

*“Ego Is the Enemy”
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Book Note ~ Dave Kraft*

It wasn't so much the amount of work but the outsized role it had taken in my sense of self.

For people with ambitions, talents, drives, and potential to fulfill, ego comes with the territory.

The ego we see most commonly goes by a more casual definition: an unhealthy belief in our own importance. Arrogance. Self-centered ambition.

The need to be better than, more than, recognized for, far past any reasonable utility—that's ego.

Bill Walsh explained, “self-confidence becomes arrogance, assertiveness becomes obstinacy, and self-assurance becomes reckless abandon.”

We are, as the poet Lucretius put it a few thousand years ago, the proverbial “sick man ignorant of the cause of his malady.”

How are we supposed to reach, motivate, or lead other people if we can't relate to their needs—because we've lost touch with our own?

The performance artist Marina Abramović puts it directly: “If you start believing in your greatness, it is the death of your creativity.”

Three stages.

1. Aspiring
2. Success
3. Failure

Humble in our aspirations. Gracious in our success. Resilient in our failures

But no one is truly successful because they are delusional, self-absorbed, or disconnected.

“Be slow in deliberation, but be prompt to carry out your resolves”

“Be natural and yourself and this glittering flattery will be as the passing breeze of the sea on a warm summer day.”

As Irving Berlin put it, “Talent is only the starting point.”

One might say that the ability to evaluate one's own ability is the most important skill of all.

What is rare is not raw talent, skill, or even confidence, but humility, diligence, and self-awareness.

It's a temptation that exists for everyone—for talk and hype to replace action.

She did what a lot of us do when we're scared or overwhelmed by a project: she did everything but focus on it.

Silence is the respite of the confident and the strong.

The poet Hesiod had this in mind when he said, "A man's best treasure is a thrifty tongue."

The more difficult the task, the more uncertain the outcome, the more costly talk will be and the farther we run from actual accountability.

I just spent four hours talking about this. Doesn't that count for something? The answer is no.

Do you seek the respite of talk or do you face the struggle head-on?

Having authority is not the same as being an authority. Having the right and being right are not the same either.

This is what the ego does. It crosses out what matters and replaces it with what doesn't.

In this course, it is not "Who do I want to be in life?" but "What is it that I want to accomplish in life?"

Do I need this? Or is it really about ego?

The pretense of knowledge is our most dangerous vice, because it prevents us from getting any better. Studious self-assessment is the antidote.

Passion—it's all about passion. Find your passion. Live passionately. Inspire the world with your passion.

Wooden won ten titles in twelve years, including seven in a row,

What humans require in our ascent is purpose and realism. Purpose, you could say, is like passion with boundaries.

More than purpose, we also need realism. Where do we start? What do we do first? What do we do right now? How are we sure that what we're doing is moving us forward? What are we benchmarking ourselves against?

The critical work that you want to do will require your deliberation and consideration. Not passion. Not naïveté.

Great men have almost always shown themselves as ready to obey as they afterwards proved able to command. —Lord Mahon

Greatness comes from humble beginnings; it comes from grunt work. It means you're the least important person in the room—until you change that with results.

Those who have subdued their ego understand that it doesn't degrade you when others treat you poorly; it degrades them.

McClellan was constantly thinking about himself and how wonderful he was doing—congratulating himself for victories not yet won,

When anyone—including his superiors—questioned this comforting fiction, he reacted like a petulant, delusional, vainglorious, and selfish ass.

What a pitiful thing it is when a man lets a little temporary success spoil him, warp his judgment, and he forgets what he is!”

What we don’t protect ourselves against are people and things that make us feel good—or rather, too good.

“The first product of self-knowledge is humility,” Flannery O’Connor once said.

“That on which you so pride yourself will be your ruin,” Montaigne had inscribed on the beam of his ceiling.

It’s here where abstraction meets the road and the real, where we trade thinking and talking for working.

“You can’t build a reputation on what you’re going to do,” was how Henry Ford put it.

We’re simply talking about a lot of hours—that to get where we want to go isn’t about brilliance, but continual effort.

Ego is a wicked sister of success.

“The worst disease which can afflict business executives in their work is not, as popularly supposed, alcoholism; it’s egotism,”

“Whether in middle management or top management, unbridled personal egotism blinds a man to the realities around him; more and more he comes to live in a world of his own imagination; and because

He sincerely believes he can do no wrong,

Here we are having accomplished something. After we give ourselves proper credit, ego wants us to think, I’m special. I’m better. The rules don’t apply to me.

Without the right values, success is brief.

Success is intoxicating, yet to sustain it requires sobriety. We can’t keep learning if we think we already know everything.

Do you know how you can tell when someone is truly humble? I believe there’s one simple test: because they consistently observe and listen, the humble improve. They don’t assume, ‘I know the way.’”

