.2

Baltazar Graçian

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4.9: If you are unsure of a course of action do not attempt it. Your doubts and hesitation will infect your execution.

cf. 4.2

Robert Greene

---

4.10: Once the words are out, you cannot take them back. Keep them under control.

Robert Greene

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4.11: Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools speak because they have to say something.

Plato

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## 4.12: The best advice I ever got was "shut up"

Ryan Holiday

Always say less than necessary<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><http://tcat.tc/1wHzGd>

4.13: Never do anything when you are in a temper, for you will do everything wrong

Baltazar Graçian

---

4.14: Anger and emotion are strategically conterproductive. You must always stay calm and objective

Robert Greene

---

## 4.15: The best fighter is never angry

Lao Tzu

---



4.16: Fear is a bad advisor.

Angela Merkel

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## CHAPTER 5

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# Learning





5.1: If I read a book and get one good idea from that \$20, then I've gotten one of the greatest deals of all time

Tom Peters

---

5.2: An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.

Benjamin Franklin

---



5.3: To forgive and forget means to have thrown away a dearly bought experience.

Arthur Schopenhaur

---

## 5.4: The art lies in concealing the art

Horace

---

## 5.5: If people knew how hard I worked, it would not seem so masterful

Michelangelo

---

5.6: never expose the sweat and labor behind your poise

Robert Greene

---

5.7: Never nitpick a heuristic

Nassim Taleb

---

5.8: You must see your attempt at attaining mastery as something necessary and positive

Robert Greene

---

5.9: The greatest danger you face is your mind growing soft and your eyes growing dull.

Robert Greene

---

5.10: More listening, more learning  
Fewer interruptions, fewer conclusions.

cf. 7.11

Ryan Holiday

---

5.11: I would never die for my beliefs because I might be wrong

Bertand Russell

---

5.12: Does learning mean nothing to you unless you know that someone else knows that you know it?

cf. 7.17

Michel de Montaigne

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5.13: It is a greater thing to make oneself impassable than to be impassable as a property of one's nature.

Michel De Monataigne

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5.14: It's it the height of folly to learn inessential things when time is so desperately short?

cf. 3.13

Seneca

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## CHAPTER 6

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# Resilience



We can't have full control and so things won't always turn out as we'd hoped. Having the courage to pursue our goal in the face of unexpected changes of plan (cf. 6.52), times of poor judgement (cf. 6.3), and even after outright failures (cf. 8.10) will mean that we'll still make slow progress towards our aim of a better self.

The challenges, of course, won't just come from us and our lapses in judgement or the fates changing their mind, others will see our improvement and resent us or even try to derail us (cf. 6.10) our successes will make them feel uncomfortable after they fell revealed as lazy, cruel or arrogant. When that happens we need to remember that we were there not so long ago ourselves (cf. 10.7) but we need to keep focussed on what's truly important and what we're trying to achieve. Our route is hard enough without al-

lowing other people to throw us off course (cf. 3.2 and 6.13).

Picking ourselves up and dusting ourselves off needs to become second nature. We may be lucky enough to have support from others at times but we know we can't rely on that, we can only rely on what we control and that is nothing more than our response to what has happened. To reach our goals we don't need to be the best (cf. 8.14), and in our case it doesn't really make sense to "be the best" as we'll always be able to improve in some way, but we do need to keep at it and no matter what happens acting as though we were already the better person we want to be (cf. 6.9).

No matter what's happened, no matter what they've said, no matter what they've done; it's up to us how we react, it's up to us what happens next.



## 6.1: Fall seven times, stand eight

cf. 6.36

Japanese Proverb

---

6.2: Promise yourself to be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind

Christian D'Larson

---

6.3: When we are tired we are attacked by ideas we conquered long ago.

Friedrich Nietzsche

---

6.4: All the meat and all that it wants.

Case, Neuromancer

---

6.5: It's just fat and muscle

---



## 6.6: Hanlon's Razor:

Never attribute to malice that  
which can be adequately explained  
by incompetence

cf. 10.7

Robert J. Hanlon

or weakness or fear or hunger or ...

---

## 6.7: You control the effort not the results

Ryan Holiday

---

6.8: We control our own actions and are responsible for them.  
If we act wrongly we have done serious harm to ourselves

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.9: Does what happened stop you from acting with justice, generosity, self control, sanity, prudence, honesty and stright forwardness?

