

How to Stop Worrying and Start Living

Dale Carnegie

summarized by
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ABSTRACT

The book is mostly a collection of anecdotes. I won't talk about them all, so this summary will be short.

Check out for newer versions: <https://t.karchnu.fr/doc/how-to-stop-worrying-and-start-living.pdf>

And if you have questions: karchnu@karchnu.fr

Lastly compiled the **22/6/2022** (day/month/year, you know, like in any sane civilization).

1. Some pieces of advice in the book

The following isn't the exhaustive list of tips from the book, but a rough summary.

When anxious about a decision to make

Ask yourself some questions: what am I worrying about? What can I do about it? Then, take decisions: what I'll do about it, when I'll do it. After that, stop thinking about the matter, you made up your mind and what is done is done.

In other words: gather facts. Analyze. Decide, act and forget.

When facing a fearful future

Imagine the worst. Accept it. Improve on the worst.

When sad or anxious

Keep yourself busy, you won't have time to worry¹.

Whenever you are grieving, stressing, being anxious or sad about something, put a *stop-loss*. This is a tip coming from trading environments, the idea is simple: you accept to lose a little (money, time, energy, whatever) and you put a limit on it². Worrying, being anxious or sad is normal, but it brings little of value, so cut your loss and move on.

This *stop-loss* idea is close to the "day-tight compartments" concept introduced earlier in the book saying basically that

1. Since worrying is thinking, and since we cannot think about several things at a time, this *seems* rather accurate.
2. I'll even go further: accept to live a shitty moment. Take your time to experience it fully, don't even try to avoid the blow. Think about what or who you lost, think about it a lot and cry, feel the pain. But this must have an end.

whatever happened yesterday, specially if it was a bummer, forget about it, it's done. Forget about tomorrow, too, focus on today.

Be someone new everyday, a blank page, ready to live the day.

General tips

- Fill your mind with peace, courage, health.
- Do not try to be even with your enemies, don't waste a minute on people you don't like.
- Expect ingratitude, be grateful to others. Gratitude is a cultivated trait and most people aren't well educated.
- Count your blessings, not your troubles.
- Don't imitate others, be yourself³.
- Make the best of what you have⁴.
- Forget yourself and your own unhappiness, become interested in others and make them happy, do a good deed⁵.

Relaxation

Take a nap. This is rather simple, but terribly effective to avoid fatigue.

3. Side note: *be yourself* is a good advice. However, this implies to learn who you are, what you like and what you want or expect in life. This is not by any mean simple and can be easily overlooked.
4. A simple maxim that often comes in the book: if you have a lemon, make a lemonade.
5. *Take interest in what others have to say* is an excellent advice. You'll feel a bit more connected with your fellow humans, which itself is a fading concept in our society and I bet good money that dozen of books were written on it. Furthermore, being in a conversation is a good diversion not to think about something else.

Time management

Don't report to later, just do whatever comes first. Switching from a subject to another is time-consuming, avoid it as much as possible.

2. Summary and personal conclusion

The book provides a lot of stories from random and notable people handling good or bad life experiences, and a few citations.

The main problems with the book

Most of the book is just anecdotes, nothing really is substantial. The book contains mostly (vastly) unrelated stories which should be viewed for any careful reader as a big red flag: that's cherry-picking and leads to confirmation bias.

Furthermore, the author praises religion, many times, and for very bullshit reasons (as always with this subject). For example, here is substantially what he advises:

Believe in a god so you won't mind death and find your life meaningful.

Yeah, that's how it works, right? I will say it again but in a slightly different manner:

Force yourself to believe in a vague notion of paternalistic figure without any evidence because fairy tales are a good way to make yourself better. Forget about reality, only feelings matter, and whatever makes you happy is good so put some cocaine in this nose of yours.

Of course, let's take example on the life of Mary Baker Eddy, from homeless to almost prophet, founder of Christian Science. You know, the institute arguing that sickness is an illusion that can be corrected by prayer alone. They are Christian, no doubt, but don't expect much science. And she was a good example since **by her willpower alone** she... scamed people?

Worst, the book is filled with massively suspicious scientific informations about health issues you should probably just best forget. For example, the author claims to be able to cure depression just by following his advice, or that most problems can be cured with the mind because reasons. That's just plain dumb, probably even a bit dangerous, and it proves that the author doesn't know what he is talking about⁶.

The good parts

Though, you may find some interesting stories from people being joyful during war, or while being crippled or after losing everything of value (social, financial, or material possessions). Some of them were crippled by anxiety to a life-threatening point, spending their days lying in bed with their organs

shutting down for example, and fully recovered simply because they adopted a new point of view on life. Sometimes, just a few words were enough to change their life completely overnight, according to the book. Finally, the book contains a few useful (but very obvious) tips which go without saying but are better said. These tips are about: how to get over sad fearful or anxious situations, how to be prepared for further bad moments, how to relax and a bit about time management.

Conclusion

The very core of the whole book is mostly related to stoicism, even though the author seems to ignore this philosophy completely. The introduction actually provides a good insight on his point of view on the matter: he is almost interested in a single keyword, a very specific facet of life which is *how to avoid worrying*. From the start, the book gives an impression the author isn't a knowledgeable person, which is unfortunately confirmed later many, many times. Some points of view cannot really be reproached to the author since the first publication was in 1948 and nobody can expect of him today's knowledge, but his lack of restraint and his religious propaganda is another story.

This is a (mostly) forgettable book. Stories are somewhat entertaining but the many problems cannot be ignored and render the book less enjoyable to read. This book should be regarded as an entertainment at most. The few tips you may find useful are here, in the first section of the summary, enjoy!

6. And I'm kind of generous not assuming he was ill-intentioned here. I'll just suppose the author was very ill-informed on many points.