

Pointers

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CHAPTER 1

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 (§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 Life¹, 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 (§5.1).

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

¹<http://bit.ly/1XoP0tE>

CHAPTER 2

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 (§2.14) at the right time (§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 (§2.9 and 6.1) we can chip away at the habits (and even relationships (§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).

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

Benjamin Disraeli 2.1

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

Mahatma Ghandi 2.2

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

Marcus Aurelius 2.3

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 2.4

Action expresses priority

Mahatma Gandhi 2.5

17

Fac aut tace

2.6

Do or be silent

Code wins

2.7

Demonstrate don't explicate

Robert Greene 2.8

Quality is not an act. It is a habit.

Aristotle 2.9

How you do anything is how you
do everything

Ryan Holiday 2.10

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

Martin Luther King Jr. 2.11

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

Marcus Aurelius 2.12

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

Harry S Truman 2.13

To think is easy
To act is hard
But the hardest thing of all is to
act in accordance with your thinking

John Von Goethe 2.14

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

Yogi Berra 2.15

Life is what happens while you are
busy making other plans

John Lennon 2.16

When you confront a problem you
begin to solve it

§11.11

Rudy Guillian 2.17

CHAPTER 3

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 (§6.13) 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 (§3.2 and 6.22), we make great gains on Twitter and Facebook while we let our Amazing Book Idea gather dust (§3.11), we spend hours mindlessly scrolling around crappy sensationalist journalism when we could be reading an immersive novel (§5.1) or working on our

beloved hobby (§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 shows¹" 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 (§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.

¹Renton, Trainspotting

31

Call your mom

3.1

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

Prue Leith 3.2

You are whatever the company you
keep is

Lord Chesterfield 3.3

Let your mind dwell on examples
of honor

Cicero 3.4

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

Ryan Holiday 3.5

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

§3.17

George Bernard Shaw 3.6

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

§3.11

David Allen 3.7

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

Brian Colbert 3.8

No random actions, none not based on underlying principles

Marcus Aurelius 3.9

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

Billy Joel 3.10

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

Marcus Aurelius 3.11

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

§3.13

Tim Ferriss 3.12

See: efficacy hacks² and a not to do list³.

²<http://bit.ly/1EDPjUQ>

³<http://bit.ly/1EDPu2H>

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 3.13

There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.

Peter Drucker 3.14

If you wish to improve, be content
to appear clueless or stupid in ex-
traneous matters

Epictetus 3.15

Hard work is simply the refuge of
people who have nothing better to
do

Oscar Wilde 3.16

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

§3.6

Robert Heinlein 3.17

Parkinson's Law:

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

3.18

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 3.19

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

Of each thought ask yourself:

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

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

Marcus Aurelius 3.22

They should try to subordinate
things to themselves not them-
selves to things.

§11.19

Horace 3.23

The things you used to own. Now
they own you

Jack, Fight Club 3.24

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

Henry David Thoreau 3.25

It's a long road there's no turning back
Funk! Porcini

3.26

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

Ryan Holiday 3.27

Sometimes the hard stuff is hard
because you shouldn't do it in the
first place

Tim Ferriss 3.28

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

§3.10

Bod Dylan 3.29

NoMFuP

Malcolm Tucker 3.30

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

CHAPTER 4

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 (§4.4) and certainly we're only likely to waste time and do everything badly if we act or speak angrily (§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 (§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 (§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.

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

Anthony De Mello 4.1

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 4.2

Impatience: perhaps the single
greatest pitfall

Robert Greene 4.3

How much more damage grief
and age do than the things that
caused them.

Marcus Aurelius 4.4

There are always more of them be-
fore they are counted.

§6.18

Ulysses S Grant 4.5

The senses don't decieve, judgement deceives.

John Von Goethe 4.6

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

§3.22

Isocrates 4.7

Never content with a man who has nothing to lose.

§4.2

Baltazar Graçian 4.8

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

§4.2

Robert Greene 4.9

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

Robert Greene 4.10

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

Plato 4.11

The best advice I ever got was
"shut up"

Ryan Holiday 4.12

Always say less than necessary¹.

¹<http://tcat.tc/1lwHzGd>

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

Baltazar Graçian 4.13

Anger and emotion are strategically counterproductive. You must always stay calm and objective

Robert Greene 4.14

The best fighter is never angry

Lao Tzu 4.15

Fear is a bad advisor.

