

NOTES FROM: *Be Useful*, by Arnold Schwarzenegger:

SUMMARY: Arnold's book is the most Schwarzenegger thing I've ever read in my life. I mean that in a good way, of course. It's *full* of his big personality and he doesn't tone anything down (like he ever has), the result being this compulsively readable book, full of *great* life advice and inspirational passages. It's motivating as hell, and I *tore* through it like I was ripping a phonebook in half!

There's a lot in the book about *vision*, and the *supreme importance* of having an overwhelmingly clear, *specific idea* of how you want your one and only life to unfold. Not only that, but he backed up his vision with *massive action*, working out twice a day for hours on end (probably overtraining, but whatever) and then going to school, to work laying bricks with Franco Columbu, or off to acting classes in the evening.

His path was not without obstacles, of course. None of us can claim that. Every single one of us will face people in our lives who either don't believe in us or *actively* want us to fail. Not everyone is going to believe in your vision, no matter how strongly *you* believe in it. Arnold says that you can either *use* the naysayers you'll inevitably meet on the path to your goals, or you can *ignore* them, but you can never, *ever* listen to them.

They are *roadblocks*, and you can either go around, above, or *through*, but you can *never* turn back. *Not from your vision*. It should be *so* clear and energizing - almost literally like *a photograph in your mind* of where you're going, what it will look like when you get there, and how you'll feel when you arrive - that it will inspire you to hold onto that vision and *never let it go*.

Arnold can also be very funny, and the Governorator's got jokes for sure. I've always laughed a little whenever he advises people to "*sleep faster*" in order to leave more time in the day for accomplishing their goals. Another thing that cracked me up a bit was where he was talking about the various kinds of training and acting classes he was taking once he got to Hollywood and how he wants his money back for his "accent removal classes."

Be Useful was one of my standout reads from 2023 and I enjoyed it even more than I thought I would. I mean, I *knew* it would be good, but I didn't expect to *love it*. I loved it.

It's full of empowering, *strong* messages from someone that people can look up to for a whole lot of reasons, and Arnold, in my opinion, is just one of those guys who is *exactly* who he says he is. A hard worker - often lifting more than *40,000lbs per workout*, morning *and* evening - who isn't afraid to step forward and say "I am."

“My final two and a half years in the Capitol, which I spent in the thick of the global financial crisis, felt like being stuck in a clothes dryer with a load of bricks. It was nothing but beating after beating from every direction.”

“There are reasons and explanations for all the things that have happened to us up to this point, good and bad. But for the most part, it wasn’t because we didn’t have a choice. We always have a choice. What we don’t always have, unless we create it, is something to measure our choices against. That is what a clear vision gives you: a way to decipher whether a decision is good or bad for you, based on whether it gets you closer or further away from where you want your life to go. Does the picture you have in your mind of your ideal future get blurrier or sharper because of this thing you’re about to do?”

“This wasn’t a fantasy. This was a memory that just hadn’t happened yet.”

“From very early on, producers and casting directors were always trying to get me to shorten my name to Arnold Strong or some other such name, because they said Schwarzenegger is too much of a mouthful. It’s too long, they said. What they didn’t know, but that I could see plain as day, was that Schwarzenegger looks fucking great all by itself in BIG letters above the title of a movie.”

“The picture in my mind was so clear you could have put a frame around it and hung it on a wall.”

“If you want your vision to stick, if you want to increase the chances of success looking exactly like you hoped it would when you first figured out what you wanted your life to look like, then you need to get crystal clear on that vision and tattoo it to the inside of your eyelids. You need to SEE IT.”

Don Macpherson: “What you can ‘see’ you can ‘be.’”

“Life happens as much in the transitions as it does in the poses. It’s all one long performance, and the greater the impact you want that performance to have, the more important each one of those little moments becomes.”

“By the end of 1987, I’d killed 283 people. More than anyone else in Hollywood during that time, by far. It took me eight films, but I did it. And that meant something. It meant that I was an action movie star. My name was above the title of most of my films. In big block letters just like I’d envisioned: SCHWARZENEGGER.”

“If you only go for the smaller goal, the big goal is automatically out of reach.”

“You have a choice with the naysayers you face on the road to achieving your goals. You can ignore them or you can use them, you just can’t ever believe them.”

“Plan B is to succeed at Plan A.”

“Working your ass off is the only thing that works 100 percent of the time for 100 percent of the things worth achieving.”

“If you don’t get to experience what it feels like to push yourself, to do more than you thought you were capable of, and to know that the pain you put yourself through will lead to growth that you alone are responsible for creating, then you will never appreciate what you have the way that same thing is appreciated by someone who earned it, who worked for it. Work *works*. That’s the bottom line. No matter what you do. No matter who you are. My entire life has been shaped by that single idea.”

“That’s the beauty of pain. Not only is it temporary, which means you don’t have to deal with it forever, it tells you whether you’ve begun to give enough of yourself in pursuit of your dreams. If the work of being great or achieving something special hasn’t hurt or cost you anything, or at least made you uncomfortable, then I’m sorry to be the one to tell you, but you’re not working hard enough. You’re not sacrificing all that could be sacrificed in order to be all that you could become.”

“No. Don’t be a lazy fuck. Do the work.”

“You have to remember, my goal wasn’t just to come to America, it was to become part of America. Being in movies was key to that, but there are still walls and walkways standing in Los Angeles that Franco and I built together between workouts fifty years ago that I feel are a part of my legacy, along with my star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and billboards with my face on Sunset Boulevard.”

“And while I was definitely physically exhausted, mentally I was totally switched on. I was excited and energized, because I’d just spent two hours moving closer to achieving my vision. How could you possibly expect me to sleep at a moment like that?”

