

## QUOTES

The time to make up your mind about people is never.

My ear is still listening for everything that is going on beneath the surface.

Mike Nichols

An error doesn't become a mistake until you refuse to correct it.

Unknown

What I do know is that we've all got our hidden currents, no matter how wide and friendly the river seems. Start casting deep enough and who knows what you'll dredge up.

Charles De Lint  
*Someplace To Be Flying*

Although neither God nor moral absolutes can be logically proved, we must live as though they could be.

David S. Reynolds,  
describing a key point in the philosophy of William James  
*New York Times Book Review*  
3/15/98

Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

No man is justified in doing evil on the ground of expediency.

Teddy Roosevelt

Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never – in nothing great or small, large or petty – never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.

Winston Churchill

You have to listen very carefully to hear more than you are hearing.

Jerry Goodman

Only through focus can you do world class things, no matter how capable you are.

Bill Gates

Happiness is not a function of your circumstances; it's a function of your outlook on life.

Sidney Rittenberg

Do you know, Afanasiy Stepanovich, what your mistake is? You believe that the world rests on some rules, that it contains meaning and order. And I have long understood: life is nothing more than chaos. It has no order at all, and no rules. Yes, I do have rules. But those are my own rules, which I made for myself, and not for the world. So let the world be on its own, and I will be on my own. To the extent that I can. Personal rules, Afanasiy Stepanovich, are not a desire to rearrange the universe, but an attempt to organize, the best one can, the space closest to you. Not beyond that.

Boris Akunin (Grigory Chkhartishvili)  
*The Winter Queen*

The real leader serves truth, not people.

J.B. Yeats

Until we can speak genuinely, we should remain silent.

Eva Hoffman  
*A Meditation on the Aftermath of the Holocaust*

One should never ascribe to malice that which equally well could be ascribed to stupidity.

Anonymous

Louis Vincenti's rule: "Tell the truth and you won't have to remember your lies."

Success means being very patient, but aggressive when it's time.

Thinking success comes from four things: curiosity, concentration, perseverance, and self-criticism. Any year that passes in which you don't destroy one of your best loved ideas is a wasted year.

Charles T. Munger  
2004 Wesco Annual meeting

The first principle is that you must not fool yourself – and you are the easiest person to fool.

Richard Feynman

There are no mistakes, just lessons.

Hindu saying

Live as if you were to die tomorrow; learn as if you were to live forever.

Mahatma Gandhi

We either learn by wisdom and knowledge or suffering and woe. And we continue to suffer until we learn.

James Allen

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not, nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not, unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not, the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

Calvin Coolidge

An idea is like a fixed gun in a fortress, ready to fire and hit error in one straight direction; but a principle is like a fixed gun mounted on a revolving base, capable of firing at error in all possible directions.

John Lukacs

Attributed to Metternich in *Churchill*

The observation of the numerous misfortunes that attend all conditions forbids us to grow insolent upon our present enjoyment, or admire a man's happiness, that may yet in the course of time suffer change. For the uncertain future has yet to come, with all variety of future; and him only to whom the gods have guaranteed happiness until the end we may call happy.

[short version] No man's life should be accounted a happy one until it is over.

Solon

If you would persuade, appeal to interest, and not to reason.

Benjamin Franklin  
via Charlie Munger

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not more simple.

Albert Einstein

If a thing can't go on forever, it will stop.

Herb Stein

You can never make an explanation, which can be made in a more fundamental way, in any other way than the most fundamental way.

Charles T. Munger

Our main business is not to see what lies dimly in the distance but to do what lies clearly at hand.

Thomas Carlyle

If an undertaking was easy, someone else would have already done it.

If you follow in another's footsteps, you miss the problems really worth solving.

Excellence is born of preparation, dedication, focus, and tenacity; compromise on any of these and you become average.

Every so often, life presents a great moment of decision, an intersection at which a man must decide to stop or go; a person lives with these decisions forever.

Examine everything; not all is as it seems or as people tell you.

It is easiest to live with a decision if it is based on an earnest sense of right and wrong.

The guy who gets killed is often the guy who gets nervous. The guy who doesn't care anymore, who has said, "I'm already dead – the fact that I live or die is irrelevant and the only thing that matters is the accounting I give of myself," is the most formidable force in the world.

The worst possible decision is to give up.

John Chatterton  
Vietnam medic and ace diver  
from *Shadow Divers*

The art of being wise is knowing what to overlook

Henry James

... there is no definable necessity for a physical force that can be observed by sense organs. By eyes. If there is proof anywhere of an involved God, it is the existence of light.

We exist for the sole purpose of making one another happy.

