

NOTES FROM: *Secrets of Self-Mastery*, by Mitch Horowitz

SUMMARY: *Secrets of Self-Mastery* is one of my counterpoints to the critics of self-help books who say that they're not "practical" or that they don't help you in the "real world."

Mitch Horowitz is all about *action* and *results*, and in this book series (*Secrets of Self-Mastery* is Book Three), he extends and deepens the work of Napoleon Hill, and brings Hill's success philosophy and metaphysical principles into the everyday realities of how they're actually meant to be lived.

The starting point of all achievement is the burning desire for success, but most people don't know what they truly *want*, which is what the first book in the series was meant to help you identify. In that book, *The Miracle of a Definite Chief Aim*, Horowitz helps you identify *one* overarching purpose or goal that you want to orient your entire *existence* around achieving or pursuing.

For me, my Definite Chief Aim is to read 10,000 books, and a spin-off desire from that is to inspire literacy and the love of books and reading in as many people as I possibly can. By definition, everything else is a *lesser goal*, which makes it easier for me to design my life.

The second book in the series, *The Power of the Master Mind*, is all about recruiting a team of friends and allies to help you *achieve* your Definite Chief Aim (DCA).

No one is self-made. We rise or fall together, and *no one* achieves remarkable success without the assistance of innumerable people who helped them get there. From parents, teachers, business associates, friends and customers, there isn't a person *alive* who achieved anything significant without help.

How the *Master Mind* principle differs, however, is that it's more tactical, targeted and strategic. Book Two helps you build a Master Mind of your own.

In *Secrets of Self-Mastery*, Horowitz focuses on what you can *do*, as an *individual*, to help bring about the kind of success that you're looking for. Things like heightening your persuasiveness, becoming more charismatic, improving your skills and abilities, increasing your levels of luck (which is something you can *influence*, if not control), and to do so in a moral, ethical, upstanding way. *Success without integrity is hollow*, but *ethical ambition* (which is also the title of a great book by Derrick Bell) can take you to the top in a way that won't make you hate yourself by the time you get there.

One of the more important ideas for me was that of coming to terms with what you *actually want in life*, not what others make you feel like you “*should*” want. If you want to get rich, that’s fine! You shouldn’t be ashamed of that.

Rather, you should be honest with yourself about *why* you want to get rich, what you think it’ll do for you, and whether that’s what you *really* want, or if it masks some deeper desire instead. But if you truly and honestly just want to make a bunch of money and buy a fleet of supercars, you should accept that because it’s *authentic*. Maybe in the pursuit of riches you discover something that means even more to you than Maseratis, but you never would have discovered what that *is* if you hadn’t had that initial desire to get rich and pursued it.

Another key idea for me was the necessity of throwing your whole *being* into self-change, if that’s what you truly desire. “*Life respects no halfway measures*,” says Mitch. *You have to go all-in*. You have to desire change more than you want *literally anything else*. Whatever your goal, whatever your DCA, if you want to *succeed* as badly as you want to *breathe*, there’s not a whole lot out there that can stop you.

Above all, *Secrets of Self-Mastery* is about taking *massive action* to change your circumstances. Searchingly honest and offering up no “easy answers,” this is a book that will challenge you to accept your authentic desires, put together a solid plan for their accomplishment, and then to develop yourself into the person capable of putting that plan into action. *When you do, unseen forces will come to your aid. Doors of opportunity will open for you, but you have to be moving down the hallway.*

This book will give you an encouraging push in the direction of achieving your authentic desires. Not from someone who claims to have all the answers, but from a fellow traveler on the path who authentically desires to see you reach the end.

“Genius appears in action.”

“You may be able to identify successful people who ignore these principles. They are easy enough to find. But, knowing a few personally, I maintain that they are privately miserable. I have witnessed the lives of retirees who built their success by walking across the skulls of others. I cannot determine that what I’ve witnessed is universal, but I have never personally seen happy endings in that story. There’s no such thing as ‘just business.’ Life is a whole. You’re either ethical or you’re not.”

“If you take only one message from Hill and the larger body of work that developed around his ideas, make it the cultivation of an impassioned, concrete, and actionable aim toward which you orient your existence. *Nothing* will do more to heighten your abilities and ensure your progress.”