No matter what you’ve done up to this point, you better still be a student. If you’re not still learning, you’re already dying.

Too often, convinced of our own intelligence, we stay in a comfort zone that ensures that we never feel stupid (and are never challenged to learn or reconsider what we know).

The second we let the ego tell us we have graduated, learning grinds to a halt.

“The way to do really big things seems to be to start with deceptively small things.”

Instead of pretending that we are living some great story, we must remain focused on the execution—and on executing with excellence.

All of us waste precious life doing things we don't like, to prove ourselves to people we don't respect, and to get things we don't want.

Far too often, we look at other people and make their approval the standard we feel compelled to meet, and as a result, squander our very potential and purpose. In other words, it's not about beating the other guy. It's not about having more than the others. It's about being what you are, and being as good as possible at it, without succumbing to all the things that draw you away from it.

Life requires those trade-offs, but ego can't allow it.

One of the symptoms of approaching nervous breakdown is the belief that one's work is terribly important.
—Bertrand Russell

The complete and utter sense of certainty that got you here can become a liability if you're not careful.

At the same time, entitlement nickels and dimes other people because it can't conceive of valuing another person's time as highly as its own; and it creates ridiculous expectations.

It is not enough to have great qualities; we should also have the management of them. —La Rochefoucauld

Eisenhower ; his job as it saw it was to set the priorities, to think big picture, and then trust the people beneath him to do the jobs they were hired for.

DeLorean “had the ability to recognize a good opportunity but he didn't know how to make it happen.”

DeLorean couldn't manage himself, and so he had trouble managing others. And so he managed to fail, both himself and the dream.

If you don't think big picture—because you're too busy playing “boss man”—who will?

Micromanagers are egotists who can't manage others and they quickly get overloaded. So do the charismatic visionaries who lose interest when it's time to execute.

Ego needs honors in order to be validated. Confidence, on the other hand, is able to wait and focus on the task at hand regardless of external recognition.

Maybe a bit of that overpoweringness is what got you where you are. But let's ask: Is it really sustainable for the next several decades? Can you really outwork and outrun everyone forever?

Don't be deceived by recognition you have gotten or the amount of money in your bank account.

As James Basford remarked, “It requires a strong constitution to withstand repeated attacks of prosperity.”

We must avoid what the business strategist Jim Collins terms the “undisciplined pursuit of more,”

No one is permanently successful, and not everyone finds success on the first attempt.

Failure always arrives uninvited, but through our ego, far too many of us allow it to stick around.

As Goethe once observed, the great failing is “to see yourself as more than you are and to value yourself at less than your true worth.”

Pity isn't necessary. Their identity isn't threatened. They can get by without constant validation.

This moment is not your life. But it is a moment in your life. How will you use it?

It's far better when doing good work is sufficient. In other words, the less attached we are to outcomes the better.

When the effort—not the results, good or bad—is enough.

There was an unusual encounter between Alexander the Great and the famous Cynic philosopher Diogenes.

“Stop blocking my sun.”

Robert Louis Stevenson later observed about this meeting, “It is a sore thing to have labored along and scaled arduous hilltops, and when all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement.”

“Ambition,” Marcus Aurelius reminded himself, “means tying your well-being to what other people say or do

Do your work. Do it well. Then “let go and let God.” That's all there needs to be.

The bigger the ego the harder the fall.

It can ruin your life only if it ruins your character. —Marcus Aurelius

When we lose, we have a choice: Are we going to make this a lose-lose situation for ourselves and everyone involved? Or will it be a lose . . . and then win?

He who will do anything to avoid failure will almost certainly do something worthy of a failure.

The only real failure is abandoning your principles.

It was the 6th round and the 199th pick of the draft. The young quarterback's name was Tom Brady.

They just hold themselves to a standard that exceeds what society might consider to be objective success. Because of that, they don't much care what other people think; they care

whether they meet their own standards. And these standards are much, much higher than everyone else's.

“Vain men never hear anything but praise.” It can only see what's going well, not what isn't.

When you take ego out of the equation, other people's opinions and external markers won't matter as much. That's more difficult, but ultimately a formula for resilience.

A person who judges himself based on his own standards doesn't crave the spotlight the same way as someone who lets applause dictate success.

A person who can think long term doesn't pity herself during short-term setbacks.

And why should we feel anger at the world? As if the world would notice! —Euripides

This obsession with the past, with something that someone

did or how things should have been, as much as it hurts, is ego embodied. Everyone else has moved on, but you can't, because you can't see anything but your own way. You can't conceive of accepting that someone could hurt you, deliberately or otherwise. So you hate.

There's a quote from Bismarck that says, in effect, any fool can learn from experience. The trick is to learn from other people's experience.