

Mastery

By: Robert Greene

Highlights

“Everyone holds his fortune in his own hands, like a sculptor the raw material he will fashion into a figure. But it’s the same with that type of artistic activity as with all others: We are merely born with the capability to do it. The skill to mold the material into what we want must be learned and attentively cultivated.” —JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

That’s what this book is about, sculpting your mind and your life in the pursuit of mastery. Becoming the best in a craft, emulating the best practitioners in all fields throughout history.

“We imagine that creativity and brilliance just appear out of nowhere, the fruit of natural talent, or perhaps of a good mood, or an alignment of the stars. It would be an immense help to clear up the mystery— to name this feeling of power, to examine its roots, to define the kind of intelligence that leads to it, and to understand how it can be manufactured and maintained. Let us call this sensation mastery— the feeling that we have a greater command of reality, other people, and ourselves. Although it might be something we experience for only a short while, for others— Masters of their field— it becomes their way of life, their way of seeing the world. (Such Masters include Leonardo da Vinci, Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles Darwin, Thomas Edison, and Martha Graham, among many others.) And at the root of this power is a simple process that leads to mastery— one that is accessible to all of us.”

Then Greene gives a high level overview of the process:

1. We enter a new field with excitement, but also fear about how much there is to learn ahead of us. The greatest danger here is boredom, impatience, fear, and confusion. Once we stop observing and learning, the process towards mastery comes to a halt.
2. But if we manage these emotions and keep pushing forward, we start to gain fluency, and we master the basic skills allowing us to take on bigger and better challenges.
3. Eventually, we move from student to practitioner. We use our own ideas and experiments, getting feedback in the process. We start to use our own style

4. Then as we continue for years we make the leap to mastery. We develop an intuitive sense of the skill and have mastered it to the point of being able to innovate and break the rules.

He breaks this into three phases:

1. Apprenticeship
2. Creative-Active
3. Mastery

His structure is very similar to [the Dreyfus model](#).

1. Discovering Your Calling

“You possess a kind of inner force that seeks to guide you toward your Life’s Task— what you are meant to accomplish in the time that you have to live. In childhood this force was clear to you. It directed you toward activities and subjects that fit your natural inclinations, that sparked a curiosity that was deep and primal. In the intervening years, the force tends to fade in and out as you listen more to parents and peers, to the daily anxieties that wear away at you. This can be the source of your unhappiness— your lack of connection to who you are and what makes you unique. The first move toward mastery is always inward— learning who you really are and reconnecting with that innate force. Knowing it with clarity, you will find your way to the proper career path and everything else will fall into place. It is never too late to start this process.”

Opens with a story of Leonardo Da Vinci’s early years:

“One time, as part of his studio work, he was asked to paint an angel in a larger biblical scene designed by Verrocchio. He had decided that he would make his portion of the scene come to life in his own way. In the foreground in front of the angel he painted a flowerbed, but instead of the usual generalized renderings of plants, Leonardo depicted the flower specimens that he had studied in such detail as a child, with a kind of scientific rigor no one had seen before. For the angel’s face, he experimented with his paints and mixed a new blend that gave it a kind of soft radiance that expressed the angel’s sublime mood. (To help capture this mood, Leonardo had spent time in the local church observing those in fervent prayer, the expression of one young man serving as the model for the angel.) And finally, he determined that he would be the first artist to create realistic angelic wings. For this purpose, he went to the marketplace and purchased several birds. He spent hours sketching their wings, how exactly they merged into their bodies. He wanted to create the sensation that these wings had organically grown from the angel’s shoulders and would bring it natural flight. As usual, Leonardo could not stop there. After his work was completed he became obsessed with birds, and the idea brewed in his mind that perhaps a human could really fly, if Leonardo could figure out the science behind avian flight. Now, several hours every week, he read

and studied everything he could about birds. This was how his mind naturally worked—one idea flowed into another.”

Three steps for finding your calling

This is the goal of discovering your calling, to see what you can completely lose yourself in, become completely obsessed with. So how do we do that?

“First, you must connect or reconnect with your inclinations, that sense of uniqueness. The first step then is always inward. You search the past for signs of that inner voice or force. You clear away the other voices that might confuse you— parents and peers. You look for an underlying pattern, a core to your character that you must understand as deeply as possible.”

“Second, with this connection established, you must look at the career path you are already on or are about to begin. The choice of this path— or redirection of it— is critical. To help in this stage you will need to enlarge your concept of work itself. Too often we make a separation in our lives— there is work and there is life outside work, where we find real pleasure and fulfillment.”