Angela Merkel 4.16

CHAPTER 5

Learning

We don't know enough. We'll likely never master our respective professions, hobbies and past-times, we'll never understand how others behave and what motivates them to any meaningful level but that shouldn't stop us from trying. Quite the opposite in fact. Maintaining an open mind¹ is a key trait for us to make sure we're in a position where we can grow and make progress towards our aims. Getting stuck into patterns of behaviour and allowing our comfort zones to shrink is a sure way to stop progress dead in its tracks. There's an endless amount of knowledge our open minds can consume but learning in an undirected manner won't help us (§5.14 and 3.12). Deciding which topics (and even which authors) to consume is important enough to be given some

serious thought. We can't just let anyone in so following recommendations from those we trust becomes a key strategy for learning.

Spending some time reviewing what we would like to learn should involve not just a look at our careers and the skills needed for the Next Big Project but a broader look at things we've enjoyed in the past and what topics we can look at in that area. If it happens that the topics you've enjoyed are the ones you use every day in your career then you're very lucky and if not? In that case we need to have a more detailed look (§3.29).

No matter what we choose, one way we can certainly learn more is to simply read more² so that we make use of otherwise wasted time.

¹<http://mindsetonline.com/whatisit/themindsets/index.html>

²<http://ryanholiday.net/how-to-read-more-a-lot-more/>

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 5.1

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.

Benjamin Franklin 5.2

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

Arthur Schopenhauer 5.3

The art lies in concealing the art

Horace 5.4

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

Michelangelo 5.5

never expose the sweat and labor
behind your poise

Robert Greene 5.6

Never nitpick a heuristic

Nassim Taleb 5.7

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

Robert Greene 5.8

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

Robert Greene 5.9

More listening, more learning
Fewer interruptions, fewer conclusions.

§7.11

Ryan Holiday 5.10

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

Bertand Russell 5.11

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

§7.17

Michel de Montaigne 5.12

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

Michel De Monataigne 5.13

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

§3.13

Seneca 5.14

CHAPTER 6

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 (§6.51), times of poor judgement (§6.3), and even after outright failures (§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 (§6.9) 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 (§10.9) but we need to keep focussed on what's truly important and what we're trying to achieve. Our route is hard enough without

allowing other people to throw us off course (§3.2 and 6.12).

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 (§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 (§6.8).

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.

Fall seven times, stand eight

§6.35

Japanese Proverb 6.1



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

Christian D'Larson 6.2

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

Friedrich Nietzsche 6.3

All the meat and all that it wants.

Case, Neuromancer 6.4

It's just fat and muscle

6.5

You control the effort not the results

Ryan Holiday 6.6

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

Marcus Aurelius 6.7

Does what happened stop you
from acting with justice, generos-
ity, self control, sanity, prudence,
honesty and stright forwardness?

Marcus Aurelius 6.8

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

Schiller 6.9

Haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate

§10.5

Taylor Swift 6.10

You don't need their approval

Danielle La Porte 6.11

Tranquility comes when you stop
caring what they say

Marcus Aurelius 6.12

Ta eph'hemin
Ta ouk eph'hemin

Stoic phrase 6.13

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

Nothing either good nor bad but
thinking makes it so

William Shakespeare 6.14

Real difficulties can be overcome
It's only the imaginary ones that
are unconquerable

§4.5

Theodore N Vail 6.15

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

§6.46

Ryan Holiday 6.16

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

Marcus Aurelius 6.17

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

Ryan Holiday 6.18

Not to give into adversity.
Not to trust prosperity.

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

Seneca 6.19

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

§6.51

Jon Kabat Zin 6.20

All of our unhappiness comes from our inability to be alone

Jean de la Brugere 6.21

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

Gian Vincenzo Gravina 6.22

Strive to keep yourself free from unnecessary entanglements and alliances

Robert Greene 6.23

Happiness depends on ourselves

Aristotle 6.24

Nothing can bring you peace but
yourself.

Nothing can bring you peace but
the triumph of principles

Ralph Waldo Emerson 6.25

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 6.26

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

Lao Tzu 6.27

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

Confucius 6.28

Proper planning prevents piss poor performance

§6.28

6.29

Optimism is cowardice

Oswald Spengler 6.30

Hope is a poor hedge

Erik R. Sirri 6.31

2007, but likely earlier

Preparation not luck

6.32

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.

