

# Mastery by George Leonard



“ At the heart of it, mastery is practice. Mastery is staying on the path. ”

*George Leonard (1923 - 2010)*

*A pioneer in the field of human potentialities, is author of twelve books, including The Transformation, Education and Ecstasy, The Silent Pulse, the Ultimate Athlete and Mastery The last thirty years of his life have been inspired by Aikido*

- 1 Introduction
- 2 What is Mastery?
- 3 The Master's Journey
- 4 The Five Master Keys
- 5 Tools For Mastery
- 6 Conclusion
- 7 Appendix

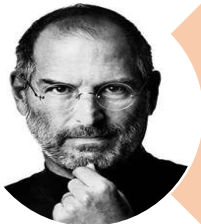
# Introduction



What makes an Olympic athlete or a Nobel Prize-winner different from the rest of us?

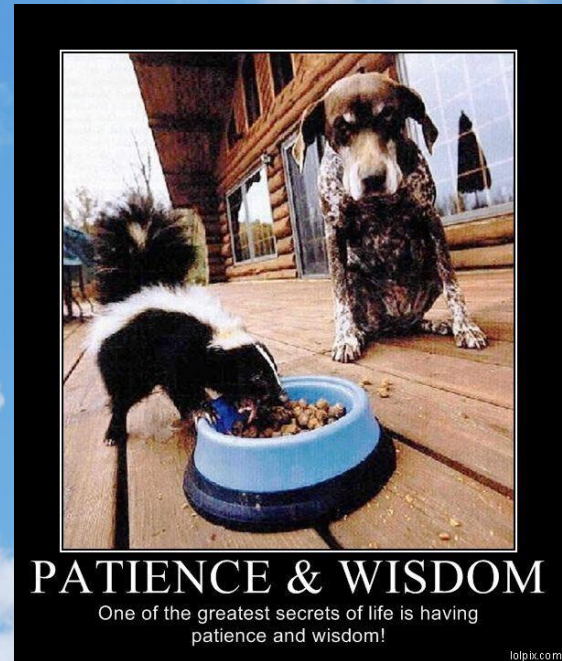


What separates someone who is successful in health and fitness?



Are successful people cut from a different cloth?

Success doesn't just happen. Successful people follow a process, they put in massive amounts of work and fail over and over before they 'make it'. **Success isn't chance, Success is mastery.**



## Part 1 - The Master's Journey

# Chapter 1

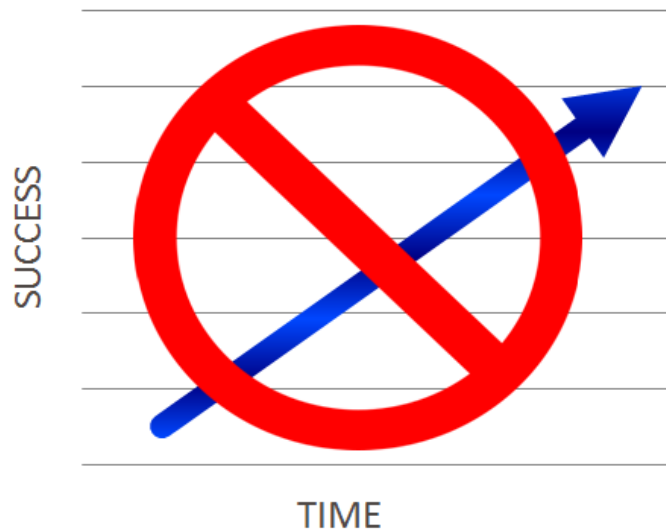
## **Mastery is...**

- A journey
- The process where what was difficult becomes easier
- A life long commitment to hone your skills
- Being goalless
- Realizing that the ultimate goal is the path to mastery itself
- Practicing, even when you seem to be getting nowhere



# The Common Misconception

Most time spent at a skill level is spent on a plateau where you do not improve and are often frustrated. Afterwards you will improve a lot then get a little worse and return to another plateau; which is an improvement to your previous plateau.



**Realistic model**

# Chapter 2

## Dabbler

- The dabbler tries many things, gets improvement, plateaus and gets bored then tries something new.