He makes the distinction here, too, that you shouldn’t let it be separate from your life: “Work is often seen as a means for making money so we can enjoy that second life that we lead. Even if we derive some satisfaction from our careers we still tend to compartmentalize our lives in this way. This is a depressing attitude, because in the end we spend a substantial part of our waking life at work. If we experience this time as something to get through on the way to real pleasure, then our hours at work represent a tragic waste of the short time we have to live. Instead you want to see your work as something more inspiring, as part of your vocation... Your work then is something connected deeply to who you are, not a separate compartment in your life. You develop then a sense of your vocation.”

“Finally, you must see your career or vocational path more as a journey with twists and turns rather than a straight line. You begin by choosing a field or position that roughly corresponds to your inclinations. This initial position offers you room to maneuver and important skills to learn. You don’t want to start with something too lofty, too ambitious—you need to make a living and establish some confidence. Once on this path you discover certain side routes that attract you, while other aspects of this field leave you cold. You adjust and perhaps move to a related field, continuing to learn more about yourself, but always expanding off your skill base. Like Leonardo, you take what you do for others and make it your own.”

Then he gives some strategies for finding this “life task”

1. **Return to your origins** : for many of the masters, their inclination presented itself clearly during childhood. What were you obsessed with when you were younger?
2. **Occupy the perfect niche** : Find where your interests align in a field to identify a particular niche that you can dominate.
3. **Avoid the false path** : We'll all be attracted to fields for the wrong reasons: money, fame, parental influence. We have to rebel against these forces and be honest about what our interests are.
4. **Let go of the past** : Avoid the sunk cost fallacy, if something is wrong for you, abandon it. You're not wedded to your past choices. Don't feel like you have to rigidly stick with a plan that you set before.
5. **Find your way back** : You'll be tempted to deviate from the path throughout your pursuit of mastery, even if you do mistakenly veer away, you can always come back. Reminds me of Siddhartha.

2. Submit to Reality: The Ideal Apprenticeship

Opening: "After your formal education, you enter the most critical phase in your life— a second, practical education known as The Apprenticeship. Every time you change careers or acquire new skills, you reenter this phase of life. The dangers are many. If you are not careful, you will succumb to insecurities, become embroiled in emotional issues and conflicts that will dominate your thoughts; you will develop fears and learning disabilities that you will carry with you throughout your life. Before it is too late you must learn the lessons and follow the path established by the greatest Masters, past and present— a kind of Ideal Apprenticeship that transcends all fields. In the process you will master the necessary skills, discipline your mind, and transform yourself into an independent thinker, prepared for the creative challenges on the way to mastery."

So how do we get this ideal apprenticeship?

"The principle is simple and must be engraved deeply in your mind: 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— the first transformation on the way to mastery... This has a simple consequence: you must choose places of work and positions that offer the greatest possibilities for learning... This means that you move toward challenges that will toughen and improve you, where you will get the most objective feedback on your performance and progress. You do not choose apprenticeships that seem easy and comfortable."

The three steps of the apprenticeship phase

Step one: Deep observation — the passive mode

“The greatest mistake you can make in the initial months of your apprenticeship is to imagine that you have to get attention, impress people, and prove yourself. These thoughts will dominate your mind and close it off from the reality around you.”

You start by observing who is doing well in the field and trying to learn rules and strategies through your observation of them.

Step two: Skill acquisition — the practice mode

“First, it is essential that you begin with one skill that you can master, and that serves as a foundation for acquiring others. You must avoid at all cost the idea that you can manage learning several skills at a time. You need to develop your powers of concentration, and understand that trying to multitask will be the death of the process.”

“Second, the initial stages of learning a skill invariably involve tedium. Yet rather than avoiding this inevitable tedium, you must accept and embrace it. The pain and boredom we experience in the initial stage of learning a skill toughens our minds, much like physical exercise. Too many people believe that everything must be pleasurable in life, which makes them constantly search for distractions and short-circuits the learning process.”

Greene emphasizes the importance of focus and deep work (deliberate practice):

“This process of hardwiring cannot occur if you are constantly distracted, moving from one task to another. In such a case, the neural pathways dedicated to this skill never get established; what you learn is too tenuous to remain rooted in the brain. It is better to dedicate two or three hours of intense focus to a skill than to spend eight hours of diffused concentration on it. You want to be as immediately present to what you are doing as possible.”