§8.6

Marcus Aurelius 6.33

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

§6.35

Mary Anne Radmach 6.34

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

Marcus Aurelius 6.35

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

Marcus Aurelius 6.36

It can ruin your life only if it ruins
your character. Otherwise it can-
not harm you. Inside or out

Marcus Aurelius 6.37

Trust yourself more and others less

Robert Greene 6.38

Love all
Trust a few
Do wrong to none

William Shakespeare 6.39

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

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 ac-
tions

§6.13

Marcus Aurelius 6.41

Straight not straightened

Marcus Aurelius 6.42

What is outside my mind means
nothing to it

Marcus Aurelius 6.43

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

Marcus Aurelius 6.44

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 6.45

It is we who generate the judgments inscribing them on ourselves

Marcus Aurelius 6.46

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

Wayne Dyer 6.47

Care about what other people think an you will always be their prisoner

§6.13

Lao Tzu 6.48

It is reason and wisdom which take
away cares
not places afording views over the
sea

§6.24

Horace 6.49

Successful people are not gifted;
they just work hard, then succeed.
On purpose

§5.5

G. K. Nielson 6.50

Change is the only constant in life

Heraclitus 6.51

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

Joyce Meyer 6.52

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

§11.2

Robert Greene 6.53

This is the precept by which I have lived:

Prepare for the worst, expect the best and take what comes.

Hannah Ardent 6.54

The burden is equal to the
strength of the horse

The Talmud 6.55

CHAPTER 7

Humility

No chorus of lamentation, No hysterics

Marcus Aurelius 7.1

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

Mike Tyson 7.2

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

Sun Tzu 7.3

Take the help

Danielle La Porte 7.4

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

Ryan Holiday 7.5

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

Italian Proverb 7.6

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

Marcus Aurelius 7.7

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

§6.19

Euripides 7.8

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

§7.8

Marcus Aurelius 7.9

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

§6.20

Ryan Holiday 7.10

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

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

Marcus Aurelius 7.11

and so, under our control

It is the folly of many to mistake
the echo of a London coffee shop
for the voice of a kingdom

Jonathan Swift 7.12

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

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

§10.9

Marcus Aurelius 7.14

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

Marcus Aurelius 7.15

Be willing to be a beginner every
single morning

§3.15

Meister Eckhart 7.16

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

§7.18

Matthew Crawford 7.17

A superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions

Confucius 7.18

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 7.19

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

7.20

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

John Von Goethe 7.21

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

§4.11

William Shakespeare 7.22

Diversity in counsel, unity in command

§7.3

Cyrus the Great 7.23

You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake

Tyler Durden 7.24

The unnamed should not be mistaken for the non-existent

Jon de la Brugre 7.25

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

§2.12

George Bernad Shaw 7.26

CHAPTER 8

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 (§7.14)).

But we're not our past (§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 bold enough to act in the face of that uncertainty is what we're aiming for.

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 8.1

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

§6.20

Anais Nin 8.2

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

"I'm fine as I am"

School of Life 8.3

On confidence¹

Don't water your weeds

Harvey Mackay 8.4

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

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

Robert Green 8.5

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

§9.3

Catherine Pulsifer 8.6

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

§6.1

Ryan Holiday 8.7

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 8.8

You will fail eventually.
Whatever.

§6.8

Danielle La Porte 8.9

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

Nassim Taleb 8.10

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

8.11

Failure cannot cope with persistence.

§6.34

Napoleon Hill 8.12

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

William Shakespeare 8.13

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

§8.12

Ryan Holiday 8.14

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

Robert Greene 8.15

Understand: you should be radiating confidence not arrogance and disdain

Robert Greene 8.16

He who demands litte gets it.

Ellen Glasgow 8.17

You are not your genes

Danielle La Porte 8.18

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

Les Brown 8.19

Don't look for miracles you your-
self are the miracle

Henry Miller 8.20

CHAPTER 9

Gratitude

Just looking at the massively improbable set of circumstances needed to get us here in one piece we should be able to grab handfuls of gratitude from the air. We don't of course as we take things for granted after a while. We forget quickly that we're lucky enough to be literate and high enough up Maslow's heirarchy of needs¹ to have time to focus on our better selves having ticked off the basics a long time ago.

It's not just the things we have already that we take for granted, it's someone taking extra effort on our behalf or extending an unexpected generosity to us. We become so cynical that we ex-

pect others to be on the make or we sniffily say that they're "just doing their job".

If we can't rely on ourselves to be spontaneously grateful, we need a little help to remind us and correct our course.