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.10: The world loves to blacken the radiant and drag the  
sublime through the dust

Schiller

---

6.11: Haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate

cf. 10.3

Taylor Swift

---

## 6.12: You don't need their approval

Danielle La Porte

---

## 6.13: Tranquility comes when you stop caring what they say

Marcus Aurelius

---



6.14: Ta eph'hemin  
Ta ouk eph'hemin

Stoic phrase

what is up to us, what is not up to us.





6.15: Nothing either good nor bad  
but thinking makes it so

William Shakespeare

---

6.16: Real difficulties can be over-  
come  
It's only the imaginary ones that  
are unconquerable

cf. 4.5

Theodore N Vail

---

6.17: Problems are rarely as bad as we think they are, or rather, they are precisely as bad as we think they are

cf. 6.47

Ryan Holiday

---

6.18: External things are not the problem. It's your assessment of them which you can erase right now

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.19: See things for what they are,  
do what we can,  
endure what we must

Ryan Holiday

---

6.20: Not to give into adversity.  
Not to trust prosperity.

And always take note of Fortune's  
habit of behaving exactly as she  
pleases

Seneca

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## 6.21: You can't stop the waves but you can learn how to surf

cf. 6.52

Jon Kabat Zin

---

6.22: All of our unhappiness comes from our inability to be alone

Jean de la Brugere

---

6.23: A bore is someone who deprives you of solitude without providing you with company

Gian Vincenzo Gravina

---

6.24: Strive to keep yourself free from unnecessary entanglements and alliances

Robert Greene

---

6.25: Happiness depends on ourselves

Aristotle

---

6.26: Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.

Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles

Ralph Waldo Emerson

---

6.27: Everyone gets one life. Your's is almost up and instead of treating yourself with respect you have entrusted your happiness to others.

Marcus Aurelius

---



6.28: He who conquers others is strong, he who conquers himself is mighty

Lao Tzu

---

6.29: Success depends on previous preparation, and without such preparation there can be no success

Confucius

---

6.30: Proper planning prevents piss poor performance

cf. 6.29

---

## 6.31: Optimism is cowardice

Oswald Spengler

---

## 6.32: Hope is a poor hedge

Erik R. Sirri

2007, but likely earlier

---

## 6.33: Preparation not luck

---

6.34: So keep at it until it's fully digested. A strong stomach digests whatever it eats. A blazing fire takes whatever you throw on it and makes light and flame.

cf. 8.6

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.35: Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day whispering "I will try again tomorrow"

cf. 6.36

Mary Anne Radmach

---

6.36: Disgraceful for the soul to give up while the body is still going strong

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.37: Choose not to be harmed  
and you won't feel harmed  
Don't feel harmed and you haven't  
been

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.38: It can ruin your life only if it  
ruins your character. Otherwise it  
cannot harm you. Inside or out

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.39: Trust yourself more and others less

Robert Greene

---

6.40: Love all  
Trust a few  
Do wrong to none

William Shakespeare

---

6.41: I was once s fortunate man,  
then fortune deserted me.

But true good fortune is what  
you make for yourself.

Good fortune:

- good character
- good intentions
- good actions

6.42: Ambition: tying your well being to what other people say and do

Self-indulgence: tying it to the things that happen to you

Sanity: tying it to your own actions

cf. 6.14

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.43: Straight not straightened

Marcus Aurelius

---



6.44: What is outside my mind  
means nothing to it

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.45: The mind without passions  
is like a fortress. No place is more  
secure

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.46: Objective judgment now, at this very moment.

Unselfish action now, at this very moment.

Willing acceptance of all external events now, at this very moment.

That's all you need

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.47: It is we who generate the judgments inscribing them on ourselves

Marcus Aurelius

---

6.48: When you judge another you do not define them, you define yourself.

Wayne Dyer

---

6.49: Care about what other people think and you will always be their prisoner

cf. 6.14

Lao Tzu

---

6.50: It is reason and wisdom which take away cares  
not places affording views over the sea

cf. 6.25

Horace

---

6.51: Successful people are not gifted; they just work hard, then succeed.

*On purpose*

cf. 5.5

G. K. Nielson

---

6.52: Change is the only constant in life

Heraclitus

---

6.53: You can suffer the pain of change or suffer remaining the way you are.

Joyce Meyer

---

6.54: The more conflicts and difficult situations you put yourself through the more battle tested your mind will be.

cf. 11.2

Robert Greene

---

6.55: This is the precept by which  
I have lived:  
Prepare for the worst, expect the  
best and take what comes.

