

THE BIG IDEAS

Don't Waste Time

Not if you value life.

Knowing Is Not Enough

We must apply.

Will-Power

Is the Supreme Court of the mind.

Letting the Spiritual Rise

Get aligned with it.

Adversity Is Beneficial

It's a powerful teacher.

Stepping Stones

vs. Stumbling blocks.

Dealing With Obstacles

It's all in how you approach them.

Reading Is Mental Food

Eat up!

Aiming at Perfection

Knowing you'll never hit it.

How Can I Be Me?

Super important question

There Is Only Self-Help

And we're all self-made! :)

"Independent inquiry is needed in your search for truth, not dependence on anyone else's view or a mere book."

~ Bruce Lee



Striking Thoughts

Bruce Lee's Wisdom for Daily Living

BY BRUCE LEE · TUTTLE PUBLISHING © 2002 · 256 PAGES

"Self-actualization is the important thing. And my personal message to people is that I hope they will go toward self-actualization rather than self-image actualization. I hope that they will search within themselves for honest self-expression."

~ Bruce Lee from *Striking Thoughts*

Bruce Lee.

The man. The myth. The legend.

.. And, the Philosopher.

In addition to being an iconic martial artist and actor, Bruce Lee was a passionate lover of wisdom. In this great book, *Striking Thoughts*, we get to take a peek at some of his thoughts on various subjects. In fact, to be precise, the book is packed with 825 Big Ideas on 72 different topics. :)

In this Note, we'll have fun exploring a few of my favorites. Hope you dig it.

Let's jump in!

DON'T WASTE TIME

"Time means a lot to me because, you see, I, too, am also a learner and am often lost in the joy of forever developing and simplifying. If you love life don't waste time, for time is what life is made up of."

Do you love life?

Then don't waste time! :)

Reminds me of Benjamin Franklin's mojo: *"Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that's the stuff life is made of."*

And, it's always a good idea to keep Aristotle's wisdom in mind as well: *"We live in deeds, not years; In thoughts not breaths; In feelings, not in figures on a dial. We should count time by heart throbs."*

So, how are YOU wasting time these days? What's the #1 thing you need to STOP doing so you don't fritter any more of your life away in nonsense?

Let's actually take a moment and make this official!

Because I value my life and know that time is the stuff it's made of, I will stop doing this: _____

(For me, it's limiting my Internet time—from constantly checking email + Facebook + Twitter,

it's shocking how much time I can waste mindlessly going back and forth throughout the day!!)

"Concentration is the ROOT of all the higher abilities in man."

~ Bruce Lee

KNOWING IS NOT ENOUGH; WE MUST APPLY

"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."

This is a HUGE theme of all these Notes and Optimal Living 101.

Knowing something is nice, but it means NOTHING if we don't actually apply it to our lives. As we often say, THEORY (or knowing something) is RUDIMENTARY philosophy. PRACTICE (or actually living a truth) is the advanced stuff.

Are you spending all your time in *theory*—simply talking about all the stuff you believe to be true? Or, are you focused on LIVING it?

[Vernon Howard](#) puts it brilliantly in *The Power of Your Supermind* (see Notes): "You see, knowing the words is not the same thing as living the meaning. Suppose I memorize the printed instructions on a first-aid kit. Does that mean I can give first aid? No. The full meaning comes when I admit I know nothing and then try, practice, succeed."

Let's take another moment for reflection.

What's the #1 thing you KNOW would be great for you to do but you just haven't gotten yourself to make an essential part of who you are?

* Insert Jeopardy music *

*"Upon reflection, it's clear to me that, although I *know* this is important and would have huge positive benefits in my life, I haven't yet made this knowledge an essential part of my day-to-day living: _____*

"If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you'll never get it done."

~ Bruce Lee

I hereby commit to rockin' it. Amen."

THE SUPREME COURT OF THE MIND

"The power of will is the supreme court over all other departments of my mind. I will exercise it daily when I need the urge to action for any purpose, and I will form habits designed to bring the power of my will into action at least once daily."

The power of will. As you can imagine, [Bruce Lee](#) held it in VERY high regard.

In fact, the power of his will was the supreme court over all other departments of his mind. :)

Science confirms the power of self-control AND our ability to develop it. Here's how Heidi Grant Halvorson puts it in her great book *Succeed* (see Notes): "If you want more self-control, you can get more. And you get more self-control the same way you get bigger muscles—you've got to give it regular workouts. Recent research has shown that engaging in daily activities such as exercising, keeping track of your finances or what you are eating—or even just remembering to sit up straight every time you think of it—can help you develop your overall self-control capacity. For example, in one study, students who were assigned to (and stuck to) a daily exercise program not only got physically healthier, but they also became more likely to wash dishes instead of leaving them in the sink, and less likely to impulsively spend money."

That's cool.

So, bottom line: It's a good idea to develop your self-control every day. And, as we do that, not only will we see improvements in the specific area in which we're challenging ourselves but in many other aspects of our lives as well!