The stoics had a, seemingly, counter-intuitive routine to make sure we appreciated the things we have and the people around us. They suggested that we occasionally take the time to imagine our life without our loved ones and our most treasured possessions (§9.4). By routinely putting ourselves through the loss of a limb or a loved one, we'll feel truly grateful when they are with you (or still attached).

¹<http://bit.ly/1BYf2Nd>

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

Michel De Montaigne 9.1

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

Ralph Waldo Emerson 9.2

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

§3.20

Seneca 9.3

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

Epictetus 9.4

... and she may be gone tomorrow.

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

§11.19

Marcus Aurelius 9.5

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.

§9.2

Robert Greene 9.6

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

Chuck Palaniuk 9.7

CHAPTER 10

Generosity

We know other people can upset and unravel our plans but it doesn't mean they're out to get us (§10.4) even though it may feel like that from time to time. As hard as it is, if we want to make progress towards our aims, we need to give these people a break. It's part of our duty to lead by example. We know that focussing on things that happened in the past is fruitless, it won't change the situation and only adds to our own stresses.

There are few things more pointless than this. We don't have to forget the events, that might mean we'd be surprised next time around but turning them over and over?

There's no need to harbour grudges, we don't have that time to waste, but we do need to remember the times we've spoken sharply or hurtfully and we've been forgiven and pass that favour on (§10.9 and §11.10).

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?

§2.13

Marcus Aurelius 10.1

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

§6.10

Malachi McCourt 10.2

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

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

§10.9

Marcus Aurelius 10.3

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.

Hanlon's Razor:
Never attribute to malice that
which can be adequately explained
by incompetence

§10.9

Robert J. Hanlon 10.4

or weakness or fear or hunger or ...

Someone hates me? Their problem.

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

Marcus Aurelius 10.5

Because... hate will get you every time

Every time.

Ryan Holiday 10.6

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

§8.4

Michel De Montaigne 10.7

Always give with remembering and receive without forgetting

§11.10

Brian Tracy 10.8

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 10.9

See the modern virtues ¹

¹<http://bit.ly/1XoP0tE>

Forgiveness means giving up hope
of a better past

§2.3

Lily Tomlin 10.10

Light cares can talk huge ones are
strick dumb

Hippolitus 10.11

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 (§10.9), 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? (§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 (§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.

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

Bill Bradley 11.1

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

Ryan Holiday 11.2

Wise men make more opportunities
than they find

Francis Bacon 11.3

Don't judge each day by the har-
vest you reap but by the seeds you
sow.

Robert Louis Stephenson 11.4

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

Andrew Carnegie 11.5

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

§11.8

Robert Green 11.6

Learning to listen is the most valuable thing you can do

§11.5

Robert Love 11.7

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

§11.7

Marcus Aurelius 11.8

People do not change, they are merely revealed.

Anne Enright 11.9

Kindness gives birth to kindness

Seneca 11.10

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

Betty Williams 11.11

Under promise; over deliver

Tom Peters 11.12

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

Henry Ford 11.13

Be careful not to boast of any success.

§7.17

Robert Greene 11.14

Be quiet, work hard, stay healthy

11.15

use strict;
good servant, bad master.

Simon Cozens 11.16

Be the chief but never the lord

Lao Tzu 11.17

One man practicing sportsmanship
is better than 100 teaching it

§11.13

Knute Roche 11.18

Life is defined by how much you
do, how often you took the diffi-
cult path and were rewarded for it

Ryan Holiday 11.19

(not by how much you own)

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

Shackleton 11.20

Recognise effort
Reward results

BAML 11.21

Close captures no crowns

Ryan Holiday 11.22

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

§11.9

Robert Greene 11.23

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

Confucious 11.24

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

§10.4

Marcus Aurelius 11.25

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.

§10.9

Marcus Aurelius 11.26

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.

§2.13

Marcus Aurelius 11.27

To undertake nothing:

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

§3.12

Marcus Aurelius 11.28

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

Robert Louis Stephenson 11.29

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

Robert Greene 11.30

Ability will never catch up with the demand for it.

Confucious 11.31

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

§5.5

Francois de La Rochefoucauld 11.32

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 11.33

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

Carl W. Buechner 11.34

Disclosure is disinfectant

Tim Ferriss 11.35

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

Seneca 11.36

We don't need to post our defects on Facebook, but we can spend
some time thinking about them¹

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

Patience Wounded too often becomes rage.

Publius Syrus 11.37

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