Hannah Ardent

---

6.56: The burden is equal to the strength of the horse

The Talmud

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## CHAPTER 7

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# Humility



## 7.1: No chorus of lamentation, No hysterics

Marcus Aurelius

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7.2: If you're not humble life will visit humility upon you

Mike Tyson

---

7.3: He who does not employ a guide cannot gain advantage from the ground

Sun Tzu

---

7.4: Take the help

Danielle La Porte

---

7.5: Learn as if you were going to live but live as if you were going to die tomorrow.

Ryan Holiday

---

7.6: After the game the king and the pawn go back into the same box

Italian Proverb

---

7.7: You could leave this life right now. Let that determine how you act.

Marcus Aurelius

---

7.8: Foolish is the man who delights in his good fortune, supposing it will never leave him.

cf. 6.20

Euripides

---

7.9: To accept it without arrogance, to let it go with indifference

cf. 7.8

Marcus Aurelius

---

7.10: Your opinion is either dependent on the facts or it's not;  
When they change you should shift along with them

cf. 6.21

Ryan Holiday

The facts were always there, of course, just unclear or hidden. Think clearly about what you're looking at. cf 8.10

---

7.11: Remember that to change  
your mind and accept correction  
are mere acts too

Marcus Aurelius

and so, under our control

---

7.12: It is the folly of many to mis-  
take the echo of a London coffee  
shop for the voice of a kingdom

Jonathan Swift

---



7.13: Everywhere, at each moment, you have the option:

- to accept this event with humility
- to treat each person as he should be treated
- to approach this thought with care, so that nothing irrational creeps in

7.14: That you've made enough mistakes yourself. You just like them.

cf. 10.7

Marcus Aurelius

---

7.15: So make your exit with grace the same grace shown too you

Marcus Aurelius

---

## 7.16: Be willing to be a beginner every single morning

cf. 3.15

Meister Eckhart

---

7.17: Boasting is what a boy does, because he has no real effect on the world.

cf. 7.18

Matthew Crawford

---

## 7.18: A superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions

Confucious

---

7.19: Never be so self absorbed as to beleive that the master is interested in your criticisms of him, now matter how accurate they are

Robert Greene

---

7.20: Listen to their criticism, take it and use it to improve

---

7.21: A great failing: to see yourself as more than you are and value yourself at less than your true worth

John Von Goethe

---

7.22: The fool doth think e is wise and the wise man knows himself to be a fool

cf. 4.11

William Shakespeare

---

## 7.23: Diversity in counsel, unity in command

cf. 7.3

Cyrus the Great

---

## 7.24: You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake

Tyler Durden

---

## 7.25: The unnamed should not be mistaken for the non-existent

Jon de la Brugre

---

7.26: Those who say it cannot  
be done should not interrupt those  
who are doing it

cf. 2.12

George Bernad Shaw

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## CHAPTER 8

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# Confidence



It's a fine line between arrogance and confidence. We need to be sure about what we're about to do but we need to remember that we're only human and we will make errors in judgement (just as we have done in the past (cf. 7.14)).

But we're not our past (cf. 8.18 and 8.19) and we can't let our past behaviour define how we behave now. Once we've learnt what we can from those events, we need to understand that we can't change what happened but using what we've learnt, we can have an impact on what happens next.

Unchecked, that negative self talk and fear of failure can be paralysing but if we structure our tasks and goals in the right way we can control it. Somewhat. If we aim for things which are un-

der our control we can be more sure of success. In areas where we have some control (or none at all) we need to consider what would constitute a successful outcome and what behaviours might influence that. We're not looking to win the Thursday night poker game, we're looking to make fewer errors than last week. We're not looking to get a raise at work, we're looking to consistently be valuable to our boss. Ultimately we don't have control of how things will turn out by external metrics and that can be a big hit on our confidence, but if we change our success criteria and focus on internal metrics we stand a better chance of avoiding failure. Not entirely, of course. Being able to act in the face of that uncertainty is what we're aiming for.

8.1: Let go and move with the chaos that presents itself to you. From within it you will find endless oppourtunities that elude other people

Robert Greene

---

8.2: Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.

cf. 6.21

Anais Nin

---

8.3: So often self confidence is dependent on the basic but elusive premise

”I’m fine as I am”

School of Life

On confidence<sup>1</sup>

---

8.4: Don't water your weeds

Harvey Mackay

---

---

<sup>1</sup><http://www.thebookoflife.org/on-confidence/>

8.5: Any kind of resistance or obstacle that crosses your path should be seen as yet another chance to improve your work

Robert Green

---

8.6: You can adopt the attitude that there's nothing you can do, or you can see the challenge as a call to action

cf. 9.3

Catherine Pulsifer

---

8.7: You've already made it this far, might as well take one more step

cf. 6.1

Ryan Holiday

---

8.8: But to get back up when you fail, to celebrate behaving like a human (however imperfectly) and fully embrace the pursuit you've embarked on.