## Obsessive

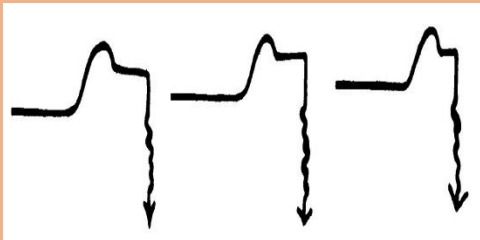
- The obsessive is purely result oriented. They are inconsistent and when they hit a plateau they quit because their results aren't increasing linearly

## Hacker

- The hacker is content where he's at. He gets good then doesn't care to continue improving.

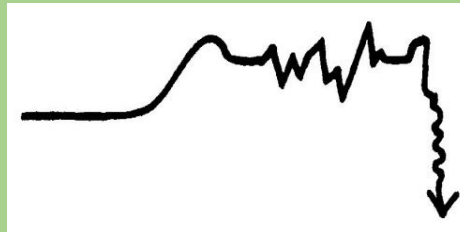
# Which are YOU?

Dabbler



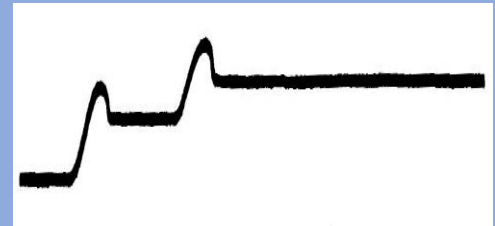
Jack of all  
trades and  
master of none

Obsessive



Full throttle  
until engine  
crash

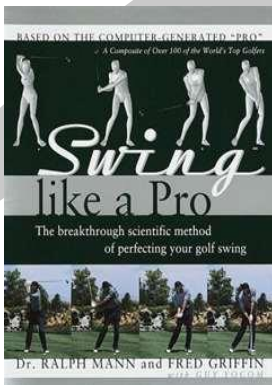
Hacker



No reason to  
move from  
Easy Street

# Chapter 3 America's War Against Mastery

Marketing and culture tend to communicate quick fixes and instant gratification. It communicates learning being linear or instantaneous. Which is not reality.



# Anti-Mastery Behavior



## Eye only on the Prize!

Results are everything

Drugs for competitive edge  
Celebrity Status



## The Quick-Fix Mentality

Fast Money

Gamble as opposed to earn

Money is everything



## Instant Gratification

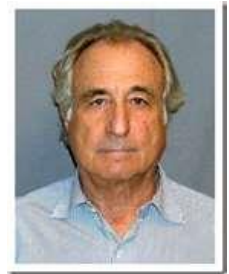
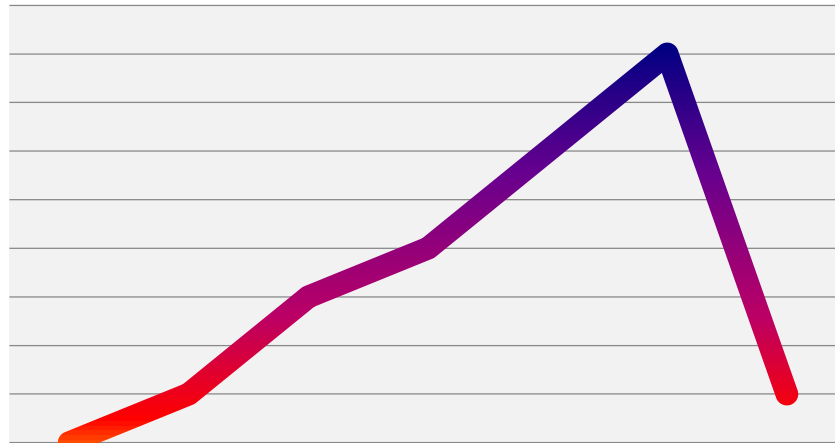
Buy it Now

Spend more than you have

No need to build wealth

# The Path of Endless Climax...

**A war that cannot be won**



**HEADLINE:**

**Drugs and Today's Wall Street**



**...Leads to a Bitter Crash**

# Chapter 4 Loving the Plateau

- Find joy in regular practice
- Practice for the sake of practice itself, NOT for reaching a certain level
- Appreciate what is most essential and enduring in your life

We are taught in countless ways to enjoy the prize, the climatic moment, but a true life of mastery is spent in the plateau.

