

Rebase

A crystallization manual for the melting mind



Everything you believed in turned out to be false. Your life become chaos.

Screw you guys, I'm going home. - Eric Cartman

Matter over mind. When someone punches you in the face you will feel pain, no matter how strongly you say *I feel no pain*. Elimination of negative emotion is more important than creation of positive emotion. Wounds can't heal if you're standing in the middle of the battlefield. Distance yourself from the source of pain. If someone's company is making you feel bad, stay away from them. Stay away from things which make you feel bad.

*I let go. Lost in oblivion. Dark and silent and complete. I found freedom.
Losing all hope was freedom. - Chuck Palahniuk*

There is no need to do anything. There is freedom, to do anything you wish. Thoughts of things which *should* be done are just social conditioning talking. There are no rules for life other than eat, sleep, breathe, and survive. The rest is made up. It doesn't matter. Remove everything from your todo list. Literally delete it. Remove all goals from your life. Planning is not needed. Live in the moment. Surrender. Stop making yourself do things. Let things happen naturally. Remove every effort. To all that happens, say yes. Let it go. There is no need to think. Things can just happen. Relax. Every thing you feel bad about, you can also laugh about. Play for fun, not to win.

Realise the fact that you simply "live" and not "live for". - Bruce Lee

Only do things which you enjoy. Concerts are there to be attended. Movies are there to be watched. Other people are there to be talked to. Those activities can fill a life, and that is completely fine. Every day, give yourself a present. This way of life is not in any way inferior or superior than any other. Just be careful not to get addicted to drugs or alcohol, of course. Your life is your life. Do things for yourself. Enjoy life. Live free or die.

No plough stops for the dying man.

The opinions of other people are irrelevant. Other people don't spend time thinking about you. Outside of close friends and family, nobody cares about you. Notice when you start worrying about what others think. Notice it and stop giving a fuck. What do you think? Only that is important. If a thing is cool to you, do it. If others think less of you because of who you are, fuck them. You can be ok with people not liking you. If you hurt other people only because they had expectations of you, that's completely their problem. Instead, if they had an agreement with you, only then is it your problem. Stop pleasing others. You failed at something, so what? It doesn't count. Life is not a game. You can't win or lose. The same way you can't win or lose a dance. The main thing people think about are other people. They compare themselves with them constantly. That produces complexes of lower value. Then people start forcing themselves to become other people which they do not want to be. Everyone is copying each other's desires all the time, instead of following their own. This leads to stupid competitions over stupid prizes. Think for yourself.

I know that I know nothing - Socrates

Forget everything you think you know. In order to learn, first you need to unlearn. You got into chaos because your model of the world was wrong. Even if your model of the world is almost completely correct, there are cracks in it. There are imperfections, and going into those blind spots, those unknown unknowns, you can acquire knowledge that would completely change your view of things. The map is not the territory. Drop your assumptions. Your interpretation or reality is not reality. You are not obliged to believe your negative thoughts. The problems which you think you have are an illusion. The process of healing is the process of disintegrating of illusions. The feeling of loss. They are an illusion. It is ok that you feel that way. There is nothing to be gained from ignoring it or trying to block it. Still, keep in mind that it's an illusion. You never lost anything because you never had anything. You never even needed anything. The feeling that you are not good enough. The feeling that something is fundamentally wrong with you. The feeling of having no control over your life. The feeling of being weak. They are all illusions. You are capable. The main barrier to learning are unnecessary aversions. Those aversions are learned structures in the brain. The process which creates them is not perfectly rational. Life goes on, and the truth changes. What was once true is often no longer true just a little while later. To grow, people have to let go of the principles and standards with which they define themselves. You are not who you thought you were. Being wrong feels the same way like being right does. Remember, the mind doesn't like to change itself in the face of new information.

