

Advisories from the Meshold

A short primer by a forge-worker of the occult

Introduction

This guide is written as a general advisory for all occultists, witches, psions, mages, warlocks, and all those who would pursue the unseen arts and sciences and the worlds beyond.

The so-called rules in this document **will** have exceptions but are intended to be broadly structured for wide applicability. It is my hope in writing these ideals down that people may have (if not an *easier* time) at least a few good habits for when things get rough.

This is not “my way or the highway”.

This is all written in the hopes that those that read it can have, freely and openly, guidance that I wish I would have had starting out - and reinforced upon me several times in the middle.

If you find yourself with a problem that is an exception or unforeseen by an advisory, simply utter the sacred incantation, **“Ah, shit!”** and remember that case for next time.

Interval 01: Ground Rules for all disciplines

All of the rules in this section can be derived from a few basic precepts.

If you stop reading here, simply remember: Take care of your body, take care of your Self.

- 1) At all times, **seek to prevent malaise and injury to yourself**. Therefore:
 - a) Drink your water, eat your food, take your medicine, and get your sleep.
 - b) Follow safety standards whenever possible.
 - c) Don't act in ways that are risky with no commensurate benefit. Weigh the risks versus the benefits, a large risk for small benefits is still usually a bad idea, even if it's not 'zero' benefit.
 - d) Keep yourself clean and scrubbed, on the physical plane and otherwise.
- 2) At all times, seek to **balance your Self**. Therefore:
 - a) Maintain a balance between The Work and your Life;
 - b) Maintain a balance between your Job and The Work; (*Capitalism willing...*)
 - c) Maintain a balance between your Life and your Job. (*As above...*)
- 3) At all times, **seek to cultivate a stable and rested mind**. Therefore:
 - a) Learn how you tend to flee from stress, and watch out for that; Fleeing from stress is not *fixing* or *treating* stress. Speaking of:
 - b) Learn how you can best treat your stress, and do it often. The more you know about how best to reduce your own stress and properly release it, the better.
 - c) At all times, practice the use of your Will and know yourself.
- 4) Learn to move with the times, and put yourself to good use. Therefore:
 - a) In times of hardship and pain, be kind to yourself and prompt with medicine.
 - b) In times of excess and happiness, be generous with others and lend a hand.
 - c) In times of quiet and boredom, sharpen your skills and learn new ones;
 - d) In times of stress and exhaustion, **lean on your friends and your fellows**.

These four basic ideals account for many, many pitfalls in occultists. Fail to take care of your body and it will break down when you can ill afford it; Fail to keep your mind and self healthy and they will crumble beneath the weight of the Work, eventually. Crumbling does not always look like gibbering or shakes; It appears as obsession, as despair, as dangerous levels of apathy, or even as a willingness to compromise one's ideals. The Work can begin to consume your life, even with things that feel good or help you; Keep it at bay nonetheless, and maintain your interests and friends outside of your Work, that when it turns sour or difficult, you can get away from it and do something else.

I have seen all manner of arguments for and against kindness: In the end, even if you are a ruthless sort it's simply good to have allies or people who owe you things. If you are kind and generous already, then it's not much of a change for you. Regardless of your stance, you should avoid giving too much of yourself - no water may be poured from an empty pitcher.

Interval 02: Basics

- 1) You *probably* do not want as much excitement as you think you do. Excitement is full of pain and misery. You're not a kid anymore, don't act like one. Adventures are stressful, combat is dangerous, and *people die*. That leads us to the rest of these advisories:
- 2) At all times, one should seek to move with care. Therefore:
 - a) Fools rush in. Study the situation and the possible consequences.
 - b) Sleep on big decisions and speak to your colleagues about them.
 - c) Act with a cool head and a heart not focused on vengeance.
- 3) Escalation is the enemy of your peace and quiet. Therefore:
 - a) Start with a gentle hand. You can go up in stakes or violence, but rarely down.
 - b) Nip problems in the bud. There's a lot of sayings about prevention and cure, and it's for a very good reason - those sayings are *true*.

This is not only when interacting with others; For instance, the use of bodily fluids where a more simple energetic attunement to one's tools would work well is not only overkill, but increases the potential attack surface in a way not easy to break. Leaving a large amount of energy in a crystal when you have no practice grabbing it out again seems like a good investment seed, but can just screw you over later if you can't protect it properly.

- 4) Showboating is for the insecure and the arrogant. You should avoid being either, so:
 - a) Act in subtle ways when possible, keeping your energy for a rainy day.
 - b) When not possible, act using precise and overwhelming force with no fanfare.
 - c) Publicly understate your accomplishments to avoid the appearance of arrogance.
- 5) Your word is your bond, and expectations are everything. Therefore:
 - a) Promise little or nothing. "I'll see what I can do" is a great phrase.
 - b) Deliver everything you can.
 - c) Lie as little as possible. It dilutes your credibility and trustworthiness, not to mention the magical power-potential of your words.
- 6) Competence is King.
 - a) Using a tool or technique badly or stupidly can be worse than not using it at all.
 - b) Maintain a grounded awareness of what you can and can't do, and how to stretch yourself without breaking entirely. You'll grow back stronger if you stretch, but you might not grow back at all if you break yourself recklessly.

