

CHRIS'LL DEAL WITH IT

episode notes




EP 37 - Principle #5 - Find solitude to think deeply

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This is part 5 of our summer PRINCIPLES series. It can be listened to by itself, but for greater context refer back to the intro Episode #32.

Note that the principles in this series are what work for me. They allow me to thrive and live my values as best as I can. I'm not advocating the adoption of my specific set of principles. Rather I'm attempting to showcase the power of principles by providing more context on how they can be defined, codified, and embedded into the thoughts & actions of our lives.

Principle #5 - Find solitude to think deeply

Where does the principle come from?

- As I've said throughout this series: Principles are aspirational. Especially this one, as it's the hardest to accomplish in our current times.

- We're bombarded by information, opportunity, and triggers for our attention.
- Most pernicious of all is the microscope of social media we use to display our lives and compare it against the curated highlights of others'.
- We live in an era of experts just a click away, there to astound us with their skill and experience.
- This principle is intended to be a reminder to break that cycle of constant bombardment.
- Why? Because to live deeply we need to think deeply.
 - Do you have a desire to stand out? Be known for something?
 - Is there a sense of uniqueness lacking in your life?
 - Are you giving in to the fear of missing out by regularly scrolling, subscribing, watching, participating?
- To think deeply is to strip away that outside world and go inside what's between the ears.
 - The depths can be scary, revealing the processes of our thoughts and making new connections between them.
 - It's always a personalized trip: The sights seen unique to your memories, sensibilities, and the intention of the guide.
 - Like any vacation from our regular lives, it usually takes some time to get comfortable and relax into that experience.
 - What you realize during those journeys can feel risky, dangerous to pursue.
 - We might change: Our opinions, our tasks, how we spend our time. The very direction of our very lives.

Why is it important?

- The importance of solitude is simple: It gives ourselves the opportunity to think and feel deeply.
- Stepping out of the pace of modern life can be unsettling.
 - Pause for a moment. Ponder all that's happening in and around you.

- All of your commitments, tasks to be done, the media you've been enjoying, your aspirations, your relationships.
- Consider how quickly time and information are flowing past, much of it briefly considered or reacted to earnestly but quickly, before the next thing. And the next thing . . .
- Now consider the scope of everything else occurring in this moment. Across an entire universe that's truly incalculable in scope, a near-infinite amount of everything.
 - What is this moment, who are you, within *that*?
 - We get closer to understanding it by going deeper into ourselves rather than trying to grasp the entire universe.
- Solitude is important because it provides an intentional break from routine.
 - Solitude doesn't just mean being away from other people. It means being away from responsibilities, tasks, media, and work. *The thoughts of other people.*
 - It really just means you being there; Mind, body & spirit alone with each other. Considering things. (*and you thought holidays at the in-laws were tough!*)
- An aside: Deep thinking is critical to doing our best work - so a practice of creating solitude to do what's important both professionally and personally!
- Any of us can easily justify reasons to not gift ourselves solitude. There are so many legitimate things that need doing!
 - But regardless of the excuses to not gift ourselves solitude, it makes it no less important.
 - We need to carve out time for it, and seize opportunities to enjoy it.

How does living it impact myself & others?

- When data (ideas, imagery, etc...) are being actively input or output, it's not being processed. Processing takes time and resources - the more of those resources that's available, the deeper and more complex analysis that become possible.
 - It allows us to create more meaningful ideas, art, products, and more.

- We can better see the nuance underlying issues and interconnectedness of all things.
- With that clearer vision we can see further & deeper - providing better waypoints for our journey and others'.
- Deep thoughts can persist in our minds, worked on during shorter bursts as life allows.
 - But those moments must be sought, embraced, and made purposeful.
 - It's a kind of a shame to let many opportunities be wasted on more shallow pursuits.
- When we do travel into these depths of ourselves, it's important to bring our findings back up with us.
 - Act on the truths discovered, in accordance with who we aspire to be.
 - It's often difficult to connect our depths to the realities of our external lives.
 - Yet with patience, practice, and focused intention we'll build a sturdier tether between these worlds.

What does living the principle look like in action?

- Not all deep thought requires a weekend monastic retreat or a solo camping trip to sort through important questions.
 - Depth can be found in a morning cup of tea sipped beneath wind-rustled trees.
 - It can be found on a lunchtime walk with a silenced cell phone.
 - Carving out early morning hours of quiet, when much of the world is still asleep.
- Not all deep thought happens in complete physical solitude: Depth can be found in a busy café, engaged in quiet observation. Taking the time to truly see others, the interactions and tasks that are a product of our society, and reflecting on what it means for us.
- And putting this principle into action looks a lot like preparation:
 - Training ourselves for deep thought and being in solitude.

- Figuring out what helps us ease into those journeys: Breaking from the pattern of modern life most effectively.
- Build practices and mental models that will allow us to transcend the limits of self as we currently perceive them.
- And it can also take the form of finding guides who can help bring us along at the start of our journey, or deal with issues that are blocking those journeys. I'll go into this more deeply in the next principle: *Don't be afraid to ask for help.*

Episode 37 Quote:

Today's quote is one of my all-time favorites. It comes from *The Simple Life* by Charles Wagner:

What is a good lamp? It is not the most elaborate, the finest wrought, that of the most precious metal. A good lamp is a lamp that gives good light.