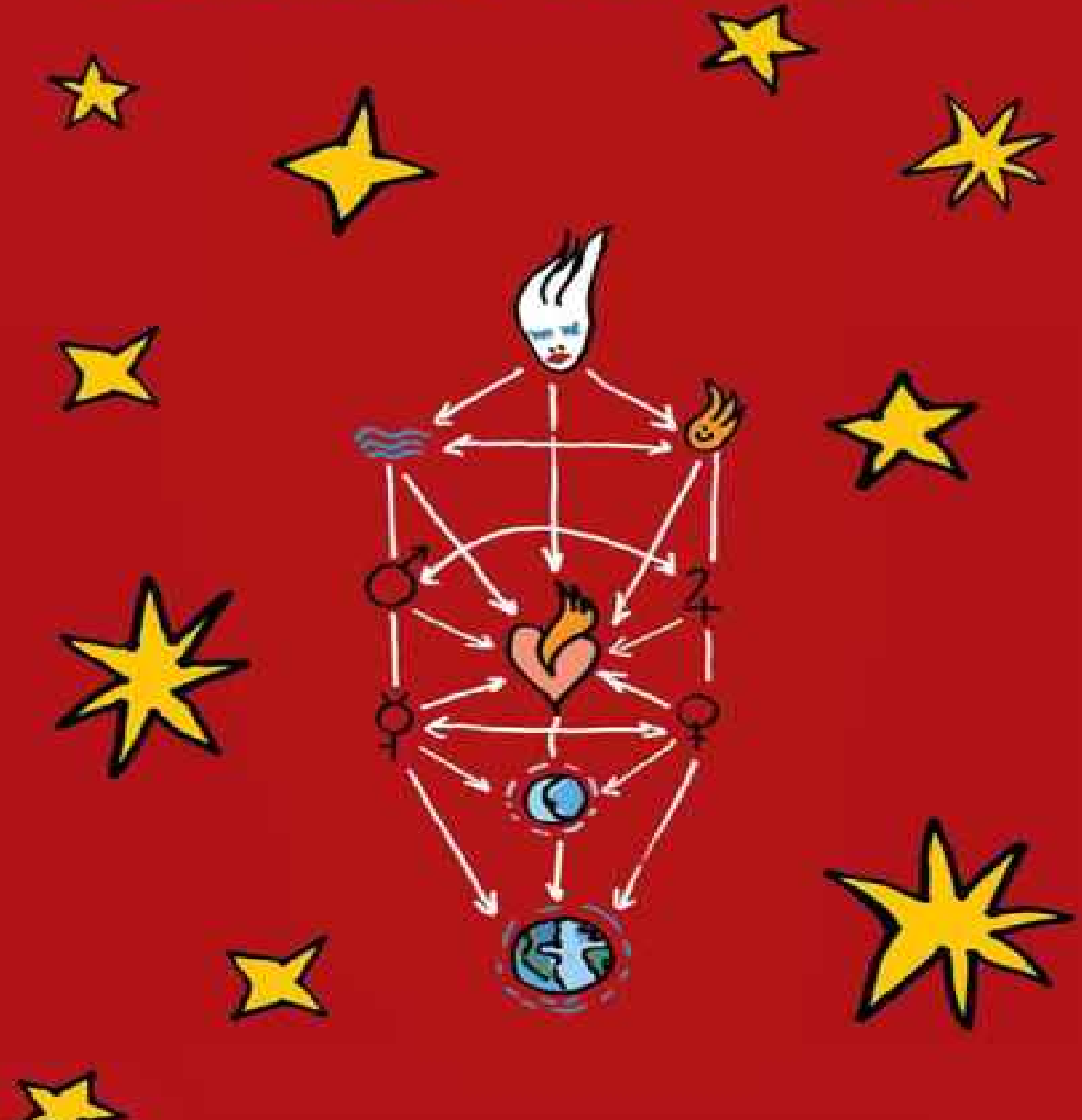


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The Book of Manuals

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Man and his manuals

There are several dictionary definitions of the word 'manual'. The most common definition for the adjective is 'done or performed with the hands', but the noun has its origins among pilgrims, who could only carry very slender books in their luggage, books containing abbreviated texts and aphorisms as food for thought.

I have read many manuals in my life, ranging from manuals on how to mend boats to ones telling me how to use a computer (nowadays, of course, the computer itself tells us what we should do). Gradually, I developed something of a passion for the manual and started to draw up my own, based on my observations of daily life. When I was asked to write a book, I thought: Why not collect together all the manuals I've written over the years and publish them? The result is the book you're holding in your hands now.

As I worked on the project, I came across some other manuals I had compiled, based on other people's work: Carlos Castañeda, Tahlan, Mario Rosa and Stephan Rechtschaffen – all duly acknowledged on the relevant pages.

The manuals written by Julia Dragan and Kristen about relationships between men and women were sent to me via the internet, and I give them due credit. Hard as I've tried, however, I've been unable to confirm that they are the actual authors of those texts.

May I make a suggestion? Write your own manuals. It's a fascinating exercise.