# Relish the Journey



Where in our upbringing, our schooling, our career are we explicitly taught to value, to enjoy and to love the plateau, the long stretch of diligent effort with no seeming progress?

# Trying to Escape the Plateau...

could create a restless life full of distractions or self-destruction.





## Part 2 – Five Mastery Keys

# Chapter 5 Key 1: Instruction



- A good instructor will point out both the good and the bad
- Understand teachers are not perfect
- Know when it is time to say good bye to a teacher

- The good thing about no instruction is you have unlimited potential as nobody will tell you something will not work
- The bad thing is it can take much longer to learn and you will not have anyone to help you along the way



# Chapter 6 Key 2: Practice

**Practice is NOT something you do, it's something you ARE**



**Larry Bird**

Started practicing basketball at age 4 and never stopped



**Jerry Rice**

Hardest working and most disciplined receiver in NFL history



**Bill Gates**

At 13 years of age had 10,000 hours practice in computer programming

# Chapter 7 Key 3: Surrender

- Surrender to your teacher and the demands of your discipline
- Be willing to look like a fool
- There are times when we forfeit hard-won competency in order to advance to the next stage. (Like when a golfer decides to change his or her swing)



**For the master, surrender means there are no experts, only learners.**

# Chapter 8 Key 4: Intentionality

Visualizations

Thoughts,  
images and  
feelings play into  
your success

Intentionality  
fuels the  
master's journey

Every master is a  
master of vision



Jack Nicklaus

- Always pictured golf shot before swing
- Believed only 10% of success of shot due to swing



Arnold Schwarzenegger

- Believed that pumping a weight one time with full consciousness was worth 10 without mental awareness



Sir James Jeans (astronomer)

- More and more, the universe looks like a great thought rather than a great machine

# Chapter 9 Key 5: The Edge

- Pushing the limits for higher performance, sometimes to the point of stupidity
- You must be able to play the edge while respecting practice



## Chuck Yeager

First pilot to break the sound barrier in X-1 rocket plane. Injured at the time, used a broom handle to close rocket door.



## Agony of Defeat

Julie Moss, 23, collapsed and crawled to finish Hawaii's Ironman Triathlon World Championship. Heroic or stupid?



## Part 3 – Tools for Mastery

# Chapter 10

## Why Resolutions Fail & What to Do About It

- Everyone resists change, good or bad. Expect some backsliding.
- Resistance to change is proportional to size/speed of change, not if it is good or bad.
- Be aware of how homeostasis works.
- Develop a support system. Particularly those who have gone before you.



# Chapter 11 Getting Energy for Mastery



- You gain energy by using energy
- Maintain physical fitness
- Acknowledge the negative and accentuate the positive
- Be honest with others, it will revitalize you
- Set your priorities
- Make your commitments, take action
- Get on the pathway of mastery, and choose to stay on it

# Chapter 12 Pitfalls Along the Path

1. **Conflicting Way of Life**
2. **Obsessive Goal Orientation**
3. **Poor Instruction**
4. **Lack of Competitiveness**
5. **Over Competitiveness**
6. **Laziness**
7. **Injuries**
8. **Drugs**
9. **Prizes and Medals**
10. **Vanity**
11. **Dead Seriousness**
12. **Inconsistency**
13. **Perfectionism**

- ✓ Your job may not be your path.
- ✓ Your teacher is a teacher, not a guru.
- ✓ Competition keeps you motivated.
- ✓ External validation can often stop or slow the pathway to mastery
- ✓ You must be willing to look like a fool.
- ✓ Have fun.

# Chapter 13 Mastering the Commonplace

Nothing in life is “commonplace”. Nothing is “in between”. The threads that join our every act, our every thought, are infinite. All paths of mastery eventually merge.