These careful observations will serve to keep you well in most situations. However, do not mistake *care* for inaction: **The best equipment, skills, techniques and thoughts in the world are doing more harm than good if they engender useless passivity and anxious inaction.**

Lastly, remember that bit about saving it for a rainy day? When the chips are down, when the time comes, when every mote of your body sings that the time is right, *pull out all of the stops and use your trump cards*. That last edible, your biggest boom, it's worthless if you don't **use** it.

Interval 03: Research and Development

*This section is broken up into three subsections. Development is sorted on three major fronts:
Development of the self, of the network, and of techniques.*

Development: Your Self

Development of the self is a whole industry of books, an enormous life's work of written words, so I won't presume to give you things for every occasion. I **will** presume to give you a few words of advice on the subject.

- 1) Illusions come from many places. Dispel illusions of the self to improve yourself:
 - a) An illusion that flatters you should be destroyed - your behavior should account for your flaws and seek to heal or work around them, not pretend they don't exist.
 - b) An illusion that shatters you should be destroyed - your behavior should account for your strengths and your worth accurately. Your will draws strength from within.
- 2) Sometimes, mind over matter is the A+ approach. Mental illnesses are **not those times**.
- 3) Don't throw away memories. Your old shitty writing, your notes on simple things from years ago - these are valuable snapshots of your mental development. Journals are valuable, photos preserve the past, chat logs are a peek into your old brain. There is immense worth in the perspective these reminders can grant.

Development: Your Network

In the course of your work and your investigations into the world, it would unambiguously be a mistake to not have any friends or colleagues. You hardly need to move in lock-step with others, but working alone is often a quick way towards a dead end, or losing your grip. So:

- 1) Cultivate a small group of colleagues upon whom you can **thoroughly** rely, and who may in turn rely on you. You can help each other grow in many ways, magic and otherwise.
- 2) Carefully observe your fellows for stress, especially if they come into contact with traumatic or hazardous things, and seek to help them process and heal from them.
- 3) Don't keep secrets among your coterie if you can help it. You need to *trust* each other!

If you have the good fortune of having a trustworthy, reliable group, you will quickly discover the meaning of the term "force multiplier" - having such a bond makes all of you far more resilient, powerful, and inventive than each of you separately, even before you start helping each other grow. But it only works if you put the work in. Tend to each other's wounds and weaknesses.

Watch out for each other. Confide in each other. Share happiness with one another.

When the chips are down, you'll pull through.

Development of Tech(-niques and -nology alike)

In the course of your interactions and studies you are bound to figure out new ways to do interesting things. Spell design, ritual implementations and entirely new methods of interacting with the universe, intuitively or by rote, are part and parcel of the world's normal instruction of a practitioner. Like all research, you will be well-served by values that have been upheld by magisters, alchemists, observers, and scientists for many years.

- 1) Journal **everything**. I am not the only person who will tell you this, and there's a reason this advice is ubiquitous. If you are cooperating with others, write quick notes on what happened in a given night of Work - memories fade fast.
- 2) The scientific method exists and can be applied to any form of research. Therefore:
 - a) Attempt to gather as much data as possible when researching phenomena, techniques, entities, and the like.
 - b) Examine your base assumptions -- repeatedly! -- while researching.
 - c) Special attention should be given to cultivate your ability to perceive the world immaterial - and thus, to gather data in the first place.
- 3) It is likely that time and time again your assumptions and previous conclusions will be tested. New things do not automatically overturn old things, and old things are not automatically better. Remember advisory 2-2 - *at all times, seek to move with care*.

Remember that magic involves the manipulation and exploitation of things like synchronicities and placebo effects, especially on the physical plane. You will sometimes need to operate in a manner one might deem paradoxically unscientific. Sometimes all the information you get is a negative-outline of the truth. Obviously you should always aim for more data and more proof, but sometimes things just *taste* true and that's the best you get. Speaking of "unscientific" things and their place in the Work, there are some further advisories on getting ideas or data:

- 1) Dreams are like stories. They can sound and look very nice without being true, and are easily used to manipulate people. Treat even the sweetest honey with skepticism. On the other hand, they can be **very** true and give you entirely new information to test out.
- 2) Drugs are great for ideas and initial passes but as soon as they're involved, seek external confirmations from your fellows. You can't afford to let a good trip convince you of a complete falsehood, but they can give you **extremely valuable** shifts in perspective.
- 3) Interviewing outsiders and spirits requires a lot of practice. You want to hear the truth, not what you want to hear -- work on this skill early and often!

Researching techniques is, like everything else in this interval, an impossibly broad subject to cover in two pages, but it's my hope that some of these tips will help you along in the breathtakingly confusing mess that is Life and the Work.

Interval 04: Outsiders

- 1) Don't accept deals from strangers, and only rarely from acquaintances.