Drop all your preconceived and fixed ideas and be neutral. Do you know why the cup is useful? Because it is empty. - Bruce Lee

Assumptions are not knowledge. When events happen, we form an interpretation of them. Of what people meant when they said something. Of what is going to happen. Of what people think about various things. All of those interpretations are an illusion. The truth is not what you think it is. As you live, your interpretations accumulate. Keep your mind clean of garbage interpretations. Think step by step. Pay close attention to what you truly know and what is an assumption. Create a great number of alternative hypotheses for why something happened. When you feel something is true, ask yourself, is perhaps the opposite true? Relax your expectations when going into things. You do not actually know if things are going to go well or not.

We are not special. We are not crap or trash, either. We just are. We just are, and what happens just happens. - Chuck Palahniuk

There are no wrong feelings. It's as if someone put a match on you and you feel hot. Of course you feel that way. You are free to feel that way, that's ok, don't worry about it. And if you say further *but I can't help worrying about it*, then ok, worry about it. Go along with it. You don't know what you're supposed to do. What can you do? If you don't know what you're supposed to do, you watch. Watch not only what's going on on the outside but also what's going on on the inside. Treat your own thoughts, reactions, and emotions as if those inside reactions were also outside. And you're just watching them. Without attempting to change it in any way. Without judging it. Without calling it good or bad. When some emotion feels overwhelming, remember that it too will pass. The subconscious and the conscious part of your brain wish to communicate. The rational part of you can't hold the emotional part in submission. This break in communication comes from the rigid idea that things *should* be a certain way, that you *should* feel this or the other. Drop your assumptions. The subconscious needs to express itself. Blocking your emotions blocks learning.

You are not alone. There are a lot of similar people to you out there, as there have been before in history. They walked the same path you walk. They had the same thoughts you have. Good people are out there. The world is a large place. Everything could be ok in the end. Not all is lost.

I say never be complete, I say stop being perfect, I say lets evolve, let the chips fall where they may. - Chuck Palahniuk

You will never be perfect. You have done something you think you shouldn't have. You have failed to do something you think you should have. This does not make you a bad, evil, or immoral person. It makes you a normal person. The event which occurred is not completely your fault. You had your share of influence and you will be careful to avoid such behavior in the future. Your influence was not so large as you think. The person you feel you wronged may feel completely differently about the situation. That person has a lot of other things in their life. Those things make them feel very different than you do, in a lot of ways. You think you should have done differently, because a perfect person would do differently. That is not in line with reality. You're not supposed to be some imaginary perfect person. You're supposed to be you. You could not predict all outcomes of your actions. You did the best you could given the situation and the knowledge you had at that moment. One can notice that, in the moments of a catastrophe unfolding, there is almost no control over what's happening, there are almost no thoughts, it's like everything is on autopilot. Because it is. Do you know why you did what you did? Understanding leads to forgiveness. Forgiveness allows you to learn from the past. Everything that will happen, must happen, can't not happen. You can't make a mistake. Everything that happend should have happened.

First you have to give up. First you have to know, not fear, know - that some day you're gonna die. - Chuck Palahniuk

Everything is exactly as it should be. You are not a victim. You can't blame others for how you feel. You are not responsible for how other people feel. That is their responsibility. You have your own life. You have your own path. Whatever happened to you, you have personally contributed to it. And that was not a mistake. You do not need anything from other people. You do not *deserve* anything. You do not **not** *deserve* anything. It has nothing to do with deserving. Complaining is useless. You can be grateful for the opportunity to start over from scratch. You think others are underestimating you. They are estimating the best they can, given how little they see. Work but do not control. Create but do not possess. Succeed but do not dwell on success. Achieve without arrogance. Rise without domination. Yield and remain whole. Bend and remain straight. Be worn out but become renewed. Have little and receive. Those who praise themselves have no merit. Those who boast about themselves do not last. Those who stand on tiptoes do not stand firmly. Those who rush ahead don't get very far. Those who try to outshine others dim their own light. Return to the state of the infant. A good commander achieves result, then stops. And does not dare to reach for domination. Achieves result but does not brag. Achieves result but is not arrogant. Achieves result but only out of necessity. Achieves result but does not dominate. The ultimate honor is no honor. Do not wish to be shiny like jade, be dull like rocks. Close the mouth. Shut the doors. Blunt the sharpness. Unravel the knots. Dim the glare. Mix the dust. Learn to laugh at yourself. Remember that you are going to die. In fact, you are dying all the time. You have nothing to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.