“It’s not hours in the day you lack, it’s a vision for your life that makes time irrelevant.”

“After all this stuff in a typical daily life is accounted for, there are still two hours left in the day to make progress toward your vision. I can already hear the question coming from a bunch of you: What about time for rest and relaxation? First of all, rest is for babies and relaxation is for retired people. Which one are you? If you want to do something special, if you have a big dream that you want to achieve, I believe you’re going to have to put relaxation aside for a while. But fine, you want some relaxation, take half of the remaining time for your little nap. That still gives you an hour each day to work toward your goal. Do you have any idea how powerful an hour a day is? If you want to write a novel, sit down and write for an hour every day, and aim for just one page. At the end of the year, you will have a 365-page manuscript. That’s a book! If you want to get in shape, burn five hundred more calories each day than you consume. In one week, that’s a pound you will have lost. In a year, that could be fifty pounds! How can you burn more than you eat? Try using that leftover hour to ride your bike. Even at a moderate pace, even just five days a week, by the end of a year you will have ridden farther than the distance between Los Angeles and Boston. You will have ridden across the country! These are fantastic accomplishments that require a lot of hard work. But it’s work that you are more than capable of doing when you’ve planned it out and broken it down into little, daily goals that shouldn’t take more than an hour or two to complete. Hell, you can even be crazy like me, and it’s still only five hours of work each day. That leaves nineteen hours to do everything else. Eat a little quicker, hit the brakes on your commute a little less, and sleep a little faster, and you’ll have found the hours you need. So don’t tell me you don’t have time to train, or to study, or to write, or to network, or to do whatever you need to do to achieve your vision. Turn your TV off. Throw your machines out the window. Save your excuses for someone who cares. Get to work.”

“In February 1976, Frank Zane, Ed Corney, and I were asked to pose for a group of art historians and art critics at the Whitney Museum in New York as part of an exhibit called ‘Articulate Muscle: The Male Body in Art’ that *Sports Illustrated* described as a chance to look at us ‘not in athletic terms but as artists living inside our own creations.’”

“Before you can achieve your goals, I think you need to express them. Share them. I think you need to admit to yourself, and communicate to others, that this thing that started in your mind as a little idea has exploded into a massive dream with huge potential to benefit your life and theirs.”

“When you’re different, when you’re unique, and nobody has ever dealt with someone like you before, they are going to drastically underestimate what you’re capable of. Do not let your ego win. Don’t correct them. If you can stay focused on winning and on achieving your goals, you can use their doubts and underestimation against them to effortlessly bridge the conversation, or the interview, or the negotiation to whatever you want to talk about.”

“No one who puts a microphone in front of your face and asks you a bunch of questions is doing it as a favor to you. They have their own agenda, whether that’s finding a way to fill up column inches, coaxing out a controversial statement that gets more attention, or in some cases just trying to make you look like an asshole. You don’t owe them anything. You definitely don’t owe them the answer they think they deserve. This is your time as much as it is theirs. This is your opportunity to tell your story and sell your vision as much as it is their opportunity to craft whatever narrative interests them. So take that time and opportunity to bridge the conversation from what they want to hear to what you need to say in order to achieve your goals.”

“People couldn’t believe it. Media outlets across the country wrote stories after the election about my meteoric ascent. Except I hadn’t ascended anywhere. I’d done hours of prep, I’d rehearsed the jokes I peppered in, I went over and over my talking points until I knew them cold, I had my arms fully around all the policies I felt were most important for the future of California. In short, I was right where I had always been. It was everybody else who finally got on my level by recognizing what they had been underestimating the whole time.”

“One of the main reasons people voted for me was that I’m not a typical politician with a phony flawless exterior. I’m a normal person who likes to do fun things. Why pretend that the things that got me where I was and made me who I am didn’t happen? All I’d be doing is putting myself in a position to sell the story of someone I don’t know.”

“I have a rule: no complaining about a situation unless you’re prepared to do something to make it better. If you see a problem and you don’t come to the table with a potential solution, I don’t want to hear your whining about how bad it is. It couldn’t be that bad if it hasn’t motivated you to try to fix it.”

“Failure has never killed a dream; quitting kills every dream it touches.”

“To everybody else, I said get on board or get out of the way, and if you do neither, expect to get worked around or run over. Is there a risk in taking that kind of approach to achieving your ultimate vision? Possibly. But this is your life and these are your dreams we’re talking about, not theirs. I would argue that doing whatever you need to do to make your dreams a reality and to create the life you want for yourself is worth the risk.”

“The world needs more sponges. It needs more smart, hopeful, driven, useful people with vision. It needs people who can dream up the world of tomorrow, which only happens when people are first able to soak up the knowledge of the world from today.”

“The first thing to realize is that at the simplest, most basic level, you don’t have to rearrange your life to help other people. You just have to keep your eyes and ears open and be engaged with the world around you. When you see someone struggling - with a bag of groceries or a difficult emotion - stop and give them a hand or a hug. If a friend you haven’t talked to for years calls in the middle of the night, answer the phone. If there is someone who looks like they might need help, answer the call, whether they asked for help or not. Lighten their burden, even if it’s only for five minutes or fifty feet. Helping others is a simple practice that requires nothing more than awareness, willingness, and a little bit of effort. Without actively seeking it out, just by being connected to your environment, you will have opportunities every day to help someone else. And trust me when I tell you, it will make you feel great when you do.”

“I could go on and on listing people who have helped me achieve my dreams and create the life I envisioned for myself beginning all those years ago back in my little village in Austria, but I think you get the point by now.”