

## THE BIG IDEAS

**The Toltec Warrior**  
Powerful stuff.

**Carlos Castaneda**  
The man, myth & legend.

**The Path with Heart**  
You on it?

**Luring Game**  
Quit clinging.

**The Struggle**  
The great combat.

**Warrior's Perception**  
Change yours.

**Blink of an Eye**  
Blink.

**Death As an Advisor**  
Mini-me to your left.

**Chatter in Our Heads**  
Turn it off.

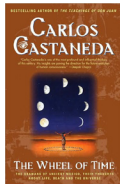
**Personal History**  
Cut it off.

**Impeccability**  
Hit your target.

**No Stress Success**  
Effortless effort.

*"But how will I know for sure whether a path has a heart or not?" "Anybody would know that. The trouble is nobody asks the question; and when a man finally realizes that he has taken a path without a heart, the path is ready to kill him. At that point very few men can stop to deliberate, and leave the path."*

~ Carlos Castaneda



# The Wheel of Time

The Shamans Of Mexico Their Thoughts About Life Death And The Universe  
BY CARLOS CASTANEDA · WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS © 2001 · 304 PAGES

[Carlos Castaneda](#) and his *Toltec Warrior*. Powerful stuff.

If you enjoy [Don Miguel Ruiz](#) (who wrote *The Four Agreements* (see Notes)) then you've been exposed to some of the wisdom of the shamans of Mexico and I think you'll dig Castaneda. If you're familiar with Castaneda, I think you'll really enjoy this Note as we're going to focus on [The Wheel of Time](#)—a book that collects the most powerful thoughts from his variety of great books.

We'll start with a quick look at both Toltec wisdom and [Carlos Castaneda](#) and then we'll explore his incredible Big Ideas!

## THE TOLTEC WARRIOR

*The Toltec Warrior*: An individual who is engaged in a battle for personal power. A person who views everything in life as a challenge while striving to act with impeccability and to approach life's challenges with humility and courage.

The ancient Toltec teachings inspire men and women to become warriors—taking the journey into self discovery that will lead them to transcend social conditioning and follow their individual, noble path to the attainment of true power, freedom and joy.

(Kinda like [Dan Millman](#)'s "Peaceful Warrior." Me likes! :)

## CARLOS CASTANEDA

[Carlos Castaneda](#) was an anthropologist from UCLA who, during the course of his research, introduced the world to both the Mexican philosophy known as Toltec as well as his teacher, the Yaqui Indian shaman Don Juan.

Castaneda chronicled his experience with Don Juan through a series of books. The first, *The Teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, was actually his UCLA master's thesis—which introduced the world to Don Juan and quickly became a best seller while starting a fascination with the world of shamanism and the Toltec warrior.

Although the veracity of some of his experiences (including the actual existence of Don Juan) is questioned, the profile of a Toltec warrior is no less meaningful. The lessons he shares are powerful and echo many of the truths revealed in other classic philosophies teaching us the art of living.

## THE PATH WITH HEART

"Anything is one of a million paths. Therefore, a warrior must always keep in mind that a path is only a path; if he feels that he should not follow it, he must not stay with it under any conditions. His decision to keep on that path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition. He must look at every path closely and deliberately. There is a question that a warrior has to ask, mandatorily: 'Does this path have a heart?'" from *The Teachings of Don Juan*

I've read this passage dozens and dozens of times. I can vividly remember reading it out loud

*"Follow your bliss."*

~ Joseph Campbell

5+ years ago to a mentor of mine who was recruiting me to run his new venture. I was trying to explain to him that, although the opportunity was fantastic, it just didn't feel right. (I literally woke up in the middle of the night before our meeting and threw up.) I thought this passage captured the intention of my decision well so I (literally! :) read it out loud to him. Too funny.

So, how about you? Got any big things on your mind? Any big decisions?!? Ask yourself this simple question: *Does this path have a heart?*

(Well, does it?!? :)

## LURING GAME

**"Once a man worries, he clings to anything out of desperation; and once he clings he is bound to get exhausted or to exhaust whomever or whatever he is clinging to. A warrior-hunter, on the other hand, knows he will lure game into his traps over and over again, so he doesn't worry."**

from *Journey to Ixtlan*

Remember the lesson of non-attachment from Buddhism and Hinduism (see Notes)? Same thing here. Are you clinging? Too attached to the results/outcomes in your life? Afraid that you might be in trouble if things don't work out on this particular project/relationship/whatever?

Well, quit doing that! :)

Don't cling. You have nothing to worry about... *knowing* you will lure game into your traps over and over again.