He also mentions the 10,000 hour rule as the “gold standard” for how long it takes in practice to reach expertise.

Step three: Experimentation — the active mode

As you gain more skill and understanding, you must move into the active mode where you take the skill and apply it yourself. You have to break out of just following the rules, and start creating new works on your own.

Strategies for Completing the Ideal Apprenticeship

Value learning over money : Einstein working at the patent office to give himself time to work on his thought experiments. Learn to get by on little money and give yourself the time to learn as much as possible.

Keep expanding your horizons : Mingle with as many different people and ideas as possible, they'll all contribute to enhancing your learning. Whenever you feel like you are settling into some circle, force yourself to shake things up and look for new challenges

Revert to a feeling of inferiority: Zen mind beginner's mind, if we feel like we already know something or have mastered it, then we stop learning. Need to assume we're beginners and that there's more to learn.

Trust the process: It takes time. As long as you're learning and working, you will keep moving towards mastery.

Move toward resistance and pain: Once we get good at part of a skill, we tend to just do that since it's easy and familiar. We avoid our weaknesses, and that prevents us from learning. Instead, we must follow the "resistance path," fighting against where we want to go and making it more challenging for ourselves.

Apprentice yourself in failure: When a machine malfunctions, it shows you where you need to improve it. Treat your own failures the same way, as opportunities for improvement.

Combine the "how" and the "what": Get a full understanding of the skill, not just the recipes or tools, don't leave parts of it unlearned.

Advance through trial and error: Try out different paths and adopt new skills, avoid following a fixed career path, especially spend your 20s moving around and exploring different paths, learning everything you can along the way.

"In this new age, those who follow a rigid, singular path in their youth often find themselves in a career dead end in their forties, or overwhelmed with boredom. The wide-ranging apprenticeship of your twenties will yield the opposite— expanding possibilities as you get older."

3. Absorb the Master's Power: The Mentor Dynamic

"The mentor-protégé relationship is the most efficient and productive form of learning. The right mentors know where to focus your attention and how to challenge you. Their knowledge and experience become yours. They provide immediate and realistic feedback on your work, so you can improve more rapidly. Through an intense

person-to-person interaction, you absorb a way of thinking that contains great power and can be adapted to your individual spirit. Choose the mentor who best fits your needs and connects to your Life's Task. Once you have internalized their knowledge, you must move on and never remain in their shadow. Your goal is always to surpass your mentors in mastery and brilliance."

"To learn requires a sense of humility. We must admit that there are people out there who know our field much more deeply than we do. Their superiority is not a function of natural talent or privilege, but rather of time and experience."

"If you work on yourself first, as Faraday did, developing a solid work ethic and organizational skills, eventually the right teacher will appear in your life."

"Although one mentor at a time is best, it is not always possible to find the perfect one. In such a case, an alternate strategy is to find several mentors in your immediate environment, each one filling strategic gaps in your knowledge and experience. Having more than one mentor has side benefits, giving you several connections and important allies to rely upon later on. Similarly, if your circumstances limit your contacts, books can serve as temporary mentors, as *The Improvement of the Mind* did for Faraday."

Strategies for Deepening the Mentor Dynamic

Choose a mentor according to your needs and inclination: "In this case, the right choice can perhaps provide what your parents didn't give you— support, confidence, direction, space to discover things on your own. Look for mentors who can do that, and beware of falling into the opposite trap— opting for a mentor who resembles one of your parents, including all of his negative traits. You will merely repeat what hampered you in the first place."

Gaze deep into the mentor's mirror: The mentor can show you where you're weakest, don't be afraid to see it. Get used to criticism, welcome it. Through their realistic feedback you'll increase your confidence and ability.

Transfigure their ideas: As you incorporate the lessons of your master, begin to adapt them to yourself. Don't purely copy them, think for yourself. You have to surpass them eventually.

Create a back and forth dynamic: You have to push back sometimes and make it clear what you need from the mentor. Work on the relationship together, and adjust their instruction to fit your needs.

4. See People as they Are: Social Intelligence

“Often the greatest obstacle to our pursuit of mastery comes from the emotional drain we experience in dealing with the resistance and manipulations of the people around us. If we are not careful, our minds become absorbed in endless political intrigues and battles. The principal problem we face in the social arena is our naïve tendency to project onto people our emotional needs and desires of the moment. We misread their intentions and react in ways that cause confusion or conflict. Social intelligence is the ability to see people in the most realistic light possible. By moving past our usual self-absorption, we can learn to focus deeply on others, reading their behavior in the moment, seeing what motivates them, and discerning any possible manipulative tendencies. Navigating smoothly the social environment, we have more time and energy to focus on learning and acquiring skills. Success attained without this intelligence is not true mastery, and will not last.”

