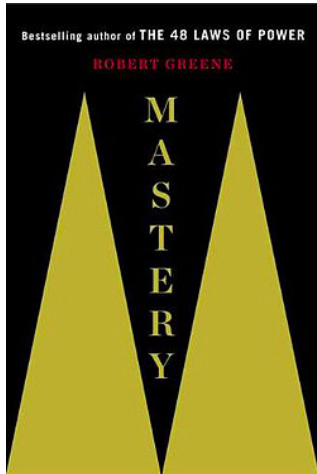


# THE GOOD LIFE

## CliffsNotes for Personal Growth Lessons from Robert Greene's Mastery



### WHY THIS BOOK?

- Highly recommended by [Tim Ferriss](#)
- Fan of Greene's [48 Laws of Power](#), including gems like “enter action with boldness” and “act like a king to be treated like one”
- Profiles many world-changers that I admire, including Da Vinci, Ben Franklin, and Mozart

### WHO'S THE AUTHOR?

Robert Greene is the author of 4 international bestsellers. A Berkeley grad, Greene estimates he “*worked 80 jobs, including as a construction worker, translator, magazine editor, and Hollywood movie writer.*”

### WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

This is a “CliffsNotes for personal growth”: it's not a comprehensive summary; I focus on lessons for living a Good Life, one with personal fulfillment and value for society.

In *Mastery*, Greene dissects world-changers (past and present) to reveal how they became great. Using case studies like Glenn Gould, Thomas Edison, and Bobby Fischer, Greene presents a theory and process for how anyone can become a world-class master: from picking the right topic, to developing the necessary skills, to creating stuff that can change the world. Want to be like Da Vinci? Read on!

- What is mastery?
  - *The feeling that we have a greater command of reality, other people, and ourselves.*
- Mastery is central to finding your purpose. However, we undervalue it; we're afraid of hard work and conform to social pressures
  - *The great danger is that we give in to feelings of boredom, impatience, fear, and confusion. We stop observing and learning. The process comes to a halt.*
- We assume that only a select few are capable, but ANYONE can become a master
  - *Over the centuries, people have placed a wall around such mastery. They have called it genius and have thought of it as inaccessible...But that wall is imaginary...[the] evolution of the brain was designed to lead us to mastery, the latent power within us all.*
- Talent and high IQ cannot explain mastery. It's all about hard work and persistence
  - *...thousands upon thousands of children display exceptional skill and talent in some field, yet relatively few of them ever amount to anything, whereas those who are less brilliant in their youth can often attain much more. Natural talent or a high IQ cannot explain future achievement.*
- Masters must harness their emotions
  - *It is an emotional quality that separates those who master a field from the many who simply work at a job. Our levels of desire, patience, persistence, and confidence end up playing a much larger role in success than sheer reasoning powers. Feeling motivated and energized, we can overcome almost anything.*
- Three steps to finding your area of focus

- **#1 Connect with your inclinations**
  - *In order to master a field, you must love the subject and feel a profound connection to it. Your interest must transcend the field itself and border on the religious.*
- **#2 Choose the right career based on those inclinations...avoid the false path!**
  - *A false path in life is generally something we are attracted to for the wrong reasons—money, fame, attention, and so on.*
- **#3 See your career as a journey with twists and turns. Focus on the long-term**
  - *The road to mastery requires patience. You will have to keep your focus on five or ten years down the road, when you will reap the rewards of your efforts.*
- Learn from existing Masters through apprenticeships
  - *Before it is too late you must learn the lessons and follow the path established by the greatest Masters, past and present*
  - *The goal of an apprenticeship is not money, a good position, a title, or a diploma, but rather the transformation of your mind and character*
- There are 3 steps to the Apprenticeship:
  - **Step 1:** Deep Observation (observe and notice everything, especially the details)
  - **Step 2:** Skills Acquisition (learn to do what they do extremely well)
  - **Step 3:** Experimentation (learn to make those skills your own, and go beyond them!)
- Feedback, feedback, feedback. Learn to love criticism
  - *It helps also to gain as much feedback as possible from others, to have standards against which you can measure your progress so that you are aware of how far you have to*
  - *Sometimes greater danger comes from success and praise than from criticism. If we learn to handle criticism well, it can strengthen us and help us become aware of flaws in our work. Praise generally does harm. Ever so slowly, the emphasis shifts from the joy of the creative process to the love of attention and to our ever-inflating ego.*
- To find a great mentor, appeal to their self-interest
  - *To initially entice the right Master to serve as your mentor, you will want to mix in a strong element of self-interest. You have something tangible and practical to offer them, in addition to your youth and energy.*
- Learn social intelligence: mastering them is key
  - *The most effective attitude to adopt is one of supreme acceptance. The world is full of people with different characters and temperaments. We all have a dark side, a tendency to manipulate, and aggressive desires.*
  - *You will encounter thousands of various individuals in your life, and the ability to see them as they are will prove invaluable. Keep in mind, however, that people are in a state of continual flux. You must not let your ideas about them harden into a set impression. You are continually observing them and bringing your readings of them up to date.*
  - *To develop your intellectual powers at the expense of the social is to retard your own progress to mastery, and limit the full range of your creative powers.*
- Be obsessed with your work
  - *The task that you choose to work on must have an obsessive element. Like the Life's Task, it must connect to something deep within you.*
- ...but take breaks!
  - *In moments of great tension and searching, you allow yourself moments of release. You take walks, engage in activities outside your work (Einstein played the violin), or think*