## THE STRUGGLE

**"To be a warrior is not a simple matter of wishing to be one. It is rather an endless struggle that will go on to the very last moment of our lives. Nobody is born a warrior, in exactly the same way that nobody is born an average man. We make ourselves into one or the other."** from *Tales of Power*

Socrates calls it the *"great combat."* Rumi calls it the *"inner jihad."* Jesus has some thoughts on it and Lao-tzu talks about the egomania of thinking you're going to reach total awareness without disciplined effort.

ALL great teachers preach the power of self-mastery. A sampling of some of my favorite thoughts on the subject:

Socrates (from *The Gorgias*): *"I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can... And, to the utmost of my power, I exhort all other men to do the same... I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict."*

**Rumi:** *"The lion who breaks the enemy's ranks is a minor hero compared to the lion who overcomes himself."*

Jesus: *"He who rules his spirit has won a greater victory than the taking of a city."*

**Lao-tzu** (see Notes on [The Tao te Ching](#)): *"He who controls others may be powerful, but he who has mastered himself is mightier still."* And *"Don't think you can attain total awareness and whole enlightenment without proper discipline and practice. This is egomania. Appropriate rituals channel your emotions and life energy toward the light. Without the discipline to practice them, you will tumble constantly backward into darkness."*

How're you doing with your self-mastery? You embracing the challenge? Or letting yourself tumble constantly backward into the darkness because you haven't created the rituals and the commitment to truly hone your consciousness?

What's ONE thing that's leaking your power that you know you should STOP doing? Cool. Quit doing that. (Starting NOW! :)

*"If his spirit is distorted he should simply fix it—purge it, make it perfect—because there is no other task in our entire lives which is more worthwhile..."*

*To seek the perfection of the warrior's spirit is the only task worthy of our temporariness, our manhood."*

~ Carlos Castaneda  
from *A Journey to Ixtlan*

*"One can have no smaller or greater mastery than mastery of oneself."*

~ Leonardo da Vinci

*"The world is incomprehensible. We won't ever understand it; we won't ever unravel its secrets. Thus we must treat the world as it is: a sheer mystery."*

*"The warrior: silent in his struggle, undetainable because he has nothing to lose, functional and efficacious because he has everything to gain."*

*"The spirit of a warrior is not geared to indulging and complaining, nor is it geared to winning or losing. The spirit of a warrior is geared only to struggle, and every struggle is a warrior's last battle on earth. Thus the outcome matters very little to him. In his last battle on earth a warrior lets his spirit flow free and clear. And as he wages his battle, knowing that his intent is impeccable, a warrior laughs and laughs."*

*"Only the idea of death makes a warrior sufficiently detached so that he is capable of abandoning himself to anything. He knows his death is stalking him and won't give him time to cling to anything so he tries, without craving, all of everything."*

All of the above: Carlos Castaneda  
from *A Separate Reality*

And, what's ONE thing you know your Highest Self needs you to START doing today that'll build your power? Nice. Excited to hear about your new habit. Rock that. :)

## THE WARRIOR'S PERCEPTION

"The trick is in what one emphasizes. We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves strong. The amount of work is the same." from *Journey to Ixtlan*

That's brilliant. So, uh, what are you emphasizing? Any better alternatives?

Tony Robbins has a great exercise in his Personal Power CD's. (btw: His (brilliant) stuff was one of my first introductions to self-development. I found myself up at 2 AM 10+ years ago feeling not-so-good and happened to see him going off on one of his infomercials as I channel-surfed (before I got rid of my TV). So, I reluctantly/embarrassingly bought his stuff then hid it in my closet so my roommates wouldn't know about it. Hah!)

In his Personal Power program, Tony has you focus on everything that's BROWN in your room/ wherever you are. Brown brown brown brown brown brown brown.

Go ahead and give it a try. Look around you right now and see if you can find ALL the things that are BROWN! Do it for 30 seconds or so.

OK.

Now, what is BLUE in your immediate surroundings right now?

Exactly. You have no clue because you're spending all your time looking for stuff that's pooh-brown. QUIT DOING THAT!

As Castaneda says, the effort is the same. Just choose to look for the things you WANT to see. Look for the good and that's what you'll see. *Simple* and really powerful.

## BLINK OF AN EYE

"We hardly ever realize that we can cut anything out of our lives, anytime, in the blink of an eye." from *Journey to Ixtlan*

Pow-er-ful!

You complaining about something incessantly in your life? The traffic? The job you hate? Possibly the relationship that isn't working?