The fundamental delusion: there is something out there that will make me happy and fulfilled forever. - Naval Ravikant

The only thing which exists is now. The past and the future are just mental constructs, they are illusions. Thoughts of what happened in the past. And how it could have went better than it did. Or, how it was better than the state we are in now. Thoughts about pursuing a future. Thoughts of making one's happiness depend on something which isn't here at all. When you fulfill your desire, another one will take its place. Nothing will make you happy forever. There is no singular turning point in your life from which on everything will be different. Other people will not save you, nor will they make you happy forever. The present is the only place you live in. Memory is a tool. The reason we have memory is to learn from experience. If you remember that something bad happened, and you can figure out why, then you can try to avoid that bad thing happening again. That's the purpose of memory. It's not *to remember the past*. It's to stop the same thing from happening over and over. What we learn are models. Once we have the models the training data can be discarded.

Sometimes I go about in pity for myself, and all the while, a great wind carries me across the sky. - Ojibwe saying

Look at yourself from the outside perspective. Imagine how your whole life would look to your brother, if you had one. All the obstacles you had, and you overcame. How you were in pain. Pause and say to yourself: *Here I am. I am in a difficult situation. I am struggling and I am in pain.* And then, react to this information just as if we were hearing it from a close friend. Say to yourself: *I am so sorry. I want to care for you in the best way that I can. How can I help you? What can I do for you?* And then we must answer these questions for ourselves. If a member of your family had the same problems you have you would hug them. You would be kind to them. You may think you hate yourself. On some deep level, you do. Going even deeper you will see, underneath it all, underneath the sea of disappointment, anger, horror and sadness, if you look hard enough, you will find that you love yourself. You want yourself to be at peace. Say to yourself: *May I accept my anger, fear, and sadness, knowing that my heart is not limited by them. May I accept my pain, without thinking it makes me bad. May I be at ease and happy.*

I am a human being, therefore nothing human is foreign to me. - Terence

You are an animal.

Inside of us all there is potential for the worst possible behavior.

Our minds are evolved.

Parts of our brain are primitive.

Since we are born, we are selfish.

Our emotions are often nonsense.

Our brain is full of lies.

Our ability to reason is very limited.

Yet, there is a flame within us.

Our heaven is a selfless union with another.

We wish to know why the stars shine.

We are ugliness, seeking beauty.

Imperfections can be endearing.

Not just with romantic partners but with everyone.

Not just with people but with art and work.

Not just with others but with yourself.

I love the fact that everyone, including myself, is a fool.

The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely. - C.G. Jung

Stop trying to be someone else. Let go of who you think you should be. Let go of what others think you should be. Let your heart and your intuition guide you. As you do that, the real you emerges. Sink into who you are. In vulnerability, there is strength. When you think something is wrong with you, you turn to the outside world to tell you what is wrong. They are happy to provide you with bullshit about what you should change. Instead, look within at who you are, and accept that. It's not better to act than to be still. It's not better to be *productive* than to do nothing. It's not better to be disciplined than it is to be relaxed. All of these are equally valid and good. Life is not something that can be wasted. In the same way you can't waste a dance. You can't waste a song. Walk with who you are. Ego is a good thing, it is condensed experience, processed and compressed information. Happiness is not something you can *not deserve*, it does not have anything to do with deserving. This is something you can internalize on a deep level.

I believe that it is better to tell the truth than to lie. I believe that it is better to be free than to be a slave. And I believe that it is better to know than be ignorant. - H. L. Mencken

Open up. Share your thoughts with someone close. Looking the world through the eyes of others will make you learn to view your life in a new light. When you feel an urge to say something to close friend, don't be afraid. It is better to speak than not to speak. Lying it is the major source of all human stress. Lying kills people. The kind of lying that is most deadly is withholding, or keeping back information from someone we think would be affected by it. Keeping secrets and hiding from other people is a trap. Never lie, be honest with everyone. Say what you think, speak the truth. What can be destroyed by truth should be destroyed by truth. What is true is already so. Owning up to it doesn't make it worse. Not being open about it doesn't make it go away.