*about something else, no matter how trivial.*

- Work with your hands whenever you can...we're wired to do so and it will improve your skills
  - *The hand-brain connection is something deeply wired within us; when we attempt to sketch something we must observe it closely, gaining a feel through our fingers of how to bring it to life. Such practice can help you think in visual terms and free your mind from its constant verbalizations. To Leonardo da Vinci, drawing and thinking were synonymous.*
- Deadlines are key. Make them up if needed!
  - *The feeling that we have endless time to complete our work has an insidious and debilitating effect on our minds. Our attention and thoughts become diffused. Our lack of intensity makes it hard for the brain to jolt into a higher gear...For this purpose you must always try to work with deadlines, whether real or manufactured.*
  - *The inventor Thomas Edison understood how much better he worked under pressure. He would deliberately talk to the press about an idea before it was ready.*
- Mastery is beautiful :)
  - *The great chess Master Bobby Fischer spoke of being able to think beyond the various moves of his pieces on the chessboard; after a while he could see "fields of forces" that allowed him to anticipate the entire direction of the match. For the pianist Glenn Gould, he no longer had to focus on notes or parts of the music he was playing, but instead saw the entire architecture of the piece and could express it.*
- Mastery can keep you young!
  - *What is interesting to note is that many Masters who come to possess this high-level intuitive power seem to become younger in mind and spirit with the passing years—something that should be encouraging to us all. They do not need to expend a great deal of energy in order to understand phenomena, and can think creatively with increasing speed. Unless debilitated by disease, they can maintain their spontaneity and mental fluidity well into their seventies and beyond.*
- Closely observe rivals and uncover their weaknesses - "Look wider and think further ahead"

## QUESTIONS AND MY ANSWERS

Actively think on these questions! I'd love to hear your responses. I've provided my own, rough, personal responses below.

**Question #1:** In what area do you want to develop world-class mastery? Think deeply about your childhood hobbies, your current skills, your passions

*I've always had a deep-seated belief that I could change the world, and have jumped from politics to business to startups, but have yet to find a "niche" I can (and want to) dominate.*

**Question #2:** Which present-day masters do you deeply admire? This could help you find a focus area, and a potential mentor!

*Spirituality and self-development are very interesting areas for me. People who really impress me include: Tim Ferriss, Tony Robbins, Joel Osteen, Stephen Covey, Clay Christensen*

**Question #3:** How would you rate your social intelligence and social skills? Mastering people (including yourself) is a lifelong process

*I frequently let my emotions get the best of me (particularly negative ones like impatience). I need to manage these emotions, and also pay deep attention to what people do, not what they say*

**Question #4: Do you need more deadlines in your life?** If so, identify the highest priority area and figure out how to create them!

*Since I'm currently in a period of self-reflection and professional exploration, I feel no specific pressure to produce X or deliver Y by Z date. I need to create specific deadlines and ask people to hold me accountable. Yet another reason for finding a life coach and/or mentor :)*

**Question #5: What false path are you currently on?** Understand why its a false path, and find a way to jump off!

*I've reduced this significantly in the past few years, but my need to buy the latest "stuff" always bothers me. The latest Apple iPhone, the newest shirts from Club Monaco, kitchen gadgets and household appliances that I never use...I now schedule a monthly review of stuff I own, and actively seek to give them to friends, donate them, or simply throw them away...yet it's an emotional problem and too often I find myself erring on the side of keeping something useless which literally adds physical baggage (and mental, too)*

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