Well, KNOW that you could cut any and all of that out of your life. NOW. You could work different hours, move to a new city or work from home. You could walk in to the office tomorrow morning and quit. You could end the relationship.

You can, in the blink of an eye, cut any and every thing out of your life. Of course, you *may* or *may not* choose to do this, but the moment you operate from this perspective, you take your power back.

Remember: Warrior's don't complain. They take action to change their situation or change their perception of the situation. How about you?

## DEATH AS AN ADVISOR

"Death is our eternal companion. It is always to our left, an arm's length behind us. Death is the only wise adviser that a warrior has. Whenever he feels that everything is going wrong and he's about to be annihilated, he can turn to his death and ask if that is so. His death will tell him that he is wrong, that nothing really matters outside its touch. His death will tell him, 'I haven't touched you yet.'" from *A Journey to Ixtlan*

Imagine *death* as your advisor—a constant companion always to your left, an arm’s length behind you.

The next time you get stressed/irritated/whatever, pause for a moment. Look back to your left. You’ll see death smiling and waving at you—reminding you that outside of his touch you have NOTHING to worry about.

Another one of my favorite teachers, [Seneca](#) (the 1st century Roman Stoic Philosopher) talks a lot about using death as an advisor as well. See the Notes on his [Letters from a Stoic](#) for a full review and enjoy these few thoughts here: “Rehearse death. To say this is to tell a person to rehearse his freedom. A person who has learned how to die has unlearned how to be a slave. He is above, or at any rate, beyond the reach of, all political powers.”

“You want to live—but do you know how to live? You are scared of dying—and, tell me, is the kind of life you lead really any different from being dead?” And: “As it is with a play, so it is with life—what matters is not how long the acting lasts, but how good it is.” And: “Refuse to let the thought of death bother you: nothing is grim when we have escaped that fear.” And: “Death: There’s nothing bad about it at all except the thing that comes before it—the fear of it.” And, one more: “Every day, therefore, should be regulated as if it were the one that brings up the rear, the one that rounds out and completes our lives.”

Death. Our constant advisor.

Let’s live as if this moment may be our last and refuse to have our last act be anything but the best we’re capable of!

*“The hardest thing in the world is to assume the mood of a warrior. It is of no use to be sad and complain and feel justified in doing so, believing that someone is always doing something to us. Nobody is doing anything to anybody, much less to a warrior.”*

~ Carlos Castaneda  
from *Journey to Ixtlan*

## CHATTER IN OUR HEADS

“We talk to ourselves incessantly about our world. In fact we maintain our world with our internal talk. And whenever we finish talking to ourselves about ourselves and our world, the world is always as it should be. We renew it, we rekindle it with life, we uphold it with our internal talk. Not only that, but we also choose our paths as we talk to ourselves. Thus we repeat the same choices over and over until the day we die, because we keep on repeating the same internal talk over and over until the day we die. A warrior is aware of this and strives to stop his internal talk.” from *A Separate Reality*

How’s that internal dialogue of yours working out for you?

You repeating the SAME thing to yourself over and over and over again?

Time to take control.

Buddhists like to say your meandering mind is like a monkey swinging from tree to tree. An especially overactive “monkey mind”? That mind is like a drunk monkey swinging from tree to tree after being bitten by a scorpion. (Isn’t that a great image!?)

So how’s *your* mind?

Out of control or balanced?

Get it balanced. Control your internal dialogue. Become equanimous.

(Wisdom tidbit: Did you know the word “equanimity” comes from the Latin words *aequus* and *magnus* literally meaning “equal/balanced mind”? Cool, eh?)

“The internal dialogue is what grounds people in the daily world. The world is such and such or so and so, only because we talk to ourselves about its being such and such and so and so. The passageway into the world of shamans opens up after the warrior has learned to shut off his internal dialogue.” from *Tales of Power*

*" A warrior is a hunter. He calculates everything. That's control. Once his calculations are over, he acts. He lets go. That's abandon. A warrior is not a leaf at the mercy of the wind. No one can push him; no one can make him do things against himself or against his better judgment. A warrior is tuned to survive, and he survives in the best of all possible fashions."*

~ Carlos Castaneda  
from *Journey to Ixtlan*

*" A warrior seeks to act rather than talk."*

All of the above: Carlos Castaneda  
from *Tales of Power*

*" A warrior must cultivate the feeling that he has everything needed for the extravagant journey that is his life. What counts for a warrior is being alive. Life in itself is sufficient, self-explanatory and complete. Therefore, one may say without being presumptuous that the experience of experiences is being alive."*

~ Carlos Castaneda  
from *Tales of Power*

## PERSONAL HISTORY

**"Personal history must be constantly renewed by telling parents, relatives, and friends everything one does. On the other hand, for the warrior who has no personal history, no explanations are needed; nobody is angry or disillusioned with his acts. And above all, no one pins him down with their thoughts and their expectations."** from *Journey to Ixtlan*

Personal history. It's a \*huge\* part of Castaneda's teaching. One of the basic aspects of the Toltec warrior is the process of transcending/cutting off/destroying our personal history.