If I commit to doing something, then I commit to doing it right now. - Naval Ravikant

Make your life a tiny bit easier and more enjoyable. Day by day, step by step. If something bothers you, fix it. Improve small everyday things. Do things which are easy to do. Play with the task. Learn to love it. When doing tasks, don't do them out of duty, responsibility, or obligation. Don't work on them. The *real* task may be *worked on* in the future. Still, you could check out the situation now, and make some preparations. You're not working on it, you are preparing it. Knowledge of the future is impossible. The only thing you can commit to is doing it right now.

Only after disaster can we be resurrected. It's only after you've lost everything that you're free to do anything. Nothing is static, everything is evolving, everything is falling apart. - Chuck Palahniuk

Discover something you enjoy doing. We need a lot of downtime. A lot of daydreaming time. A lot of slack and unstructured time. We need boredom. We need to be out of the limelight for long periods of time. Only failure gives you that kind of alone isolation downtime where you can find yourself. Everyone spends so much time looking around themselves. Almost no one is looking up. You can find inspiration in art. The world is an interesting place which you can study. Go outside, walk around, go into nature. You can do things just for fun, just to see what will happen. Follow your curiosity. Approach things like a scientist, do things as an experiment. Experiments can be done even if you are feeling unwell. Moving in different directions, you will see what you like. Watch in which direction you are naturally flowing. Creating is more rewarding than consuming. Let your intuition guide you. Take feedback from your environment. When it comes to your life, gardening works better than engineering. You can produce something; not because you have to, but just for fun. Mess things up. Do them poorly. Improvise. Do silly, unconventional, spontaneous and irrational things. It needs to be pure fun. If you like swimming, you don't swim to get to the other side. You do it to move, to feel the water. What would you do if you had an infinite amount of resources and an infinite amount of time? Whatever is within you, express it. Release it. Do whatever *you* intrinsically *want* to do.

School, politics, sports, and games train us to compete against others. True rewards such as knowledge, love, and equanimity, they come from ignoring others. - Naval Ravikant

Ignore irrelevant things. Take one thing you care about the most and run with it. Go all the way. Remove all barriers. Give zero fucks about other things. Caring about many things at the same time just creates anxiety. You can change what you care about later. Now focus on what is the most important thing is this phase of your life. You need to feel the pull of the thing calling you to it. When you are thirsty, it takes no energy to drink water. It takes energy *not* to drink water. Pushing yourself it is not needed. About other things, things you don't give a fuck about, be spontaneous. Intelligence is learning what you can ignore.

Our business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand. - Bruce Lee

Your every action should be beneficial in and of itself. Do not plan anything. Solving beats planning. The shortest path between two points is a line. Think short term. Gradient following works better than discipline. Things which look hard or boring from a distance, when you come closer and apply action, get transformed. Do more, think less. You learn by doing. To become good at something a surprisingly large amount of repetition is needed, practice, experience. Move step by step. What is needed is a lot of specific knowledge of the details, doing things which don't generalize, which don't scale, rote memorization. Fail! Ignore theory. Experience is the only way to learn. Instead of reading, write. Always go with the line of the least resistance. Act automatically, without thinking, without effort. When you feel inspired, do it, don't pause too long. Inspiration is perishable. Use it while you have it.

Discipline is just you fighting with yourself to do something you don't want to do. Find things that excite you. - Naval Ravikant

A horse which loves the track runs faster. That is a horse which, when exhausted, stops running. When one part of you wants to do something and another part is resisting, think about the following. How would the world look like if you did do it? How would it look like if you didn't? Do you really want to do it? Lack of motivation for some action could be your subconsciousness telling you the goal is not something you really want. Or maybe the action you are considering is not a good way to achieve the goal. Or maybe that particular goal is not something which should be at the top of your priorities right now. A great way to waste time is to achieve a goal, only to realize you didn't actually want it. There is no need for pain. It could be that you actually don't want to do it. In that case, don't do it. At the same time, don't let fear of failure stop you. What would happen if you failed? You would gain the most important thing, knowledge. Failure is the consequence of a lack of knowledge. This lack of knowledge is the result of a lack of experience. Failure is a better teacher than success. If you decide you want to do it, fall towards it with no effort.