# Chapter 14 Packing for the Journey



## Checklist

- Five Keys to Stay on the Path
- Tips to Energize and Avoid Pitfalls



## Returning to Center

- Meditation & Yoga
- Discover your “Personal Ki”



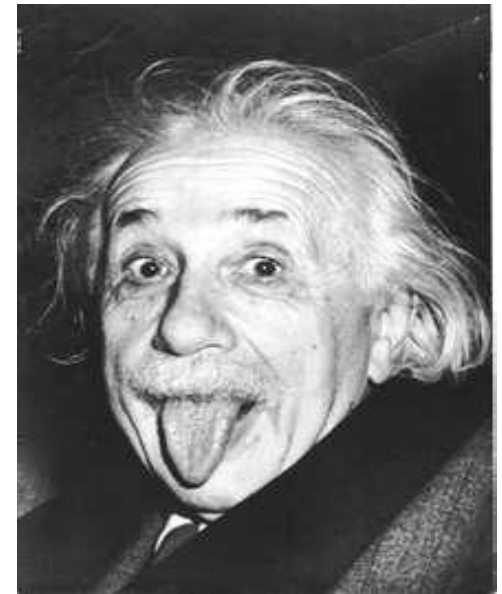
## Unexpected Blows

- Take the hit as a gift
- Unleash your Power and Unused Potential

# Epilogue The Master and the Fool

- ✓ Always be a student
- ✓ Never believe that your cup is full
- ✓ Preconceived notions of what is foolish may inhibit your path to mastery
- ✓ Always wear your White Belt

**What we frown at as foolish in our friends, ourselves, we're likely to smile at as merely eccentric in a world-renowned genius.**



# Mastery is...

1. The process where what was difficult becomes both easier and more pleasurable;
2. Long-term dedication to the journey – not the bottom line;
3. Gaining mental discipline to travel further on your journey;
4. Being goal-less;
5. Realizing that the pleasure of practice is intensified;
6. Creating deep roots;
7. Knowing that you will never reach a final destination;
8. Being diligent with the process of mastery;
9. Your commitment to hone your skills;
10. After you have reached the top of the mountain, climb another one;
11. Being willing to practice, even when you seem to be getting nowhere;
12. Making this a life process;
13. Being patient, while you apply long-term efforts;
14. Appreciating and even enjoying the plateau, as much as you do the progress;
15. Practicing for the sake of practice;
16. Winning graciously, and losing with equal grace;
17. Placing practice, discipline, conditioning and character development before winning;
18. Being courageous;
19. Being fully in the present moment;
20. Realizing that the ultimate goal is not the medal, or the ribbon, but the path to mastery its self (The “I am” stage);
21. Being willing to look foolish;
22. Maintaining flexibility in your strategy, and in your actions;
23. A journey; and,
24. Determination

# About the Author

**George Burr Leonard** (1923 – January 6, 2010) was an [American](#) writer, editor, and educator who wrote extensively about [education](#) and [human potential](#). He was President Emeritus of the [Esalen Institute](#), past-president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, President of ITP International, and a former editor of [Look Magazine](#). He was also a former [United States Army Air Corps](#) pilot, and held a fifth degree [black belt](#) in [aikido](#). Leonard was a co-founder of the Aikido of Tamalpais dojo in Corte Madera, California. He also developed the Leonard Energy Training (LET) practice for centering the mind, body, and spirit. Leonard died at his home in [Mill Valley, California](#) on January 6, 2010 after a long illness. He was 86 years old.

## Books

- *The Decline of the American Male* (1958) ASIN B000JWGFBW
- *Shoulder the Sky* (1959) ASIN B000HLSI5Q
- *The Man & Woman Thing, and Other Provocations* (1970) ASIN B0006DY0R0
- *The Transformation* (1981) [ISBN 9780874771695](#)
- *The End of Sex* (1983) [ISBN 9780091528300](#)
- *Education and Ecstasy* (1987) [ISBN 9781556430053](#)
- *Walking on the Edge of the World* (1988) [ISBN 9780395483114](#)
- *Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment* (1992) [ISBN 978-0452267565](#)
- *The Life We Are Given* (1995) [ISBN 9780874778533](#)
- *The Way of Aikido: Life Lessons from an American Sensei* (2000) [ISBN 978-0452279728](#)
- *The Ultimate Athlete* (2001) [ISBN 9781556433498](#)
- *The Silent Pulse* (2006) [ISBN 9781423601227](#)