Greene breaks this into two kinds of knowledge: specific knowledge of human nature — the ability to read people, to get a feel for how they see the world, and to understand their individuality, and the general knowledge of human nature, which means accumulating an understanding of the overall patterns of human behavior that transcend us as individuals, including some of the darker qualities we often disregard.

Specific Knowledge — Reading People

You have to learn to see people as they are. “To begin this process, you need to train yourself to pay less attention to the words that people say and greater attention to their tone of voice, the look in their eye, their body language— all signals that might reveal a nervousness or excitement that is not expressed verbally. If you can get people to become emotional, they will reveal a lot more.”

In the end, your goal is to identify and pierce through to what makes people unique, to understand the character and values that lie at their cores.

General Knowledge — The 7 Deadly Realities

Envy : It is our nature to constantly compare ourselves to others— in terms of money, looks, coolness, intelligence, popularity, or any number of categories. In general, it is by standing out too much that you will spark this ugly emotion, and so it is best to maintain a nonthreatening exterior and to blend in well with the group, at least until you are so successful it no longer matters.

Conformism: When people form groups of any type, a kind of organizational mind-set inevitably sets in. Although members of the group might trumpet their tolerance and celebration of people’s differences, the reality is that those who are markedly different

make them feel uncomfortable and insecure, calling the values of the dominant culture into question.

Rigidity : The world has become increasingly complex in many ways, and whenever we humans face a situation that seems complicated our response is to resort to a kind of artificial simplicity, to create habits and routines that give us a sense of control. The best strategy is to simply accept rigidity in others, outwardly displaying deference to their need for order. On your own, however, you must work to maintain your open spirit, letting go of bad habits and deliberately cultivating new ideas.

Self-obsessiveness : In the work environment, we almost inevitably think first and foremost of ourselves. In general, in your interactions with people, find a way to make the conversations revolve around them and their interests, all of which will go far to winning them to your side.

Laziness : We all have the tendency to want to take the quickest, easiest path to our goals, but we generally manage to control our impatience; we understand the superior value of getting what we want through hard work. In general, be wary of people who want to collaborate—they are often trying to find someone who will do the heavier lifting for them.

Flightiness : We like to make a show of how much our decisions are based on rational considerations, but the truth is that we are largely governed by our emotions, which continually color our perceptions.

Passive Aggression : The root cause of all passive aggression is the human fear of direct confrontation—the emotions that a conflict can churn up and the loss of control that ensues.

Strategies for Acquiring Social Intelligence

Speak through your work: If you are experiencing the pressures of political maneuvering within the group, do not lose your head and become consumed with all of the pettiness. By remaining focused and speaking socially through your work, you will both continue to raise your skill level and stand out among all the others who make a lot of noise but produce nothing.

Craft the appropriate persona : You must see the creation of a persona as a key element in social intelligence, not something evil or demonic. We all wear masks in the social arena, playing different roles to suit the different environments we pass through. You are simply becoming more conscious of the process. Think of it as theater. By creating a persona that is mysterious, intriguing, and masterful, you are playing to the public, giving them something compelling and pleasurable to witness. You are allowing

them to project their fantasies onto you, or directing their attention to other theatrical qualities.

See yourself as others see you : Almost all of us have social flaws of some sort, ranging from the relatively harmless to those that can get us in trouble. Perhaps it could be that we talk too much, or are too honest in our criticisms of people, or take offense too easily when others do not respond positively to our ideas. Be honest with yourself about what these flaws might be, looking back at conflicts you've had and how your actions may have caused them.

Suffer fools gladly: In dealing with fools you must adopt the following philosophy: they are simply a part of life, like rocks or furniture. All of us have foolish sides, moments in which we lose our heads and think more of our ego or short-term goals. It is human nature. Seeing this foolishness within you, you can then accept it in others. This will allow you to smile at their antics, to tolerate their presence as you would a silly child, and to avoid the madness of trying to change them.