Think of your personal history as an anchor you have tied to your waste. A big one. It's heavy. It slows you down. It's all the things you've done in the past—good and bad—that have created a world of expectations around you. If you let it, this'll stifle your evolution and creativity faster than anything.

As Castaneda advises, let it go. Quit putting yourself in a little box by trying to live consistently with your past and explaining every little action you take. BE YOU. Fully. In this moment. Independent of what others may or may not "expect" from you.

**"It doesn't matter how one was brought up. What determines the way one does anything is personal power."** from *Journey to Ixtlan*

## IMPECCABILITY

**"A warrior must learn to make every act count, since he is going to be here in this world for only a short while, in fact, too short for witnessing all the marvels of it."** from *Journey to Ixtlan*

Impeccability.

The word literally means "without sin"—where sin means to "miss the mark" (think missing a target in archery). So, to be impeccable means to hit the mark—to be "on target," to live your ideals.

The Toltec warrior is impeccable.

In my philosophy, there are two primary ingredients (both with roots in Toltec): 1. Intention: We must know who we are, what we stand for and what we will give to the world; and, 2. Impeccability: We need to do what needs to be done. Without consistent, impeccable execution, all the best intentions will be meaningless.

Who has the clearest intention and the strongest impeccability?

The people we admire the most. Tiger Woods comes to mind for me. Or Barak Obama. Or Oprah. These (amazing!) people have remarkably clear intentions and equally powerful impeccability.

How's your intention? Your impeccability?

What can you do to optimize each?

## NO STRESS SUCCESS

**"If a warrior is to succeed at anything, the success must come gently, with a great deal of effort but with no stress or obsession."** from *Tales of Power*

I love that—> *"With a great deal of effort but with no stress or obsession."*

We usually wind up on one extreme or the other: we're either REALLY goal-driven and obsessed and stressed OR we're on a beach somewhere or in meditation trying to breathe/relax ourselves out of the stress through NON-action.

The challenge, of course, is to be FULLY engaged and totally calm. (Fun!)

[Lao-tzu](#) and the Taoists call this “effortless effort.”

Note: It’s not NO effort. It’s effortless effort.

It’s like water moving downstream—incredibly active and powerful but without stress—it’s simply moving with it’s built-in purpose: downstream.

[Deepak](#) has a great line about this: “One-pointed intention means holding your attention to the intended outcome with such unbending purpose that you absolutely refuse to allow obstacles to consume and dissipate the focused quality of your attention. There is a total and complete exclusion of all obstacles from your consciousness. You are able to maintain an unshakable serenity while being committed to your goal with intense passion.”

I love that. I call it “dynamic equanimity”—that place where you’re totally engaged and totally balanced.

How are you showing up? Are you stressed or are you flowing? Are you totally disengaged and timid about setting exciting goals because you don’t want to become imbalanced or are you having fun finding your center while playing at the edge?!?

Make it a game. Play full out. Put in a great deal of effort and let go of your attachment to the results and just let it flow, my friend!!!

To bringing out the Toltec Warrior within as we live with more personal power, impeccability, and fearlessness,

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
Chief Philosopher

“Whenever a warrior decides to do something, he must go all the way, but he must take responsibility for what he does. No matter what he does, he must know first why he is doing it, and then he must proceed with his actions without having doubts or remorse about them.”

If you liked this Note,  
you’ll probably like...

[The Fountainhead](#)

[The Four Agreements](#)

[Motivation and Personality](#)

[The Tao te Ching](#)

[Letters from a Stoic](#)

[Tony Robbins](#)

## About the Author of “The Wheel of Time”

CARLOS CASTANEDA



Carlos Castaneda was an anthropologist from UCLA who, during the course of his research, introduced the world to both the Mexican philosophy known as Toltec as well as his teacher, the Yaqui Indian shaman Don Juan. Castaneda chronicled his experience with Don Juan through a series of books. The first, “The Teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge,” was actually his UCLA master’s thesis—which introduced the world to Don Juan and quickly became a best seller while starting a fascination with the world of shamanism and the Toltec warrior.

## 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](http://brianjohnson.me).