Nothing that we do lasts. Eventually, you will fade. Your works will fade. Your children will fade. Your thoughts will fade. This planet will fade. The sun will fade. It will all be gone. - Naval Ravikant

Every endeavor is a sequence of small tasks. You can complete them one step at a time. The only thing to do now is to do the first task, if you want. Ignore the other tasks. Take small steps. You may think you have not been doing enough. This does not make you a lazy person or a procrastinator. In fact, you have been doing exactly as much as you should have. You have been doing enough. When you fail, it doesn't mean anything. Sometimes you fail, sometimes you succeed. Either way, it does not last forever. Some insights, once you truly understand them, you can't unlearn them. They become a part of you. Remember: nothing lasts forever. Life is a vast ocean of neverending tasks and problems. The only question is: which problems do you wish to have? Play for fun, not to win. Plan difficult tasks through the simplest tasks. Achieve large tasks through the smallest tasks. The difficult tasks of the world must be handled through the simple tasks. The large tasks of the world must be handled through the small tasks.

Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot it becomes the teapot. - Bruce Lee

Instead of addictions, be useless. Notice when a behavior becomes an addiction. Sometimes you do those things because you want to do it. That is ok. Sometimes you do it automatically without even thinking. Do you enjoy performing an activity you are addicted to? Probably not. Those activities don't have any value. They also block you from being creative. Addictions are hijacking your brain and taking your freedom away. Try to notice it and instead meditate, or do nothing. Remove the temptations from your environment. A tree which is useless for wood carving is the one which survives and offers shade. The best ideas sometimes come in the shower, or during a walk. Being bored gives you time to think. To wander into uncharted territory. To think about what's happening. Lets curiosity develop. Gives you ideas for experimentation. Gives you time to flow. The best meditation is doing nothing.

Much unhappiness has come into the world because of things left unsaid.

Choose communication. Sometimes changing the way you think can change what you feel. If it's a change from a negative emotion to a positive, that's great. Other times, you can't change what you feel. Sometimes the original emotion is still there. Even though you think it's irrational feel that way. In that case, just feel whatever it is that you feel. Don't try to override the emotion. Repressing emotions often just hides them, it does not destroy them. They are there in the background, looking for justifiable ways to express themselves, for something they can latch on to. Then they slowly start coming out in various small ways, over the years. That what is repressed the mostly is the dark side, your shadow, the ugly emotions, which we are afraid to even experience. There are parts of yourself you wish were not there, the emotions and thoughts you just want to bury. Allow yourself to feel those emotions in their full intensity. Communicate those emotions to other people. Create some environment in which you can be completely honest to others. The first step is describing the facts, what has happened. Without judging anyone. What do you see? The second step is, explain how that made you feel. The third step is to express an alternative way things could be done. Some problems can't be solved. In case those problems aren't a big deal, you can let them be. In case they truly can't be solved and are a big deal, remove that person from your life.

Stand up straight with your shoulders back. - Jordan Peterson

Noone is allowed to fuck with you. People naturally start to push boundaries, the same way children do. When someone is treating you badly, be honest and tell them what is bothering you. Refuse to be pushed around. Ask them why are they doing the thing they are doing. Noone is allowed to treat you like you're a loser. Piling up resentment will push you to the dark side. Your dark side is a serious matter. When someone is doing something you don't like, tell them. Tell the truth and let the chips fall where they may. Dare to be dangerous, in a controlled way. So that you don't become dangerous in an uncontrolled way.