5. Awaken the Dimensional Mind: The Creative-Active

“As you accumulate more skills and internalize the rules that govern your field, your mind will want to become more active, seeking to use this knowledge in ways that are more suited to your inclinations. What will impede this natural creative dynamic from flourishing is not a lack of talent, but your attitude. Feeling anxious and insecure, you will tend to turn conservative with your knowledge, preferring to fit into the group and sticking to the procedures you have learned. Instead, you must force yourself in the opposite direction. As you emerge from your apprenticeship, you must become increasingly bold. Instead of feeling complacent about what you know, you must expand your knowledge to related fields, giving your mind fuel to make new associations between different ideas. You must experiment and look at problems from all possible angles. As your thinking grows more fluid your mind will become increasingly dimensional, seeing more and more aspects of reality. In the end, you will turn against the very rules you have internalized, shaping and reforming them to suit your spirit. Such originality will bring you to the heights of power.”

The goal here is to awaken your “dimensional mind,” to think beyond the typical constraints of your skill and keep growing and learning. Not get stuck in your ways, or conform to the norms of your time.

Step One: The Creative Task

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... it is the choice of where you direct your energy that makes the master.

Your emotional commitment to what you're doing will determine your success. Choose something that appeals to your sense of unconventionalness and has a hint of rebellion, it will keep you emotionally engaged.

Keep two things in mind when picking your task: it must be realistic while still being at the limits of your reach so that you stretch for it. And you must let go of your need for comfort and security. "If you need everything in your life to be simple and safe, this open-ended nature of the task will fill you with anxiety. If you are worried about what others might think and about how your position in the group might be jeopardized, then you will never really create anything."

Step Two: Creative Strategies

The mind will naturally tighten up unless it's constantly stretched out. Use these five strategies to keep your mind open and flexible.

1. **Cultivate Negative Capability** : Learn to endure and embrace mysteries and uncertainties.
 - **Allow for Serendipity: Move outside your normal realm of comfort and interest, explore far and wide, while staying open and avoiding jumping to conclusions. Let yourself be surprised and discover new opportunities. Keep a notebook with you at all time and record ideas as they appear to you.**
 - **Alternate the Mind Through "the Current":** The Current is a constant dialogue between our thoughts and reality. If we go into this process deeply enough, we come into contact with a theory that explains something far beyond the capability of our limited senses.
 - **Alter Your Perspective:** Try to see the subject or problem from different angles, look at the how instead of the what, shift from the macro to the micro (or vice versa), look for what's weird about it, look for what's absent instead of just what's present (dog that didn't bark)
 - **Revert to Primal Intelligence:** Try to think beyond language, get visual or physical, use diagrams and models,

Step Three: The Creative Breakthrough — Tension and Insight

"At a particular high point of tension, they let go for a moment. This could be as simple as stopping work and going to sleep; or it could mean deciding to take a break, or to temporarily work on something else. What almost inevitably happens in such moments is that the solution, the perfect idea for completing the work comes to them. After ten long years of incessant thinking on the problem of general relativity, Albert Einstein

decided one evening to simply give up. He had had enough. It was beyond him. He went to bed early, and when he awoke the solution suddenly came to him.”

“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. The connections do not occur. For this purpose you must always try to work with deadlines, whether real or manufactured.”

Emotional Pitfalls

Certain pitfalls will be most likely to threaten you along the way to mastery.

Complacency: Constantly remind yourself of how little you truly know, and of how mysterious the world remains.

Conservatism: If you gain any kind of attention or success for your work in this phase, you face the great danger of creeping conservatism. Make creativity rather than comfort your goal and you will ensure far more success for the future.

Dependency: In the Apprenticeship Phase you relied upon mentors and those above you to supply you with the necessary standards of judgment for your field. But if you are not careful, you will carry this need for approval over into the next phase.

Impatience: The best way to neutralize our natural impatience is to cultivate a kind of pleasure in pain— like an athlete, you come to enjoy rigorous practice, pushing past your limits, and resisting the easy way out.

Grandiosity: What must ultimately motivate you is the work itself and the process. Public attention is actually a nuisance and a distraction. Such an attitude is the only defense against falling into the traps set by our ego.

Inflexibility: You must know your field inside and out, and yet be able to question its most entrenched assumptions.

Strategies for the Creative-Active Phase

There are nine different strategies you can use for enhancing the creative-active phase.

The Authentic Voice : “Anyone who would spend ten years absorbing the techniques and conventions of their field, trying them out, mastering them, exploring and personalizing them, would inevitably find their authentic voice and give birth to something unique and expressive.”

The Fact of Great Yield: “Better to look into ten such facts, with only one yielding a great discovery, than to look into twenty ideas that bring success but have trivial

implications. You are the supreme hunter, ever alert, eyes scanning the landscape for the fact that will expose a once-hidden reality, with profound consequences.”

