

NOTES FROM: *Getting There: A Book of Mentors*, by Gillian Zoe Segal

SUMMARY: This was a random book app find, and when I gave it a chance I *ripped* right through it to the end, taking copious notes as I went along, surprised and delighted again and again by wisdom and advice from a variety of people, most of whom I had never even heard of before picking up the book. It reminded me of *Tools of Titans*, by Tim Ferriss, actually!

***Getting There* is a collection of interviews with thirty leaders in diverse fields (you've got Warren Buffett, Muhammad Yunus, Michael Bloomberg, Hans Zimmer, among others), where they share some of their lowest moments, their fantastic wins and blazing successes, as well as their unique wisdom that I've never found anywhere else.**

There's career advice, life advice, relationship advice, money advice, and everything in between, and almost every single interview is one that I wish would have gone on for longer. Basically what I'm saying is that I ordered about a dozen new books while I was reading this one, because the wise and impressive interviewees kept sending me off in all these different thought-provoking directions. I'm glad I found this one!

Cathy Guisewite: "When you remember what you love, you will remember who you are. If you remember who you are, you can do anything."

Warren Buffett: "He taught me that what's on your inner scorecard is more important than what's on your outer scorecard."

Warren Buffett: "You have lived a successful life if, as you grow older, the people who you hope love you actually do. I have never known anyone who does not feel like a success when they have gotten close to my age and have a lot of people who love them. I know enormously wealthy individuals who have dinners held in their honor, hospital wings named after them, and all that sort of thing, but the truth is that no one thinks much of them. I have to believe that at some point they realize it, and everything gets quite empty after that."

Warren Buffett: "Try to work for whomever you admire most. It won't necessarily be the job you'll have ten years later, but you'll have the opportunity to pick up so much as you go along. You don't want to take a job just for the money, and you should never work for people who make your stomach churn or who keep you up at night. If you are in a situation like that, think about changing it. And make sure you follow your passion - whatever turns you on. You want to be excited when you get out of bed in the morning. I tap dance to work every day, and I work with people I think are terrific."

Warren Buffett: "Bad habits are hard to kick, but good habits are too."

Warren Buffett: "My good friend and hero, Tom Murphy, had an incredible generosity of spirit. He would do five things for you without thinking about whether you did something for him. After he was done with those five things, he'd be thinking about how to do the sixth."

Tom Murphy: "Warren, you can always tell someone to go to hell tomorrow."

Warren Buffett: "I try to find businesses I can grasp, where I like the people running them and think the price makes sense in relation to the future economics. I believe very strongly in operating within what I call my 'circle of competence.' The most important thing in terms of your circle of competence is not how large it is but how well you define the perimeter. If you know where your edges are, you are way better off than somebody who has a circle five times as large but is very fuzzy about the border. Knowing what to leave out is as important as knowing what to focus on."

Matthew Weiner: "It took seven years from the time I wrote *Mad Men* until it finally got on the screen. I lived every day with that script as if it were going to happen tomorrow. That's the faith you have to have."

Matthew Weiner: "You should want it so badly that you don't have a choice. You have to commit for the long haul. There's no shame in being a starving artist. Get a day job, but don't get too good at it. It will take you away from your writing."

Michael Bloomberg: "Be the first one in and the last one out. If you are there early and stay late, you get a chance to talk to people who would not otherwise take your call. I built many relationships by being early. You can call the chairman of the board of almost any company early in the morning. If he's a good chairman, he's there. The secretary's not, so he'll actually answer the phone. The best time to strike is when the gatekeepers aren't there!"

Anderson Cooper: "I wanted to become autonomous, prepare myself for any eventuality, and protect myself from further pain. I think that's part of what drew me to war zones and other places where people's whole lives have been turned upside down. I wanted to learn about survival from those who were still standing."

John Paul Dejoria: "I had to learn to overcome rejection, because after you've had fifteen doors slammed in your face, you need to be as enthusiastic at door number sixteen as you were at the first door if you want to make a sale. The average life of an encyclopedia salesman was three days, but I did it for three years! I was able to last so long because I truly believed that everyone needed a set of these books and that I was doing something good for my customers. If you don't believe in what you are selling, then you are just a salesman. I saw myself as somebody who helped people make the right decision."

John Paul Dejoria: "Always do the best you can, not the least you can get away with. When you do your job, even if it's just cleaning an office, do it as if somebody you want to impress is watching your every step."

Jim Koch: "An objective risk is something that can kill you. A subjective risk is something that just frightens you. The two are often extremely different, but, unfortunately, things that frighten you are often not the real dangers, and the real dangers are often things that don't frighten you. As a result, our instincts don't always work effectively. For example, my Outward Bound students were always scared of the rappelling portion of the trip. And I understand why - they had to stand at the edge of a 150-foot cliff and walk off it backward with only this little rope in their hands. I constantly had to talk them into it. But while that seems like a very risky thing to do, it's not. Those ropes will hold a car. Nobody ever gets killed doing that. On the other hand, walking up a not-so-steep glacier with nice, bright sun on a beautiful May morning, *that's dangerous*. Because it's May, the snow is melting. Underneath are all these layers put down during the winter. On some of them it snowed and then there was a little rain and then it iced and then, perhaps, some soft snow fell on top of that. That's a very unstable combination."

It avalanches. Avalanches don't often happen on the steep, scary-looking slopes. The snow doesn't accumulate enough on those steep inclines. It's the gentler slopes that can kill you."