“In selecting an aim, you must be starkly self-honest. The driving force behind the pursuit of an aim is passion. It cannot be faked. Without emotion at your back, you will not be able to sustain the energy and fortitude needed for success. You will get bored, you will drift - and you will fail. Hence, in selecting your aim there must be no self-deception, which quickly catches up with you.”

“Before you can embark on a meaningful journey of self-attainment, you must first truly and starkly acknowledge what you really want. Without an intimate sense of self-understanding, you confront yourself as a stranger.”

“Who am I to judge what is natural, productive, and valuable in another’s life? I can easily imagine someone growing up in squalor, and simply wanting to experience beautiful objects and surroundings or a well-made automobile. That may not be all that person wants, but it may represent something personally meaningful.”

“Never be too spiritually certain that the only things that matter are those we cannot see.”

“Life respects no halfway measures. The only aim that gets reached - whether the answer to a personal crisis, the achievement of a desire, or the search for some kind of inner understanding - is what you want with everything in you, without contradiction or division.”

“Something that we think we do all the time but rarely try: *honestly come to terms with our truest desires.*”

Michael Jackson: “I have learned that it is what you put in your mind, Mentally what you think and do, that makes your person. And you can put any Mental object in this mind and it will bring it into reality. So this means, we can program ourselves to be the people we want to be, whatever the subject matter is, live in it by a Mental physical program, a system of learning and doing, studying all the greats in that field and becoming greater.”

“You must create a need in your life for the things you want.”

Sammy Davis Jr.: “I’d learned a lot in the army, and I knew that above all things in the world I had to become so big, so strong, so important, that those people and their hatred could never touch me. My talent was the only thing that made me a little different from everybody else, and it was all that I could hope would shield me because I was different. I’d weighed it all, over and over again: What have I got? No looks, no money, no education. Just talent. Where do I want to go? I want to be treated well. I want people to like me, and to be decent to me. How do I get there? There’s only one way I can do it with what I have to work with. I’ve got to be a star! I have to be a star like another man has to breathe.”

“If you have a wish for fame, what drives it? Whatever it is, do not be ashamed of it or embarrassed out of it. The very possession of the wish is validity enough. Pursue it - and see. We often hear that fame and riches will not make you happy. But those sentiments frequently come from people who have neither. Or sometimes we hear them from people who *have* attained life’s pinnacle, and found it lacking. In any case, neither observation dictates what’s intimately right for *you*. Find out.”

William James: “The ‘scientific’ life itself has much to do with maybes, and human life at large has everything to do with them. So far as man stands for anything, and is productive or originaive at all, his entire vital function may be said to deal with maybes. Not a victory is gained, not a deed of faithfulness or courage is done, except upon a maybe. It is only by risking our persons from one hour to another that we live at all. And often enough, our faith beforehand in an uncertified result *is the only thing that makes the result come true.*”

“James saw belief in a result or possibility as the core factor in determining how or whether you experience a given outcome. Hence, belief in the power of your mental images can, in itself, increase their efficacy. Try this experiment. The outcome may surprise you.”

“What you say no to is as self-defining as what you agree to.”

Emerson: “We cannot part with our friends. We cannot let our angels go. We do not see that they only go out, that archangels may come in. We are idolaters of the old. We do not believe in the riches of the soul, in its proper eternity and omnipresence. We do not believe that there is any force in today to rival or recreate that beautiful yesterday. We linger in the ruins of the old tent, where once we had bread and shelter and organs, nor believe that the spirit can feed, cover, and nerve us again. We cannot again find aught so dear, so sweet, so graceful. But we sit and weep in vain. The voice of the Almighty saith, ‘Up and onward for evermore!’”

“Movement itself is compensatory. It is a natural and metaphysical law that events conspire to force organic life beyond its boundaries if it must outgrow them to thrive. This is why the roots of a tree can burst through layers of concrete. Waters overrun their banks. You, too, are forced past limitations - a relationship, a workplace, a friendship - in ways that can at first seem painful and jarring; but, looking back, you will often discover that these breaks represented pathways of growth.”