Every advance, every benefit, is the gift of an individual mind. No group, no crowd, no city has ever contributed anything to anyone. Whatever you have to say, make it brief.

Good advice is always irritating.

Defend your opinion only if it can be shown to be true, not because it is your opinion.

Integrity means doing the right thing even when no one is looking.

Think for yourself.

Show me the evidence.”

Jack McDevitt, *Omega*  
(from the Book of Goompahs)

Get good or get out.

Peter Drucker

Re: strategy: Pick a general direction and implement like hell.

Jack Welch

What can be left to later, usually is -- and then, alas, it's too late.

friend

Paul Volcker, quoting a

Half the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. They don't mean to do harm – but harm does not interest them. Or they do not see it, or they justify it because they are absorbed in the endless effort to think well of themselves.

T. S. Eliot

Truth springs from arguments among friends.

David Hume

Successful business is about managing the moments of truth.

Bob Batt, EVP of NFM

The chains of habit are too light to be felt until they're too heavy to be broken.

Bertrand Russell

A thing long expected takes the form of the unexpected when at last it comes.

Mark Twain

The world is a cycle; you just don't know the amplitude and frequency.

Carol Bartz

The unexpected always comes at the most awkward times.

Larry Niven

It is hatred that unites people, while love is always individual.

G.K. Chesterton

Find out what you are best at and keep pounding away at it.

Simon Marks

Necessity never made a good bargain.

Benjamin Franklin

There are no luggage racks on a hearse.

The Eagles

Forgetting our objectives is the most frequent act of stupidity.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The world is ruled by letting things take their course. It is not ruled by interfering.

Lao Tsu in *Tao Te Ching*

Never confuse a single defeat with a final defeat.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Reality is much more messy than even our most finely crafted intellectual constructs. Listen to the man with experience over the man who, finding himself facile with words and concepts, mistakes his map for the territory.

Sam Mitchell, contemplating  
the Iraq fiasco

Ask, "Who says so and how does he know?"

Anonymous

Good luck seldom comes in pairs, and bad luck never walks alone.  
There is no unending banquet under the sun.

Chinese proverbs

Man is perishable. That may be; but let us perish resisting, and, if nothingness is what awaits us, let us not act in such a way that it would be a just fate.

Etienne Pivert deSenancour

Aspirations for importance or significance are the illusions of the ignorant. All our hopes are minor, except to us but some things matter because we choose to make them matter. What might make a difference to us, I think, is whether in our tiny roles, in our brief time, we inhabit life gently and add more beauty than ugliness.

James March

Data always beat theories.

Matthew Simmons

"We do not inherit the world from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Navajo proverb

The key to finding a happy balance in modern life is simplicity.

Sogyal Rinpoche

Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away.

Philip K. Dick

Circumstance does not make the man; it reveals him to himself.

James Allen

A gentleman is one who makes sparing use of advantage.

Robert E. Lee

You define yourself by the decisions you make every day.

Brad Englander

Without execution, vision is just another word for hallucination.

Mark Hurd, CEO of Hewlett Packard

If you are alone, you are entirely your own man.

Leonardo Da Vinci

It is amazing what you can get done, if you don't care who gets the credit.

Paraphrase of a remark by Ronald Reagan

Chance favors the prepared mind.

Louis Pasteur

We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey

Kenji Miyazawa

In all things it is better to hope than to despair.

Goethe

Learn from the mistakes of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

Eleanor Roosevelt

For the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived, and dishonest – but the myth – persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic.... We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

John F. Kennedy

The generator of reality is not observable.

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

Beware the confusion between correctness and intelligibility.

If an event is important enough, it will find its way to my ears.

The only article Lady Fortuna has no control over is your behavior.

History doesn't crawl, it jumps.

Events are not important in themselves; it is how they affect you that matters.

The more remote the event, the less we know about its probability.

There is not enough cognitive energy in us to doubt everything –so let us worry about Black Swans, those that can hurt us.

Our capacity for knowledge is vastly inferior to our capacity for doing things – our ability to tinker, play, discover by accident.

Life is the cumulative effect of a handful of significant shocks.

Speak only when the words outperform silence.

Nassim Taleb

The thoughts of others  
Were light and fleeting,  
Of lovers' meeting  
Or luck or fame.  
Mine were of trouble,  
And mine were steady,



So I was ready  
When trouble came.

A.E. Housman

The further backward you look, the further forward you can see.

Winston Churchill

There is no opinion, however absurd, which men will not readily embrace as soon as they can be brought to the conviction that it is generally adopted.

Schopenhauer

Whatever anybody does or says, assume positive intent. When you assume negative, you're angry.

Indra Nooyi, CEO, Pepsi

Doing the wrong thing is not worth the loss of one night's good sleep.