*The death-grip with which one holds on to principles is a source of
unhappiness and anger. - Brad Blanton*

Anger is the result of incorrect predictions. If you knew this was coming all along, you would not be angry. You think that things *should* be this way or that way. These hypotheses are often wrong. Question what you are saying to yourself. You think it's not fair. You think the way things are is not justice. You think things should be different. Well, they shouldn't. The universe is as it is. It's your picture of the universe which is wrong. Your expectations were wrong. If you were omniscient you would never get angry. The universe is not here for *you*. The universe doesn't think in terms of who *deserves* or does not *deserve* anything. Once you have thought about these things, if that does not make you less angry, be angry if you wish so.

You must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star. - Friedrich Nietzsche.

Remember what you value. Truth. Beauty. Take a cosmic perspective. Let your principles and ideals be at the forefront of your mind. You need something you care more about than other people. In that way, you can truly be independent and not care about the opinions of others. What is constantly tugging at you? It is not actually a matter of what is important, or what is productive. It's a question of do you wish to spend time like that. You have a choice what to think about. What you pay attention to. There are two fundamental ways of being: flow and discomfort. What's obstructing your flow my friend? There are two transitions, out of flow and into flow. Out of flow transition cannot be controlled since when you are in flow you are lost in it. Into flow transition can be helped by paying attention to what you are thinking about and then deciding what to do about the thought. You may decide to think about it later. No need to write it down, if it's important enough it will reappear. Or you may decide that it's not worth thinking about at all. What do you want to pay attention to? Once you know that, look at the thing, focus on the details. Focus on your breath, without controlling it. Focus on the feeling of touch. Flow towards your ideals.

Ordinary men hate solitude. But the Master makes use of it, embracing his aloneness, realizing he is one with the whole universe. - Lao Tzu

Isolation is a gift. We are all alone. Born alone. Die alone. We shall all someday look back on our lives and see that, in spite of our company, we were alone the whole way. Not lonely, but essentially, and finally, alone. This is what makes your self-respect so important. There is no way you can respect yourself if you must look in the hearts and minds of others for your happiness. The most profound experiences can only be had alone. The Tao which can be named is not the eternal Tao. In solitude, the nameless can be found. We seek beauty and truth, which can't be fulfilled by others. Trying to do so results in a godlike idealization of the partner and dependence on them for our self-worth. Nobody is going to save you. Only alone you can find yourself. Solitude is for the mind as food is for the body.

If you're not doing what you want, if you're not earning, you're not learning, what the fuck are you doing? Don't spend time making other people happy, other people being happy is their problem, it's not your problem. - Naval Ravikant.

You're doing it for yourself. Remember that you're not doing it for others. You are personally responsible for your continued existence. You need to orient yourself. You need to find a path for yourself. You seek knowledge for yourself. The man is an end into himself. Live for your own sake. Remember that the greatest artists created art for themselves, not for others. Even if you are helping others, you are doing it because *you* wish to, not because you're sacrificing yourself for others. The path of sacrifice leads to madness. To really experience your life, the focus must be on you as the center of the perceived universe. Any time that you are doing something that you think is not for you, examine both your thinking and your actions. If it isn't for you, you're doing it wrong. Every time you make a decision, think of yourself first. Only after that think of others. Ask for what you want. There are only two risks attached. The first is that asking will let both you and others know who and where you are. That is necessary for learning your real identity. The second risk in asking for what you want is that you might get it.

What does not kill me makes me stronger - Friedrich Nietzsche

Take small amounts of damage, slowly. Sometimes, take a cold shower. Sometimes, lift weights. Take controlled small amounts of damage and pain. The world reveals itself to those who travel on foot. Read. Test your limits. Exposing yourself to small amounts of displeasure builds tolerance for the larger amounts. Go gradually. Slowly move out of your comfort zone. You will see that you are capable. You can handle failure. Send your ships out into uncharted seas!

Unlimited possibilities are not suited to man; if they existed, his life would only dissolve in the boundless. - The I Ching or Book of Changes, Hexagram 60.