“First and foremost, I do not believe in a one-size-fits all approach to depression, anxiety, or other crises. I endorse a ‘D-Day’ approach to personal problems - throw everything into the struggle: meditation, prayer, exercise, therapy, and, where applicable, medication. Physical and emotional health are deeply intimate; let no one proscribe or dictate works for you. That said, I deeply believe that inspirational and motivational thought are part of the solution to emotional struggles.”

“There is one further ingredient that ensures the efficacy of this or any metaphysical problem-solving program: absolute passion for self-change. Without that, nothing is possible; with it, every idea becomes a key to your liberation.”

“One time I saw a publicist at a publishing meeting get complimented for scoring an important media hit. ‘I didn’t really do anything...’ he began to explain. An executive turned around to him and whispered: *‘Take credit. You’ll get blamed when you don’t deserve it, too.’* In short: be noticed. The spotlight is often where the action is.”

“Social media grants you limitless opportunities to behave caustically. When these opportunities arrive, resist them. Abstaining from a verbal pile-on, snarky comment, or minor insult is an act of rebellion against a digital culture that sells anger back to us. Social media giants profit from every spleen-fueled comment chain. In its aggregate, vitriol may be the biggest online commodity. Be among the minority who do not contribute to the anger economy. You’ll mark yourself as independent and effective.”

“Past generations were taught to ‘dress for success’ - which generally meant suits and shined shoes for men, and professional dresses or pantsuits for women. But today’s secret to dressing for success is adopting a daily ‘uniform’ that makes you feel self-possessed or at home wherever you are. Napoleon Hill emphasized this point in *The Law of Success*: ‘An appearance of prosperity attracts attention, with no exceptions whatsoever. Moreover, a look of prosperity attracts ‘favorable attention,’ because the one dominating desire in every human heart is to be prosperous.’ I would update Hill’s advice by substituting the word ‘independence’ for ‘prosperity.’ Today’s dominating desire is to be self-directed, independent, and - yes - prosperous.”

“To be great, you must dwell in the company of great thoughts and high ideals.”

“Do not be afraid to ask important people to help you.”

Niccolo Machiavelli: “I do not believe that divisions purposely caused can ever lead to good.”

Sun Tzu: “Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt.”

“In a sense, *The Art of War* is about unlearning the complexities of life and returning to the patterns of nature, much like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau prescribed. It returns us to what is simple, powerful, and true.”

“Determine the things that make you lucky, and then do more of them.”

“Filmmaker David Lynch recalled that when he attended art school in Philadelphia, he wasn’t interested in making movies, but in painting. Yet he began to see film as a kind of ‘moving painting,’ and his interests gradually shifted in that direction.”

“Consider: If a mediocre person, by just sticking around, can experience success in unexpected (though lawful) hours, imagine how much greater a success you can personally experience if you persevere as a figure of excellence. A truly prepared and driven person is vastly more primed to reap the fruits of an upturn in the Law of Cycles than a merely mediocre one. Live by this. Although downturns are equally inevitable, they are more often forgotten. Successes linger. This is why an artist, entrepreneur, campaign strategist, or battlefield commander can build his or her reputation on a single success, no matter how many reversals preceded or followed it.”

“You’re right. I don’t take no for an answer. But it’s because conditions can change, and then the answer changes.”

“By recognizing other people - privately, publicly, and, when appropriate, in remuneration - you allow them to feel that they benefit from your success, and you give them a stake in its continuance.”

“Those who feel that you have recognized them will endeavor to find a lost or late check, to put you first on a list, and to make sure your package goes out after the office closes. The opposite also holds true.”

“You demonstrate that you value someone’s work not only in cash but also in *how you deliver it*. Speed is free. Its dividends are invaluable.”

“Important and often-fortuitous things happen to those who place themselves within the flow of life.”

“Fate shines on those whom it can reach.”

A.H.Z. Carr: “It is lucky to know what we want.”

William James: “A single successful effort of moral volition, such as saying ‘no’ to some habitual temptation, or performing some courageous act, will launch a man on a higher level of energy for days or weeks, will give him a new range of power.”

“Ethical courage, not impulsiveness, cloyingness, or truculence, imbues you with nobility.”

“The very act of committing something to paper represents an inceptive, tactile projection of your intention in the world. It is actual. And you will feel this.”

