

Book Review: Compact Classics, Inc., 1993

A Guide to Confident Living

BY NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

The secrets of happiness lie within you, and in *A Guide to Confident Living*, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale demonstrates how you can *think* your way to success and happiness. Step by step, Dr. Peale teaches and demonstrates proven, uplifting techniques to achieve lasting fulfillment.

A New-Old Way to Free Your Powers

Dr. Peale tells the story of young and highly skilled physician who sometimes gives the most curious prescription to people afflicted with a sense of fear, inferiority, and general burnout: *Go to church once a week for the next three months*. In a church, the doctor explains, there is a mood and atmosphere with a healing power effective incurring the above mentioned problems.

“He further asserts that he does not particularly care whether the patient listen to the sermon. Church-going is of value if a person merely sits quietly, yielding himself to the mood and atmosphere of the church,” says Dr. Peale. This doctor reports that his patients have benefited from this unusual prescription.

Don't Keep Your Troubles to Yourself

It can be commendable, even inspiring when people keep their troubles to themselves. Most of us have known people who have had to suffer pain for years and who have done so with admirable spirit and a determination not to be a burden to others. “on the other hand, some people seem to develop into whiners and complainers...victims of self-pity, thinking constantly about themselves. They do not keep their troubles to themselves and they should learn to do so. They want everybody else to keep their troubles for them, and people do not like to be the repositories of other people's troubles. Ella Wheeler Wilcox well says: ‘Laugh and the world laughs with you; weep, and you weep alone.’”

But the practice of keeping your troubles to yourself can be dangerous. There is a sense in which the human personality must have release from itself. People cannot forever bottle up within themselves the guilt, problems, and adversity which have affected them. To use a common expression, it is advisable to get some things “off your chest.” It is significant that the word “chest” is used in this idiom, since “the heart has been traditionally considered the center of emotional life,” says Dr. Peale.

Inner release, explains Dr. Peale, is something every human being needs. It is dangerous to carry problems around too long or they will hurt you. Find someone who is skilled in listening to and solving problems of the heart, a minister, priest, rabbi, psychologist, or just a wise and understanding friend. Often, merely the act of sharing a burden with another human being will provide immediate relief....

How to Achieve a Calm Center for Your Life

The main ingredient in tension is *mental disorganization*. The mind refuses to make decisions about many different things and as a result always carries around numerous burdens, never really resolving any of them. “The mind in this situation reacts somewhat like the body shivering,” says Dr. Peale. “One shivers when passing suddenly from a warm to a cold area; the body attempts to accommodate itself quickly to the sudden change in body temperature. It has been estimated that as much energy is expended in a half-minute of shivering as in several hours of work. This results in depletion of vigor. In a similar way, shivering in the mind depletes its force when one fails to practice the fundamental principle of mental organization.”

To unload excess mental baggage – unresolved decisions – and use our energy for enjoying the finer things in life, Dr. Peale suggests the following: “Get the calm selective ability to take up one thing at a time and concentrate upon it. Deal finally with it, if possible, before passing to the next matter. When you organize your mind, a sense of power will come to you, and you will soon wonder at the ease with which you can handle responsibilities. Your capacity for work will increase; so will your pleasure in what you are doing. Strain and tension will subside.”

How to Get Rid of an Inferiority Complex

There is tremendous power within every one of us. Socrates urged us to “know thyself” and knowing ourselves includes knowing and appreciating our innermost spiritual powers. When you know yourself, it is difficult to be defeated by a false sense of inferiority. “Quite possibly you often do feel defeated. Depression settles over you, bringing the disheartening feeling that there isn’t much use in the fighting on,” says Dr. Peale. “Probably everybody yields to it. Those who accept the idea that they are defeated usually *are* beaten; for, as a famous psychologist says, ‘There is a deep tendency in human nature to become like that which you imagine yourself to be.’ Believe you are defeated, believe it long enough, and it is likely to become a fact.”

People who achieve lasting happiness and success are those who, feeling themselves sinking into depression, refuse to think they are defeated. They refuse to think that situations and circumstances — or their enemies — have put them there. They know that thinking they *are* defeated, or *might* be defeated, is the surest way to *be* defeated. They also know that the consistent practice of thinking positively — thinking of ultimate victory — is the key to success.

How to Achieve a Calm Center for Your Life

The main ingredient in tension is *mental disorganization*. The mind refuses to make decisions about many different things and as a result always carries around numerous burdens, never really resolving any of them. “The mind in this situation reacts somewhat like the body shivering,” says Dr. Peale. “One shivers when passing suddenly from a warm to a cold area; the body attempts to accommodate itself quickly to the sudden change

in body temperature. It has been estimated that as much energy is expended in a half-minute of shivering as in several hours of work. This results in depletion of vigor. In a similar way, shivering in the mind depletes its force when one fails to practice the fundamental principle of mental organization.”

To unload excess mental baggage – unresolved decisions – and use our energy for enjoying the finer things in life, Dr. Peale suggests the following: “Get the calm selective ability to take up one thing at a time and concentrate upon it. Deal finally with it, if possible, before passing to the next matter. When you organize your mind, a sense of power will come to you, and you will soon wonder at the ease with which you can handle responsibilities. Your capacity for work will increase; so will your pleasure in what you are doing. Strain and tension will subside.”

How to Think Your Way to Success

The power to think is one of our greatest powers and we need to cultivate practical techniques to improve our thinking and so improve our lives. It is by changing our thinking that we change our world.

People become what, habitually, in their conscious and subconscious mind — or in their heart — *they think*. The wisest of all books says, “As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he.” And two of the worlds’ wisest thinkers said:

“Our life is what our thoughts make of it.”

-- Marcus Aurelius

“A man is what he thinks about all day long.”

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Surely a person thinks about many things in the course of a day. Beneath all of these thoughts, however, is one basic or primary thought. Through this fundamental thought, all other thoughts are filtered and take their color and content.

For example, some people allow fear to become their primary thought. Fear usually begins as a thin trickle of worry across the mind. Repeated over many days, it becomes habitual until it cuts a deep channel across the consciousness. As a result, *every* thought — about family, business, health, or the world — is colored by dark thoughts of fear, stained by the tarnish of anxiety and insecurity. Fear, in all its forms, dominates their thinking.

To counteract this condition we must develop the only type of thinking that can defeat fear: FAITH. Faith will change our dim image of the world to a brighter, more glorious hues of gold and silver.

How do we develop faith? “...Affirm the positive thought. Faith, too being as a thin

trickle across the mind. Repeated, it becomes habitual. It cuts deeply into the consciousness until finally ... you have two basic channels of thought — one of fear, and one of faith. But fear can never defeat faith,” says Dr. Peale. The more we operate by faith, the less we operate by fear. Gradually, deepening faith supplants fear; it displaces it so completely that the “fear channel” finally dries up. “The faith thought overflows the becomes the deep flowing, primary thought of the mind. Then every thought about your business, about your family, about the world is touched by the thought of faith and comes up bright resplendent, optimistic and positive.”

As a result of cultivating this positive train of thought, you will find that your optimism, your *faith*, will touch everything and everybody in your life. You will come to believe more deeply in yourself and your fellow human beings.

...Again Dr. Peale emphasizes the importance of changing your thinking. “Change your thoughts and you change everything.” Again and again in life, what you think has much more to do with success and happiness than any set of circumstances. “A man’s world is not primarily made of the circumstances that surround him... You are not what you think you are, but what you *think*, you are.”

What’s the Money Mastery Point?

“To become financially well organized, we must first learn to become mentally organized.”