Obtain an organizing idea. An ultimate ideal to play towards. It should never be achievable. It should be an infinite game. It should not depend on others, only on yourself. It should be creative. It should be private. An organizing idea is determinate optimism. Everything else may be uncertain. An organizing idea is logic, everything else is probability. In order to play, you need to create time and space for play. Therefore, limits are needed. The space you carve out for play will be attacked. To gain money, power, status, or any other goal, play must be sacrificed. The goal is always in the future, and life is always here, in this moment. Your creations don't need the approval of others. The limits of that space need to be defended. This choice needs to be made each day anew. Resist addiction. Obtain flow. Never forget that it's a game. An infinite game, played for fun.

Because it's there. - George Mallory

Magic and dust. A flash of lightning in the dark! You can be grateful you witnessed magic. Set up the conditions in which magic can be produced. In isolation and silence, wait and the muse shall deliver. Art is the only way to reach truly great states of mind. Either by appreciating art or by creating it. The art that we *shall* make will have God as its intended audience, and all other beholders will be merely incidental. This is how it must be, and how it always has been, with regard to great and poignant art. The production of art began with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult. The sheer existence of such objects was always more important than their display. The elk portrayed by the man of the Stone Age on the walls of his cave was an instrument of magic. It was meant for the spirits. Certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals are invisible to the spectator on ground level. These objects are aimed at Heaven. Yet at the same time, nothing is special. The source of magic, and the experience itself, is just dust.

Christopher: *You ever feel like nothing good was ever gonna happen to you?*

Paulie: *Yeah, and nothing did. So what?*

Rivers and oceans can be the kings of a hundred valleys. Because they stay low. While alive, the body is soft and pliant. When dead, it is hard and rigid. All living things, grass and trees, while alive, are soft and supple; when dead, become dry and brittle. Thus that which is hard and stiff is the follower of death. That which is soft and yielding is the follower of life. Therefore, an inflexible army will not win. A strong tree will be cut down. The arrogant, competitive, ruthless, judgemental, vengeful, eager to prove themselves... They occupy a lowly position; while the soft and pliant occupy a higher place.

I want you to remember that no bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor, dumb bastard die for his country. - George S. Patton, movie Patton

Keep your identity small. We have a capacity to identify strongly with a particular task or mission. We invest so much of ourselves into an effort that we are unable to separate ourselves from it. The failure of the effort becomes identical, in our mind, with our own terminal loss of identity. Cutting your losses becomes cutting your own throat. We become unable to separate losing from being wrong, being wrong from social death, and social death from actual death. If you're not person winning this hill, what are you? Well, you are a not dead yet person, which is everything, even if it seems like nothing in the moment. Notice when you're hitting diminishing returns. Know your limits and make sure you never cross the thin red line that separates indefinite survivability from an irretrievable spiral of self-destruction.

This is water. - David Foster Wallace

Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for choosing some spiritual thing to worship is that anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money, then you will never feel you have enough. Worship your body and beauty and you will always feel ugly. On one level, we all know this stuff already. The trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness. Worship power, you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. But the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they're evil or sinful, it's that they're unconscious. They are default settings. And the so-called real world will not discourage you from operating on your default settings, because the so-called real world of men and money and power hums merrily along in a pool of fear and anger and frustration and craving and worship of self. The really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able to choose what to think about. The alternative is unconsciousness, the default setting, the rat race, the constant gnawing sense of having had, and lost, some infinite thing.

Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like. - Lao Tzu

You are a process of change. Awareness of the immediate moment-to-moment passing of the world, the ever-changing existence, the fragility of our own being, and the relative unimportance of the personality we think we are, is a terrifying experience. It feels like dying. Instead of avoiding the trauma of the realization, go into it. How much of you has already died. There were whole worlds, of colors, sounds and scents, unique elaborate scenes and emotions, some real, some only in your mind's eye... They could not even be described by words, and now they're gone, forever. Your cells renew themselves periodically, old concepts are replaced by new and your new being reflects life's experience. Flow with the changes. Be that new being. You don't have to make the person-you-used-to-be happy. Adapt. Be like water. The only rule to life is that there are no rules. Invent yourself and reinvent yourself. Life is a continuing process of change. Resistance to change and personal growth is pain. Flow with the changes that are happening to you and enjoy the unfolding of your own life.