

Author's Preface

All I wanted was to disappear.

I was in deep, chronic pain. A whiplash injury had left me with a migraine headache that was in its fourth long year; and divorce, its own kind of whiplash, had thrown my life out of whack. I was anxious, fidgety, filled with worry and regret, barely able to sit for a minute without reaching for a drink. This wasn't rock bottom, but it was close – as low as I had ever been.

What I needed was a way to switch gears, set myself on a different track.

A semi-competent woodworker, I rented a nearby garage, determined to lose myself in building things for my nearly empty bachelor apartment. I made cabinets, a window seat, shelving units for my books, a desk for the writing I might someday get back to. And little by little, I turned Apt. 1B into a very pleasant home.

Now what do I do with my life???

Well, I thought, if I'm not going to write, perhaps reading will provide, if not, "The Answer," at least some relief.

So I read, obsessively. I read philosophy, psychology, religious texts from East and West, biographies, books about yoga, meditation, pain and headache relief. I underlined and scribbled notes, assembled hundreds of quotes spanning centuries and continents and saw how various "keys to better living" were constantly reemerging, albeit from different cultures and orientations, linking, for example, Aristotle to Muhammad Ali, Confucius to Johnny Cash, Thomas Jefferson to *The Yoga Sutras*, and Pythagoras to Macklemore.

In addition to my constant reading and note taking, I also began a daily practice of yoga and meditation.

Over time, my pain receded, certain answers *did* appear and I sensed I was onto something beyond my own salvation. No longer working with wood and nails, I got back to working with words and ideas, writing, primarily, for an audience of one. My son.

See, Dad dug himself out of the hole he was in. Then he conjured up these pages as guideposts for you.

Creating this little book provided me with many days of joy and learning – as well as the occasional bout of hair pulling. Now it's time to share these ancient and contemporary insights with fellow searchers and finders to be.

So here it is: a "practical and spiritual guide" to a calmer, saner, more fruitful life.

Note to Reader

As you read through this book you'll encounter wisdom from a variety of sources — some familiar, some, perhaps, quite “foreign” to you. I urge you now — before you begin — to enter these pages with an open mind; to avoid being fearful or mistrustful just because it's something an Indian yogi said, or a rabbi said, or because it's from the old testament, or the new testament, from a modern pop tune or the ancient *Dhammapada* or *Tao te Ching*. Give each of these messengers a chance to be heard. They may just prove to be of great value.

“Life is really simple,” said Confucius, “but we insist on making it complex.” The antidote, however, is now before you: culled from the ages, from Buddha to Jay Z, here's a “really simple” road map for a fun, productive life — along with plenty of compassion for the wrong turns and mistakes we all make along the way.

Anxiety is Us

For many years I lived a life of anxiety. “Anxiety,” I’d joke, “is my favorite sport. You don’t need any special equipment and you can play it by yourself for as long as you’d like.”

Truth is, we’ve all experienced anxiety, a chronic stress response with no way out — or so it feels. We’re jumpy, nervous, stuck in a rut of needless, repetitive worry. “Anxiety’s like a rocking chair,” writes Jodi Picoult. “It gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you very far.”ⁱ

Yet as hopeless and relentless as anxiety feels, we can get unstuck from our rocking chair rut. The solution is activity, serving to redirect our nervous energy and apply it to something productive instead. That’s what got me building furniture, reading, and creating this book. “In times of great stress or adversity,” advised Lee Iacocca, “it’s always best to keep busy, to plow ... your energy into something positive.”

Is activity a cure-all, a silver bullet to put an end to anxiety? Not entirely.

During the writing of this book, for example, I’d often find myself worrying, *Who am I to write a book about having the “perfect life”? Can I really pull this off or am I headed for complete disaster?* The solution, I would repeatedly discover, was simply to redirect my brain: from worry and anxiety to *Right back to work!* This was the balm, the magic elixir that kept the wolves of worry from eating me alive.

Speaking from years of personal experience, I can tell you this with complete authority: *Ruminating in your room, feeling nothing but doom and gloom will never get you anywhere good.* The trick is to muster the courage to move from the rut you’re in and get busy with a meaningful activity. “In the midst of activity alone,” counsels *The Upanishads*, “wilt thou desire to live a hundred years.”

Anxiety is a rut in which we get stuck. So prepare to move to a far better groove.

Breathing is Key

When I confided to a friend of mine, a minister, that I was writing a book called *How to Have the Perfect Life*, she replied with a single word, “Breathe,” a response as complete as it was brief.

“If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath.” —Amit Ray, PhD

“If I had to limit my advice on healthier living to just one tip, it would be simply to learn how to breathe.” —Andrew Weil, MD

When we’re stressed, or anxious, our breathing tends to become shallow, or we hold our breath without realizing it. To quell your anxiety — especially when it peaks — turn your attention *inward* to your breathing. This is what’s known as mindful breathing. It will lower your heart rate, relax your muscles, and increase your body’s production of endorphins, your body’s natural pain-killing chemicals.

“I’m a hyper-anxious person by demeanor, so I’m always restless and anxious, and I try to compensate for that by breathing in and breathing out as calmly as I can.” —Glenn D. Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art

“Mindful breathing is like a loving mother holding her sick baby in her arms, saying, ‘Don’t worry, I’ll take good care of you, just rest.’” —Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist monk

My own introduction to this mindful breathing came as I sat on the floor across from a yoga instructor about my age — but a lot more together. First, he demonstrated, inhaling slowly and deeply, focused entirely on just his breath. It was like he was feasting on a field of energy. *Wait, not fair. I’ve been missing out on this all these years!?*

Ancrene wisse, author's preface: footnotes. 1 I, In; nome, name; Ancrene Wisse, Anchoresses' Guide. 2-6 Recti diligunt te . . . te, "The righteous love you" (in the Song of Songs [1:3], the bride to the bridegroom).Â 147-51 earst of mete . . . leofliche learen, first about food and drink, and about other things which pertain to that (lit., there-about), after that about the things which you may Mises Institute.

Author's Preface. 5 years ago5 years ago. History. Comment must not exceed 1000 characters. Like. Repost. Share.Â Current track: Author's PrefaceAuthor's Preface. Like. Follow. Drop your files here. After you sign in, your upload will start. Introduction to elementary number theory Karel Lepka Author's preface The famous German mathematician Karl Friedrich Gauss said that mathematics is the queen of the sciences and that number theory is the queen of mathematics. His no less famous colleague Kronecker claimed that natural numbers are from God and everything else is human creation.