Even if (and wow, huge if) you don't run into something that wishes you deliberate harm, even as a "trick" to them rather than something lethal, you're unlikely to fully grasp every side effect.

- a) The "algorithmic cost" of such a deal in your decision making should rise geometrically or even logarithmically if the deal is time-limited. The less time you are being given to think, the more you should assume that any given deal is another tricky scam. (The IRS takes iTunes cards in payment, now?)
 - b) Even if they're truly on your side, they may fail to communicate the responsibilities or limitations that such a thing may come with, or you may assume a meaning of a word that does not match up to their intent.
- 2) Be polite, but be armed. It never pays to be defenseless and only very rarely pays to be a rude bastard, and if you're *going* to be a rude bastard, someone will inevitably call you on it by force.
 - 3) In direct contrast with Rule #01, should you eventually be fortunate enough to grow close with an entity and trust them, learn all that you can from their teachings. Through this carefully gained wisdom you can grow your own. Store-bought is inferior and tends to expire at inopportune moments - Murphy's law applies.

A clear pattern should be emerging: Always careful, frequently suspicious, but never so far under that you lose the sense of wonder and access to the wonderful friendships that this strange and breathtaking way of life can bring you. Much like in other sections, it is widely recommended to involve any colleagues you may have in vetting and getting eyes on entities you may be working with: It is exponentially harder to fool several careful investigators that a malicious entity would have no time to slowly build up an illusion for. Conversely, if they seem utterly genuine, now your colleagues already have an energy reference for that entity, should they desire to seek it out later for whatever reason, good or bad.

It may be to your advantage when interacting with entities and practitioners to quietly collect a **Trace library**, or repository of various things and their energetic signatures. Traces are (often) unique, but may degrade over time.

Cultivation of a Trace library will give you more experience in working with energistic tracking and sleuthing in general, aid you in more quickly identifying genuine articles from imposters, and help with identifying unknown or noncommunicative entities in terms of categorization. However, one must be careful to *noninvasively* collect such "signatures", lest you attract significant ire - how would you like it if someone came along and took a prick of your blood while shaking your hand?

Interval 05: Offense and Defense

- 1) Know how strong you are. Judge how strong your enemy is. Avoid fair fights and fights you might lose. Take fights you know you can win, and win them before the other party knows that the fight has started whenever possible. Honor is for the dead.
- 2) It's good to watch your back. It's better to have others to help. Having friends to help peel something off of your back is invaluable in all situations.
- 3) Offense and Defense are **perpetual** arms races. Therefore, given time:
 - a) Your wards can be breached. Yes, even those ones.
 - b) Your weapons aren't good enough. Yes, even that one.
- 4) Never tank if you can dodge; Never dodge if you can avoid being fired upon.
 - a) Accordingly, if you know a conflict **must** happen, it is best to fire the first shot, so you never have to dodge at all.
- 5) Your means of combat should be tested by your colleagues before it is necessary.
- 6) A variety of options is necessary to deal with a variety of threats, but ensure you have, at minimum the following types of options and situations covered:
 - That which tends to dodge and flip plentifully,
 - That which armors itself to become a "tank",
 - That which leeches energy from the very weapons that attack it,
 - That which slimily morphs around weapons instead of being impacted.

These four are far from the only options, but a layman might explain ideal counter-weapons to these four as "A lot of fast bullets", "a missile", "poison", and "fire". Then again, one might also say "fire", "more fire", "hotter fire", "even more fire". Every person has a framework with which they interact with all things. Some people like guns, some people like spells.

- 7) Take care that your means of attacking others and defending yourself minimizes inertia; It's hardly viable if your wards require a full 2 minutes to boot up and your enemy is coming in five seconds, nor is a long-range weapon with long charge time particularly viable against those who tend to run up and bite you in your *skillful* ass.
- 8) If you have gear, it must be maintained. All wards should be serviced periodically, all weapons should be inspected, sharpened, cleaned, just as their physical counterparts would be. This attention to upkeep will build discipline as well as ensuring nothing breaks at a critical time later when you can least afford it.
- 9) When in doubt, keep it simple. Knives never jam, and a twenty-syllable incantation is a terrible thing to fumble in the heat of the moment.

This was one of the hardest sections to write because to engage in attack or defense on planes other than the physical is to necessarily realize that there's almost no limit to the various means of attack and defense employed both by other practitioners and by denizens of other planes.

Above all, remain adaptable and attentive, and with conviction and luck you'll go a long way.

Interval 06: Conclusion

Well, that was quite a trip. So much doom and gloom, so many watchful things and observations of work! But don't let it get you down. There's plenty of good things out there, plenty of wonder to offset the nightmares. Balance is a key watchword in every interval, and if you take nothing else away from this entire document, I would rather it be "try to stay balanced and healthy".

If you're looking for the short-short list of rules, though, here it is, in all of its RPG-speak glory: Level your stats and skills early, learn the ways of the enemy so you can counter them better, and never stop looking for interesting new friends and party members.

That's it. That's all I've got for you.

Get out there and do the Work.

- Sincerely, 761

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