



THE PRACTICING MIND

by Thomas M. Sterner



Overview

*This book describes how to shift your perspective from focusing on some future, far-off, delusional, "perfect" goal, and instead focusing on the **process** of getting there. Your goals are simply meant as a guide to give you direction. Overly focusing on the future creates extreme stress and anxiety in the present. It's far better to focus all your attention on the process of the present moment. This will free you from the anxiety of society, and (perhaps paradoxically) will actually result in achieving your goals more efficiently.*

"Life itself is nothing more than one long practice session."

Chapter 1. The Learning Begins

At an early age, when the author was studying the piano he found it "boring and difficult." But by his mid-30s the immersion in practicing an activity became a healthy escape. Life is all about practicing, whether dealing with a child's emotions, or your work schedule.

When he picked up golf, he observed many golfers playing for as long as he had played piano. But it was like they were stuck on the first practice book of piano, never having progressed. They were repeating the same problems over and over.

"Our culture today is one built on multitasking."

After you start your car, you immediately turn on the radio. You are now both driving and listening to music. You might then talk to someone on the phone as well. Then, you barely remember driving for a few miles because your mind was so scattered. With such dispersed, distracted minds, we wonder why we are always tired, never questioning the absurdity of it.

The practicing mind, however, is laser-focused on the present task, and results in a calm feeling, free from anxiety. This has been known for ages, as the struggles we face today are not necessarily very different from

past times despite our modern technology. There is an old adage about a chariot driver with four horses (the horses represent the mind). An undisciplined urgent driver has the horses going in a million directions. But a disciplined focused driver calmly directs the four horses directed towards a destination, and in doing so actually arrives fastest.

As an example, while the author was playing with his child, he realized that he was frantically devising ideas for this very book. He quickly realized that his horses were scattered. He forced himself to stop thinking about this book until his dedicated writing time, and was afterwards free from anxiety in that moment.

Many people use up the initial spurt of motivation that made them begin something, and then flounder. When in our early 20s, we typically take on new tasks with enthusiasm, and then slowly lose steam. Envision starting a gym schedule. You may get new clothes, become excited about a new routine, and then in a few months the enthusiasm wanes. You then move on to the next task to fill that void within you.

*"Without **self-control**, you have no real power."*

Chapter 2. Process, Not Product

When taking golf lessons, the author was meticulous about his process of practicing. The other people in his class thought it would require too much time and effort to focus on the specific mechanics of their golf swing. And yet the author never actually put in more than an hour's worth of work on his golf swing each day; it was simply *focused* effort for that hour. It was a nice diversion, he improved more than others in his class, and being immersed was actually calming. In essence, he was focused on the present moment, not the past or future (further described in [The Power of Now](#)).

What was different between him and his classmates? They thought that being meticulous *would* be arduous.



www.kibook.club

[The Practicing Mind](#) (Page 1 of 5)