“If there is a secret key to every self-help program, it is absolute, ravenous hunger for self-change. Absent that, self-help is a hobby. With the right degree of hunger, any legitimate program - from the twelve-steps to talk therapy - can make a difference. But never underestimate the depth of passion that must be present to sustain and drive your efforts. As C.S. Lewis put it: ‘All depends on really wanting.’”

“We must never place ourselves above ‘simple’ ideas.”

“You become what you do not forgive.”

“Ironically, this is what dramatist John Milton (1608-1674) demonstrates in his portrait of the Eternal Rebel in the early books of *Paradise Lost*. These passages reflect not only some of the most enthralling portraits of psychological self-determination in history, but, somewhat surprisingly, also suggest a higher, nobler, and better way to live; a way toward which many of us may feel drawn, or are at least questioning toward, but are too squeamish to acknowledge. Consider: Milton’s anti-hero neither bows his head in humility, crumples into defeat, or sets himself the task of regaining his former Master’s favor. Rather, he famously declares from his subterranean throne: *‘Here we may reign secure, and in my choice, To reign is worth ambition though in Hell: Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav’n.’*

In summoning and reviving his defeated troops - those angels who joined him in battling what is considered an overbearing and conformity-demanding God - Milton's Lucifer encourages extreme self-reliance: *'The mind is its own place, and in it self Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.'* The fallen angels heed him. In a historically under-appreciated passage, one states: *'To whom we hate. Let us not then pursue By force impossible, by leave obtain'd Unacceptable, though in Heav'n, our state Of splendid vassalage, but rather seek Our own good from our selves, and from our own, Live to our selves, though in this vast recess, Free, and to none accountable, preferring Hard liberty before the easy yoke of servile Pomp.'*

"Whenever you feel thwarted, assailed, or overlooked, the way to the 'high road' may pass through what is traditionally considered the 'low' - in other words: be defiant, driven, unbowed, and brave. Consider the psychological possibility that it really is better to live solely from your own ethically informed principles than from another's, whether it be a person or an institution."

"Constantly improve. Be like a martial artist or master musician who never stops training and preparing for the instance when his or her moment arrives, sometimes in the strangest or most unexpected way. Someone once defined artistry as excellence meeting opportunity. Be excellent and ready. Preparation is never wasted."

Christopher Reeve: "I see somebody just get up out of a chair and stretch and I go, 'No, you're not even thinking about what you're doing and how lucky you are to do that.'"

"In the end, what is faith? It is knowing that what you see is not all there is. And that hidden resources are available to you in equal measure to the challenges you face - *provided you have worked to make them manifest.*"

"We honor life by valuing the sacrifices that others have made for us, and the opportunities we are granted for developing our highest potential."

The Hermetica: "Your mind is god the father; they are not divided from one another, for their union is life."

"One of nature's laws is that concentration of energies brings impact. The concentration of a striking blow delivers the greatest force. Too often we deplete our energies by dispersing or spreading thin our aims and efforts."

"Only those purchases that expand your power and abilities leave you any richer. Indeed, wealth that fails to accompany expansion is wealth thrown away."

Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Every man is a consumer, and ought to be a producer. He fails to make his place good in the world, unless he not only pays his debt, but also adds something to the common wealth. Nor can he do justice to his genius, without making some larger demand on the world than a bare subsistence. He is by constitution expensive, and needs to be rich.”

“Your talent is a potential source of excellence.”

“I sometimes say that positive thinking is really *deliberative thinking*. The fullest expression of positivity is not picturing rosy tomorrows or dwelling on sunny thoughts, but rather knowing what you truly want, and using your mind’s fullest constructive and causative abilities to move toward it. This requires probing every part of yourself - including the shadow.”

“The profundity of simple ideas is revealed only in their application.”

“The depth of your hunger for self-change is likely to match the benefit you experience from any legitimate self-help program. This is because the individual’s passion for betterment is a force of deliverance. That is perhaps the most actionable principle of human nature. Use it.”

Napoleon Hill: “I ask not for more blessings, but more wisdom with which to make better use of the blessings I now possess.”

“May everyone be happy. May everyone be free from disease. May auspiciousness be seen everywhere. May suffering belong to no one. Peace.”