Marcus Aurelius

---

8.9: You will fail eventually.  
Whatever.

cf. 6.9

Danielle La Porte

---

8.10: A mistake is not something to be determined after the fact but in the light of information up to that point

Nassim Taleb

---

8.11: A failed attempt is just that and nothing more, its not the end and its not fatal. Keep at it.

---



8.12: Failure cannot cope with persistence.

cf. 6.35

Napoleon Hill

---

8.13: Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we might oft win by fearing to attempt.

William Shakespeare

---

8.14: You don't have to be the best you just have to be harder to destroy. You have to be relentless

cf. 8.12

Ryan Holiday

---

8.15: You cannot display yourself too brazenly, yet you must get noticed. Create a distinctive (a subtly distinctive) style and image.

Robert Greene

---

8.16: Understand: you should be radiating confidence not arrogance and disdain

Robert Greene

---

8.17: He who demands litte gets it.

Ellen Glasgow

---

8.18: You are not your genes

Danielle La Porte

---

8.19: Don't let someone else's opinion of you become your reality

Les Brown

---

8.20: Don't look for miracles you yourself are the miracle

Henry Miller

---

---

## CHAPTER 9

---

# Gratitude



9.1: Certainly, if a man of understanding still has himself, he has lost nothing.

Michel De Montaigne

---

9.2: If the stars were to appear but one night every thousand years how man would marvel

Ralph Waldo Emerson

---

9.3: Get used to your circumstances, complain about them as little as possible. Grasp whatever advantages they have to offer

cf. 3.20

Seneca

---

9.4: When you kiss your wife or child, repeat to yourself, "I am kissing a mortal"

Epictetus

...and she may be gone tomorrow.

---



9.5: Treat what you don't have as non-existent

Look at what you have, the things you value most and think how much you'd crave them if you didn't have them

cf. 11.19

Marcus Aurelius

---



9.6: The ability to express wonder and amazement and seem like you mean it, is a rare a dying talent but one that is still greatly valued.

cf. 9.2

Robert Greene

---



9.7: It is so hard to foget pain but  
it is harder to remember sweetness.  
There is no scar for happiness

Chuck Palaniuk

---



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## CHAPTER 10

---

# Generosity





10.1: Tell yourself this the people I deal with today will be:

- meddling
- ungrateful
- arrogant
- dishonest
- jealous
- surly

cf. 10.7

Marcus Aurelius

People are going to be like that from time to time and so long as you remember that you've been like that too you can see the behaviour for what it is.

10.2: Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die

cf. 6.11

Malachi McCourt

---

10.3: Someone hates me? Their problem.

Mine: to be patient and cheerful with everyone (including them)

Marcus Aurelius

---

10.4: Because... hate will get you  
every time  
Every time.

Ryan Holiday

---

10.5: If talking to oneself did not  
look so mad no day would go  
by without my growling to myself  
"you silly shit!"

Yet, I do not intend that to be the  
definition of me

cf. 8.4

Michel De Montaigne

---

## 10.6: Always give with remembering and receive without forgetting

cf. 11.10

Brian Tracy

---

10.7: Forgiveness means a long memory of all the times when we wouldn't have gotten through life with someone cutting us some slack. It is recognising that living with others is not possible without excusing errors

School of Life

See the modern virtues <sup>1</sup>

---

---

<sup>1</sup><http://bit.ly/1XoP0tE>

10.8: You've given 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?

cf. 2.13

Marcus Aurelius

---

10.9: Forgiveness means giving up hope of a better past

cf. 2.3

Lily Tomlin

---

10.10: Light cares can talk huge ones are strick dumb

Hippolitus

---

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## CHAPTER 11

---

# Leadership





It doesn't matter whether we're leading an expedition, a household or just ourselves. Our behaviour is always influencing those around us and our actions speak volumes about the sort of people we are.

We're holding ourselves to an incredibly high set of standards; we need to recognise the efforts of others and be generous in our interpretation of their actions (cf. 10.7), show gratitude when things go well, have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, be open to correction (from anyone) in the light of better information, let others know they're important to us by putting everything else to one side and focussing entirely on them when they need us (and making sure we're available when they do). Consistently measuring ourselves against these standards will be hard and humbling for us. We will slip up from time to time.