*"The human goal: to
actualize oneself."*

~ Bruce Lee

LETTING THE SPIRITUAL RISE UP

"Live content with small means; seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion. Be worthy, not respectable, wealthy, not rich; study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly; bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasions, hurry never. In a word, let the *spiritual*, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common."

How beautiful is THAT?! :)

So much we can talk about here.

This line: "*Be worthy, not respectable*" jumps out in particular for me. Reminds me of [Confucius](#)' wisdom from his [Analects](#) (see Notes) where he tells us: "*The Master said, He does not mind not being in office; all he minds about is whether he has qualities that entitle him to office. He does not mind failing to get recognition; he is too busy doing the things that entitle him to recognition.*"

It's easy to spend our time worrying about being recognized and developing our reputation. Not such a good idea. Instead, let's focus our attention on being WORTHY of any potential recognition!!

Here's to studying hard, thinking quietly, talking gently, acting frankly, bearing all cheerfully, doing all bravely, and never hurrying as we let the spiritual force of the Divine within come through us moment to moment to moment. :)

ADVERSITY IS BENEFICIAL

"Prosperity is apt to prevent us from examining our conduct; but adversity leads us to think properly of our state, and so is beneficial to us."

Adversity is an interesting thing.

Although we tend to want to avoid mistakes/failing/hard times at all costs, the fact is we actually NEED adversity to fully self-actualize.

[Robert Emmons](#) puts it this way in [Thanks!](#) (see Notes): "*Not only does the experience of tragedy give us an exceptional opportunity for growth, but some sort of suffering is also necessary for a person to achieve maximal psychological growth. In his study of self-actualizers, the paragons of mental wellness, the famed humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow noted that "the most important learning lessons... were tragedies, deaths, and trauma... which forced change in the life-outlook of the person and consequently in everything that he did."*"

So, although it's never fun to be in the middle of a challenging time, the edge can definitely be softened by remembering that it's these times where we get really clear about who we are, what's most important to us and how we want to live our lives!

P.S. Keep this [Vernon Howard](#) mojo in mind when/if you're feeling stressed by life: "*If your grand purpose in life is to wake up, then whatever happens to you is good, for it can prod you into self-awakening.*"

STEPPING STONES VS. STUMBLING BLOCKS

"Remember my friend that it is not what happens that counts, it is how you react to them. Your mental attitude determines what you make of it, either a stepping stone or a stumbling block."

We've heard this once or twice before, eh? :)

As good ol' Shakespeare tells us: "*There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.*"

*"If every man would help
his neighbor, no man would
be without help."*

~ Bruce Lee

"Real living is living for others."

~ Bruce Lee

We can approach life as a helpless Victim or an empowered Creator—seeing the same event as a stepping stone or as a stumbling block.

As we discuss again and again throughout these Notes, the choice is ALWAYS ours.

ALWAYS! :)

So, let's choose wisely!

Begs the question: Is there anything in your life that's kicking your butt that you may need to reinterpret?! And, is now a good time to do it? :)

DEALING WITH OBSTACLES

"Believe me that in every big thing or achievement there are always obstacles, big or small, and the reaction one shows to such obstacles is what counts, not the obstacle itself. There is no such thing as defeat until you admit so yourself, but not until then!"

Love that.

Reminds me of [Confucius](#)'s wisdom: "As in the case of making a mound, if, before the very last basketful, I stop, then I shall have stopped. As in the case of leveling the ground, if, though tipping only one basketful, I am going forward, then I shall be making progress."

Here's to making progress! :)

READING IS MENTAL FOOD

"Reading, specialized reading, is the mental food."

A mind's gotta eat and the best way to nourish ourselves is to read!! :)

It's pretty much impossible to actualize without reading.

In [Pathways to Bliss](#) (see Notes), [Joseph Campbell](#) puts it this way: "For myself, well, Alan Watts once asked me what spiritual practice I followed. I told him, 'I underline books.' It's all in how you approach it."

While [Twyla Tharp](#) tells us this in [The Creativity Habit](#) (see Notes): "When I'm reading archaeologically, I'm not reading for pleasure. I read the way I scratch for an idea, digging down deep so I can get something out of it and use it in my work. I read transactionally: How can I use this? It's not enough for me to read a book. I have to "own" it. I scribble in the margins. I circle sentences I like and connect them with arrows to other useful sentences. I draw stars and exclamation points on every good page, to the point where the book is almost unreadable. By writing all over the pages, I transform the author's work into my book—and mine alone."

Amen.

Here's to feeding our minds with reading goodness!! :)

AIMING AT PERFECTION

"Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable; however, they who aim at it, and persevere, will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable."

Perfection.

The trick is to aim for it AND to know that actually attaining it is impossible. :)

[John Wooden](#) and [Tal Ben-Shahar](#) articulate this process well.

"But most of all, I like books. I read all types of books—fiction and nonfiction."