Jim Koch: "While I was still pondering my beer idea, I had a conversation with one of my mentors - a senior guy at General Electric. I mentioned the risk involved and he said something very insightful: 'Jim, I would sooner hire you for a senior position at General Electric with two years of failed entrepreneurship on your resume than with two more years at BCG.' He didn't think that trying something entrepreneurial was an objective risk because I'd always be able to rejoin the workforce if it didn't work out. It *seemed* like a risky thing to do because it looked very likely to fail, but the real risk was *not* doing it. The objective risk was wasting years of my life stuck in something that appeared attractive but that I really didn't enjoy. A lot of entrepreneurship and innovation seems perilous, but it's not. And a lot of things that seem safe and comfortable are, in fact, profoundly risky. *That's* subjective versus objective risk."

Jim Koch: "I learned another obvious lesson from mountaineering: You never climb a mountain to get to the middle; you climb it to get to the top. So I set our company's goal as becoming the largest and most respected high-end beer in the United States. That was the summit for us."

Jim Koch: "People tend to think way too linearly about career paths, but career wanderings often have great outcomes too. There's a whole lot less urgency than you think. It's okay to drop out, breathe, and try other stuff. I could not have designed a better life's work. I get up every morning excited. I am completely fulfilled and have not gotten the least bit bored or tired, which is unusual. But the path didn't appear to me until I was thirty-four, and my wanderings are what prepared me for it."

Jim Koch: "I have an old message from a guy framed and hung on my office wall. It says: 'I'll call back on Monday.' It was a Friday when he called and left that message with my secretary. On Sunday night, the guy died of a heart attack. He was only thirty-four. Monday never came. *Monday doesn't always come.*"

Jim Koch: "The Boston Beer Company has a simple hiring standard - never hire someone unless they will raise the average. Before we employ anyone, we ask, 'Is this person better than the average of the current people we have working in this position?' If the answer is no, we don't make the hire. When you bring someone on board who is below your company's average, you degrade the quality of your company. If you always hire people who raise your average, your company gets increasingly better."

Ian Schrager: "In the end, there's so little that separates people. Those who want success the most and are relentless about pursuing it are the ones who get it."

Ian Schrager: "There are very few things in life that you can't recover from."

Kathy Ireland: "My parents didn't see barriers or limits for us, so neither did we."

Nitin Nohria: "The government designed our curriculum, and everyone learned from the same set of prescribed textbooks. I was a sincere, high-performing kid, but I had no independent curiosity. In seventh grade that changed. My English teacher approached me one day and said, 'How would you like to read books by Nobel Prize winners in literature?' He gave me about ten books from his own library. I don't know exactly what this teacher saw in me, but he clearly felt I could read more than the government thought I could."

Laird Hamilton: "Although parts of my life have been tough, I wouldn't change any of it if it meant not being the person I am today."

Laird Hamilton: "It is essential to have the support of the person you are in a relationship with. If your partner prevents you from fulfilling your potential, it's not good for anybody. My wife understands what I do and knows that continuing along the path I'm on is part of what I need to be happy. I also feel that it's important for my daughters to know the real me - the guy who comes in from riding giant waves and has that look in his eye. I want them to see what it does for me so that perhaps one day they can find the thing that gives them that feeling."

Muhammad Yunus: "Banks conducted their business primarily in city centers. We went to the small villages where our borrowers lived. Banks did not lend to women. We set an initial goal of having half our borrowers be women. Banks required collateral for their loans and wanted to know as much as they could about a person's past before lending. We didn't require collateral and were more interested in the future prospects of our borrowers. I believe that poverty is created by society and is not a reflection on the poor themselves. There is nothing wrong with them. They are not destitute and illiterate because they are stupid or lazy - they were just born into a life where there was no formal financial structure available to help them succeed. Grameen was founded to give these people the break they needed to start fresh and unleash their potential."

Muhammad Yunus: "Men were especially against us because our efforts tended to empower women. Feeling threatened and insulted, they tried to frighten off women by saying that if they took a loan from us they would be banished from society, attacked, or even thrown into the deep sea. Women not only worried about creating problems for their families but were also insecure about handling money. Most of them had never touched it before and had been told their whole lives that they were good for nothing. It required a lot of patience and determination, but we didn't give up. We continued to calmly explain ourselves and attempted to build the confidence of our borrowers - especially the women. We had to convince them to see value in themselves and that they didn't need rank or status to advance their stations in life. It took six years before we reached our initial goal of women making up fifty percent of our borrowers, but along the way something interesting happened. We observed that when money entered a family through women it went toward purchases that benefited children and the household in general, while most men tended to focus on their own personal needs. We concluded that females had more drive to overcome poverty and lending to them brought about the most rapid change for the entire society. As a result, we began to concentrate on lending to women. Today, ninety-seven percent of Grameen borrowers are women."

Rachel Zoe: "I did need to toughen up, and surviving the hardships with my boss made me realize that, but I believe people can be strong and nice at the same time. My father is the nicest person I've ever known and he has served as the CEO and president of several companies throughout his career."

Helene Gayle: "Social change is better achieved by being for something than against something."

Hans Zimmer: "The truly important, existential things never quite filtered through my daydreams. On one hand, being a poor artist sucked, but in many ways it was a grand life. I was surrounded by other poor artists. At the end of the day we would all sit around a table, have interesting conversations, then suddenly pick up our instruments and make music together. That created a feeling I couldn't find anywhere else. Days went into nights, and nights went into mornings. The only time we noticed that we didn't have money was when the electricity would get turned off."

Hans Zimmer: "Whenever I need legal or medical advice, I stand up in front of my orchestra and announce my problem. Half of the musicians are doctors and the other half are lawyers whose parents forced them into those jobs."