Mechanical Intelligence: In the end, you win through superior craftsmanship, not marketing. This craftsmanship involves creating something with an elegant, simple structure, getting the most out of your materials— a high form of creativity.

Natural Powers: Give yourself open-ended time and focus, develop a wide understanding of your field, never settle into complacency, and embrace slowness as a virtue in itself. Imagine yourself years ahead looking back on the work you’ve completed.

The Open Field: Create a space to build something new, by creating something new you will create your own audience, and attain the ultimate position of power in culture.

The High End: Your project or the problem you are solving should always be connected to something larger— a bigger question, an overarching idea, an inspiring goal. Whenever your work begins to feel stale, you must return to the larger purpose and goal that impelled you in the first place.

The Evolutionary Hijack: What constitutes true creativity is the openness and adaptability of our spirit.

Dimensional Thinking: You are not in a hurry. You prefer the holistic approach. You look at the object of study from as many angles as possible, giving your thoughts added dimensions. You assume that the parts of any whole interact with one another and cannot be completely separated. In your mind, you get as close to the complicated truth and reality of your object of study as possible. In the process, great mysteries will unravel themselves before your eyes.

Alchemical Creativity and the Unconscious: Your task as a creative thinker is to actively explore the unconscious and contradictory parts of your personality, and to examine similar contradictions and tensions in the world at large.

6. Fuse the Intuitive with the Rational: Mastery

“All of us have access to a higher form of intelligence, one that can allow us to see more of the world, to anticipate trends, to respond with speed and accuracy to any circumstance. This intelligence is cultivated by deeply immersing ourselves in a field of study and staying true to our inclinations, no matter how unconventional our approach might seem to others. Through such intense immersion over many years we come to internalize and gain an intuitive feel for the complicated components of our field. When we fuse this intuitive feel with rational processes, we expand our minds to the outer limits of our potential and are able to see into the secret core of life itself. We then come to have powers that approximate the instinctive force and speed of animals, but with the added reach that our human consciousness brings us. This power is what our brains

were designed to attain, and we will be naturally led to this type of intelligence if we follow our inclinations to their ultimate ends.”

The Roots of Masterly Intuition

“At first, our intuitions might be so faint that we do not pay attention to them or trust them. All Masters talk of this phenomenon. But over time they learn to notice these rapid ideas that come to them. They learn to act on them and verify their validity. Some lead nowhere, but others lead to tremendous insights. Over time, Masters find that they can call up more and more of these high-level intuitions, which are now sparking all over the brain. Accessing this level of thinking on a more regular basis, they can fuse it even more deeply with their rational forms of thinking.”

“This desire for what is simple and easy infects all of us, often in ways we are mostly unaware of. The only solution is the following: We must learn how to quiet the anxiety we feel whenever we are confronted with anything that seems complex or chaotic.”

Strategies for Attaining Mastery

Connect to your environment — Primal Powers : The ability to connect deeply to your environment is the most primal and in many ways the most powerful form of mastery the brain can bring us.

Play to your strengths — Supreme Focus: Mastery is like swimming— it is too difficult to move forward when we are creating our own resistance or swimming against the current. Know your strengths and move with them.

Transform yourself through practice — The Fingertip Feel: If we are learning a complex skill, such as flying a jet in combat, we must master a series of simple skills, one on top of the other. Each time one skill becomes automatic, the mind is freed up to focus on the higher one. At the very end of this process, when there are no more simple skills to learn, the brain has assimilated an incredible amount of information, all of which has become internalized, part of our nervous system.

Internalize the Details — The Life Force : Seeing your work as something alive, your path to mastery is to study and absorb these details in a universal fashion, to the point at which you feel the life force and can express it effortlessly in your work.

Widen Your Vision — The Global Perspective: In any competitive environment in which there are winners or losers, the person who has the wider, more global perspective will inevitably prevail. The reason is simple: such a person will be able to think beyond the moment and control the overall dynamic through careful strategizing.

Submit to the Other — The Inside Out Perspective: We can never really experience what other people are experiencing. We always remain on the outside looking in, and this is the cause of so many misunderstandings and conflicts.

Synthesize all forms of knowledge — The Universal Man/Woman : In any way possible, you should strive to be a part of this universalizing process, extending your own knowledge to other branches, further and further out. The rich ideas that will come from such a quest will be their own reward.

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