~ Bruce Lee

"One must always strive to be better. The sky's the limit."

~ Bruce Lee

First, Wooden. In [Wooden](#) (see Notes), he tells us: "Perfection is what you are striving for, but perfection is an impossibility. However, striving for perfection is not an impossibility. Do the best you can under the conditions that exist. That is what counts."

Got it.

Now, [Tal Ben-Shahar](#). In his GREAT book [The Pursuit of Perfect](#) (see Notes and if you're a perfectionist and haven't read it yet, PLEASE do! :), Tal differentiates between a traditional "perfectionist" and an "optimalist."

The key difference, essentially, is that the optimalist deals with the reality that they'll NEVER be perfect. They see that their ideals are much more like guiding stars than distant shores.

I can personally never get enough of this wisdom, so let's check it out one more time: "Psychologists today differentiate between positive perfectionism, which is adaptive and healthy, and negative perfectionism, which is maladaptive and neurotic. I regard these two types of perfectionism as so dramatically different in both their underlying nature and their ramifications that I prefer to use entirely different terms to refer to them. Throughout this book, I will refer to negative perfectionism simply as perfectionism and to positive perfectionism as optimalism."

Plus: "Perfectionism and optimalism are not distinct ways of being, an either- or choice, but rather they coexist in each person. And while we can move from perfectionism toward optimalism, we never fully leave perfectionism behind and never fully reach optimalism ahead. The optimalism ideal is not a distant shore to be reached but a distant star that guides us and can never be reached. As Carl Rogers pointed out, "The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination."

So, here's to rockin' our optimalism and remembering that the good life is a DIRECTION, not a destination! :)

HOW CAN I BE ME?

"When I look around, I always learn something and that is to *be always yourself*. And to express yourself. Do not go out and look for a successful person and duplicate it which seems to me to be the prevalent thing happening in Hong Kong. Like they always copy mannerisms, but they'll never start from the very root of his being, which is "how can I be me?"

Love that.

Here's a question to live with: "How can I be me?"

Seriously. How can you be you?

What are you doing that's getting in the way of you REALLY being you? How are you pretending to be someone other than who you *really* are?

What's at the root of your being that needs a little more expression? Get on that!

P.S. As you do that, remember [Leo Buscaglia](#)'s wisdom: "You are the best you. You will always be the second best anyone else."

P.P.S. Keep this Oscar Wilde gem in mind as well: "Be yourself; everyone else is already taken."
:)

THERE IS ONLY SELF-HELP

"I have come to discover through earnest personal experience and dedicated learning that ultimately the greatest help is self-help; that there is no other help but self-help — doing one's best, dedicating one's self whole-heartedly to a given task, which happens to have no end but is

"Persistence, persistence, and persistence. The Power can be created and maintained through daily practice - continuous effort."

~ Bruce Lee

an ongoing process.”

—> “Ultimately the greatest help is self-help.”

Powerful stuff.

“Be a practical dreamer
backed by action”

~ Bruce Lee

[Samuel Smiles](#), in the 19th century classic on self-help appropriately called “[Self-Help](#)” (see Notes :), puts it this way: “Human character is moulded by a thousand subtle influences; by example and precept; by life and literature; by friends and neighbours; by the world we live in as well as by the spirits of our forefathers, whose legacy of good words and deeds we inherit. But great, unquestionably, though these influences are acknowledged to be, it is nevertheless equally clear that men must necessarily be the active agents of their own well-being and well-doing; and that, however much the wise and the good may owe to others, they themselves must in the very nature of things be their own best helpers.”

And, gotta love the way [Will Bowen](#) shares this truth in his great book [A Complaint-Free World](#) (see Notes) where he tells us: “We are, every one of us, already creating our lives all the time. The trick is to really take the reins and steer the horse to where we want to go, rather than where we do not. Your life is a movie written by, directed by, produced by, and starring—you guessed it—YOU! We are all self-made. When asked about “self-made millionaires,” Earl Nightingale, the twentieth-century motivational master and philosopher, once quipped, “We are all self-made, but only the successful will admit it.””

We’re all self-made, my friend.

Here’s to living our deepest truths and creating a life we’re proud of!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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you’ll probably like...

[The Art of Peace](#)

[Mastery](#)

[The Analects](#)

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[The Pursuit of Perfect](#)

[The Power of Your
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About the Author of “Striking Thoughts”

BRUCE LEE



Bruce Lee studied gung fu in Hong Kong under the legendary master Yip Man. After attending the University of Washington as a philosophy major, Lee established a gung fu studio in Oakland, CA, in 1964, to teach the art he later named jeet kune do. From a young age, and throughout his seven-year television and film career, he wrote prodigiously on all topics that attracted his interest—particularly philosophy. He died of cerebral edema in Hong Kong at the age of 32. **John Little** is the world’s foremost authority on the life and work of Bruce Lee, his training methods, and his philosophy. (from the book)

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.