What matters is how we deal with those bumps in the road, will we let our heads drop or will we use the situation to our benefit? (cf. 8.6)

When things go wrong we need to move with a level of determination and confidence demonstrating that we have thought about our options and made a conscious choice about the next steps (cf. 11.11). That's when we can be the most helpful, that's when we can calm things and that's when we're needed most.

Acting as though we have already achieved the qualities we aspire to, acting as though we are already the better versions of ourselves that we imagined at the start of the journey means we will have a positive impact on those around us.

Of course, it doesn't matter whether anyone follows. Only that we try to lead.

11.1: When you are not practicing remember that someone else is and when you meet him he will win.

Bill Bradley

---

11.2: Races are won here not there. Where it is hardest to speed up not easiest

Ryan Holiday

---

11.3: Wise men make more opportunities than they find

Francis Bacon

---

11.4: Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you sow.

Robert Louis Stephenson

---

11.5: As I grow older I pay less attention to what people say, I just watch what they do.

Andrew Carnegie

---

11.6: Pay less attention to the words people use and greater attention to the tone of their voice, the look in their eyes and their body language

cf. 11.8

Robert Green

---

11.7: Learning to listen is the most valuable thing you can do

cf. 11.5

Robert Love

---

11.8: Practice really hearing what people say. Do your best to get inside their minds.

cf. 11.7

Marcus Aurelius

---

11.9: People do not change, they are merely revealed.

Anne Enright

---

11.10: Kindness gives birth to  
kindness

Seneca

---

11.11: There is no use talking about the problem unless you talk about the solution

Betty Williams

---

11.12: Under promise; over deliver

Tom Peters

---

11.13: You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do.

Henry Ford

---



11.14: Be careful not to boast of any success.

cf. 7.17

Robert Greene

---

11.15: Be quiet, work hard, stay healthy

---

11.16: use strict;  
good servant, bad master.

Simon Cozens

---

11.17: Be the chief but never the lord

Lao Tzu

---

11.18: One man practicing sportsmanship is better than 100 teaching it

cf. 11.13

Knute Roche

---

11.19: Life is defined by how much you do, how often you took the difficult path and were rewarded for it

Ryan Holiday

(not by how much you own)

---

11.20: Super-human effort is not worth a damn unless it produces results.

Shackleton

---

## 11.21: Recognise effort Reward results

BAML

---

## 11.22: Close captures no crowns

Ryan Holiday

---

11.23: The ability to measure people and know who you're dealing with is the most important skill of all.

cf. 11.9

Robert Greene

---

11.24: Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.

Confucious

---

11.25: Learn to ask of all actions,  
"why are they doing that?"  
Starting with your own.

cf. 6.6

Marcus Aurelius

---

11.26: If it's in your control why  
do it? If it's in someone else's then  
who are you blaming?  
Blame no one  
Set people straight if you can. If  
not just repair the damage.

cf. 10.7

Marcus Aurelius

---

11.27: If they've done something wrong, correct them gently and show them how to improve. If you can't do that the blame lies with you or no one.

cf. 2.13

Marcus Aurelius

---

11.28: To undertake nothing:

- without purpose or at random
- for any other reason than the common good

cf. 3.12

Marcus Aurelius

---

11.29: Quiet minds cannot be perplexed or frightened but go on like a clock ... in a thunderstorm

Robert Louis Stephenson

---



11.30: In the end, if people mistrust you and resist your authority you have only yourself to blame.

Robert Greene

---

11.31: Ability will never catch up with the demand for it.

Confucious

---

11.32: It takes a great talent and skill to conceal a great talent and skill.

cf. 5.5

Francois de La Rochefoucauld

---

11.33: Everything is judged by its appearance; what is unseen counts for nothing. Do not get lost in the crowd or buried in oblivion

Robert Greene

---

11.34: They may forget what you said but they will never forget how you made them feel.

Carl W. Buechner

---

## 11.35: Disclosure is disinfectant

Tim Ferriss

---

11.36: All defects are lighter in the open. They are most pernicious when concealed beneath a pretense of soundness

Seneca

We don't need to post our defects on Facebook, but we can spend some time thinking about them<sup>1</sup>

---

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<sup>1</sup><http://thephilosophersmail.com/PhilosophicalMeditation.pdf>

11.37: Patience Wounded too often becomes rage.

Publius Syrus

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