Charles E. Murphy

Don't spend your time on things you can't control. Instead, spend your time thinking about what you can.

Benjamin Selekman

This above all: To thine own self be true.

Polonius to Laertes in *Hamlet*

There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact."

Mark Twain *Life on the Mississippi*

All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

Edmund Burke

The future is already here; it is just not widely distributed yet.

William Gibson

Only very weakly coupled systems are stable.

a concept from systems theory

Above all, accept randomness. Accept that the world is opaque, majestically unknown and unknowable. From its depths emerge the black swans that can destroy us or make us free. Right now they're killing us, so remember to shave. But we can tinker our way out of it. It's what we do best. Listen to Taleb, an ancient figure, one of the great

Mediterranean minds, when he says: “You find peace by coming to terms with what you don’t know.” Oh, and watch those carbs

### **Taleb's top life tips**

- 1 Skepticism is effortful and costly. It is better to be skeptical about matters of large consequences, and be imperfect, foolish and human in the small and the aesthetic.
- 2 Go to parties. You can’t even start to know what you may find on the envelope of serendipity. If you suffer from agoraphobia, send colleagues.
- 3 It’s not a good idea to take a forecast from someone wearing a tie. If possible, tease people who take themselves and their knowledge too seriously.
- 4 Wear your best for your execution and stand dignified. Your last recourse against randomness is how you act — if you can’t control outcomes, you can control the elegance of your behaviour. You will always have the last word.
- 5 Don’t disturb complicated systems that have been around for a very long time. We don’t understand their logic. Don’t pollute the planet. Leave it the way we found it, regardless of scientific ‘evidence’.
- 6 Learn to fail with pride — and do so fast and cleanly. Maximise trial and error — by mastering the error part.
- 7 Avoid losers. If you hear someone use the words ‘impossible’, ‘never’, ‘too difficult’ too often, drop him or her from your social network. Never take ‘no’ for an answer (conversely, take most ‘yeses’ as ‘most probably’).
- 8 Don’t read newspapers for the news (just for the gossip and, of course, profiles of authors). The best filter to know if the news matters is if you hear it in cafes, restaurants... or (again) parties.
- 9 Hard work will get you a professorship or a BMW. You need both work and luck for a Booker, a Nobel or a private jet.
- 10 Answer e-mails from junior people before more senior ones. Junior people have further to go and tend to remember who slighted them.

Nassim Taleb

Rather than mere experience or even raw talent, it is dedicated slogging, generally solitary exertion – repeatedly practicing the most difficult tasks – that leads to first rate performance.

Anders Ericsson

*Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance 2006*

The true journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having fresh eyes.

Marcel Proust

Nothing is to be clung to as I, me, or mine.

The Buddha

You never know when death is coming. That's why you should never be in fear of it.

Horatio Caine, a character in *CSI Miami*

Life is what it is. You have to accept that because there is no other choice.

David Balducci

Life is a series of rooms, and who we get stuck in those rooms with adds up to what our lives are.

People get what they get, not what they deserve.

Gregory House, a character in *House*

During this political season, it is good to be reminded of these words -  
'The public cannot be too curious concerning the characters of public men.'

Samuel Adams

You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot lift the wage earner up by pulling the wage payer down. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred. You cannot build character and courage by taking away men's initiative and independence. You cannot help men permanently by doing for them, what they could and should do for themselves.

Abraham Lincoln

There is always some sonofabitch that doesn't get the message.

JFK

Only that day dawns to which we are awake.

Thoreau

Do you have the patience to wait till your mud settles and the water is clear? Can you remain unmoving till the right action arises by itself?

Lao-Tzu

Acknowledge that what is happening is happening.

The spirit of mindfulness... is just to take each moment as it comes – pleasant or unpleasant, good, bad, or ugly – and then work with that because it is what is present now.

The only way you can do anything of value is to have the effort come out of non-doing and to let go of caring whether it will be of use or not.

Non-doing simply means letting things be and allowing them to unfold in their own way.

Things unfold in their own time.

Think of yourself as an eternal witness, as timeless.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

We can evade reality, but we cannot evade the consequences of evading reality.

Ayn Rand

As the enemy drew nearer Moscow, instead of the Muscovites' view of their situation growing more serious, it became more frivolous, as is always the case with people who see a great danger approaching. At the threat of danger there are always two voices that speak with equal power in the human soul: one quite reasonably tells a man to consider the nature of the danger and the means of averting it; the other still more reasonably, says that it is too depressing and painful to think of the danger, since it is not in man's power to foresee everything and escape from the general march of events, and it is therefore better to disregard what is painful till it comes, and think about what is pleasant.

Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace

We mustn't assume that all problems are solvable in the short period. There are problems that we *cannot* solve or which trying to solve them quickly may do more harm than good.

Friedrich Von Hayek

Speak only if it will improve upon the silence.

Quaker saying

Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.

Aldous Huxley

The greatest shortcoming of the human race is the inability to understand the exponential function.

Albert Allen Bartlett

All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self evident.

Money is a claim on human labor. Debt is a claim on future human labor.

History moves in jumps.

The chief good is in avoiding undesired consequences

Epicurus

Only very weakly coupled systems are stable.

A mind is like a parachute; it won't work if it is not open.

Ian Plimer

One thing I've learned in all these years is, dealing with human beings you never know everything, not even when you know everything there is to know.

Andy Dalziel, a character in *The Price of Butcher's Meat* by Reginald Hill

Few people are capable of expressing with equanimity opinions that differ from the pressures of their social environment. Most people are even incapable of forming such opinions.

Albert Einstein

Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy.

Sir Ernest John Pickstone Benn

The people I distrust most are those who want to improve our lives but only have one course of action.

Frank Herbert

Life is a series of rooms, and who we get stuck in those rooms with adds up to what our lives are.

Gregory House, a character in *House*

Lie to your friends, lie to God, but don't lie to yourself.

Pam Tibbs, a character in James Lee  
Burke's, *Rain Gods*

It's almost been worth this depression to find out how little our big men know.

Will Rogers

All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor.

Have you learned the lessons only of those who admire you, and were tender with you and stood aside for you? Have you not learned the great lessons from those who braced themselves against you, and disputed passage with you?

Walt Whitman

The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule.

H.L. Mencken

Never attribute to malice that which can be attributed to incompetence.

Napoleon

You can avoid reality, but you cannot avoid the consequences of avoiding reality.

Ayn Rand

If something happens, it must have a way of happening.

John Verdon in *Pick a Number*

“If there is any human tragedy, there is only one, and it occurs when we forget who we are and remain silent while a stranger takes up residence inside our skin.”

James Lee Burke in  
*The Glass Rainbow*

There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.

Thornton Wilder in *The Bridge at San Luis Rey*

Reality is as complicated as it is, not as we want it to be.

Marshall Poe

The ultimate result of shielding men from folly is to fill the world with fools.

Herbert Spencer

Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway.

John Wayne

Watch your thoughts for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become your character<sup>4</sup>. And watch your character, for it becomes your destiny. What we think we become.

Margaret Thatcher

There is nothing so terrible as activity without insight.

Goethe

In individuals, insanity is rare; but in groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule.

Nietzsche

Government is a disease masquerading as its own cure.

If men are good, you don't need government. If men are evil or ambivalent, you dare not have one.

Robert LeFevre

Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being.

Goethe

You can avoid reality, but you can't avoid the consequences of avoiding reality.

Ayn Rand

“At least once every human should have to run for his life, to teach him that milk does not come from supermarkets, that safety does not come from policemen, that ‘news’ is not something that happens to other people. He might learn how his ancestors lived and that he himself is no different—in the crunch his life depends on his agility, alertness, and personal resourcefulness.” - [Robert Heinlein](#)

the best early warning signs of instability are found not in historical data but in underlying structural properties.

For countries, fragility has five principal sources: a centralized governing system, an undiversified economy, excessive debt and leverage, a lack of political variability, and no history of surviving past shocks.

Nassim Taleb

Rather than mere experience or even raw talent, it is dedicated slogging, generally solitary execution – repeatedly practicing the most difficult tasks – that leads to first rate performance.

Anders Ericsson

*Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*

... no matter how much you loved someone, there are things about him [her] you will never know. The uncrossable space between two people, painful in life, widens unbearably [in death].

The Kellermans in *Crime Scene*

Civilization is the process of substituting liberty for power.

Jakub Bozydar Wisniewski



### A Celtic Blessing

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you. Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you. And the peace and blessing of the living God, who is Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, be with you forever. Amen

Iona Community

Stay in your three foot world. Focus on what you can control.

Mark Owen, Navy SEAL

People are what they do, not what they think, not what they say. But I think we all have moments when we realize we never quite know a person in his or her totality.

James Lee Burke in *Robicheaux*

Politics is an uninteresting form of activity to anyone who has no desire to rule others.

Michael Oakeshott

If you want peace, starve the government.

David Ricardo

You can never cure structural defects. You have to let the system collapse.

Survival is the only metric you can't game.

The only virtue you can't fake is risk taking.

It is dishonorable when you transfer risk to others.

Nassim Taleb

Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.

Immanuel Kant

But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

Until we accept the fact that life itself is founded in mystery, we shall learn nothing.

Henry Miller