Paulo Coelho

Convention for those wounded in love

General provisions:

A - In view of the fact that the saying 'all's fair in love and war' is absolutely correct;

B – and in view of the fact that whereas in the case of war we have the Geneva Convention, approved on 22 August 1864, which states how those wounded on the battlefield should be treated, there has, up until now, been no convention regarding those who have been wounded in love, even though they are far more numerous;

it is hereby decreed that:

Article 1 – All lovers, of any sex, are given due warning that love, as well as being a blessing, is also extremely dangerous, unpredictable and capable of causing serious harm. Consequently, anyone planning to love someone else should be aware that they are exposing their body and soul to various kinds of wounds and that they should not, at any point, blame their partner, since both run the same risks.

Article 2 – If struck by an arrow fired from Cupid's bow, you should immediately ask the archer to fire the same arrow back in the opposite direction, in order to avoid being afflicted by the wound known as 'unrequited love'. Should Cupid refuse to do this, the Convention requires the wounded party to remove the arrow from his or her heart and throw it in the bin. In order to achieve this, the injured party should avoid making

phone calls, sending messages via the Internet, sending flowers that end up being returned, or engaging in any other attempts at seduction, since while these may yield results in the short term, in the long term, they always turn out badly. The Convention decrees that the wounded party should immediately seek the company of other people and do his or her best to ignore the obsessive thought: 'This person is worth fighting for.'

Article 3 – If the wound is caused by a third party, that is, if the loved one has become interested in someone who was not included in the original agreement, vengeance is expressly forbidden. In such cases, the following actions are permitted: crying one's eyes out; punching the walls or a pillow; heaping insults on one's ex-partner during conversations with friends; commenting on his/her complete lack of taste, although without ever besmirching his/her honour. The Convention states that the rule contained in Article 2 should also be applied: seek out the company of other people, preferably in places not usually frequented by the other party.

Article 4 – In the case of slight wounds, herein classified as minor betrayals, sudden short-lived passions, a temporary loss of libido, then the medicine known as Forgiveness should be applied generously and quickly. Once this medicine has been applied, there can be no going back on one's decision, ever, and the whole subject should be completely forgotten and never used as a weapon in an argument or in a moment of anger.

Article 5 – For all mortal wounds, also known as 'breaking up', the only effective medicine is called Time. There is no point in seeking consolation from fortune-tellers (who always tell you that your lost love will return), romantic novels (which always have a happy ending), TV soaps or other such things. One must simply suffer intensely, making no use of drugs, tranquillizers or prayers offered up to saints. Alcohol should be restricted to a maximum of two glasses of wine a day.

Final resolution: Those wounded in love, unlike those wounded in armed conflicts, are neither victims nor torturers. They chose something that is

part of life, and so they must accept both the agony and the ecstasy of that choice.

And those who have never been wounded by love will never be able to say: 'I have lived.' Because they haven't.

The warrior of light and his quest

1. The Warrior of Light knows the importance of intuition. In the midst of battle he has no time to think about the enemy's blows – so he uses his instinct and obeys his angel. In times of peace he deciphers the signs that God sends him.

People say: 'He's crazy.'

Or else: 'He lives in a fantasy world.'

Or even: 'How can he put his trust in such illogical things?'

But the warrior knows that intuition is God's alphabet, and so he continues to listen to the wind and talk to the stars.

2. For the warrior there is no such thing as an impossible love.

He is not intimidated by silence, indifference or rejection. He knows that, behind the mask of ice that people wear, there beats a heart of fire.

This is why the warrior takes more risks than other people. He is constantly seeking the love of someone, even if that means often having to hear the word 'No', returning home defeated and feeling rejected in body and soul.

A warrior never gives in to fear when he is searching for what he needs. Without love, he is nothing.

3. A warrior of light cannot always choose his battlefield.

Sometimes he is taken by surprise in the middle of battles not of his choosing, but there is no point in running away, those battles will merely follow him.

Then, at the point when conflict seems almost inevitable, the warrior talks to his opponent. Showing neither fear nor cowardice, he tries to find out why the other man wants to fight, what made him leave his village in order to seek him out to fight this duel. Without even unsheathing his sword, the warrior persuades his opponent that this is not a fight for him.

A warrior of light listens to what his opponent has to say. He only fights if absolutely necessary.

But if he has no alternative, he doesn't think about victory or defeat: he fights to the end.

4. The warrior of light never forgets the old saying: the good little goat doesn't bleat.

Injustices happen. Everyone finds themselves in situations they do not deserve, usually when they are unable to defend themselves. Defeat often knocks at the warrior's door.

At such times, he remains silent. He does not waste energy on words, because they can do nothing; it is best to use his strength to resist and have patience, knowing that Someone is watching, Someone who saw the unnecessary suffering and who will not accept it.

That Someone gives him what he most needs: time. Sooner or later, everything will once more work in his favour.

5. A warrior of light is wise; he does not talk about his defeats.

A warrior of light accepts his Personal Legend completely.

His companions say: 'He has remarkable faith!'

For a moment, the warrior feels proud, then immediately feels ashamed of what he has heard because he does not have as much faith as he

appears to have.

At that moment, his angel whispers: 'You are only an instrument of the light. There is no reason to feel proud or to feel guilty, there are only reasons to fulfil your destiny.'

And the warrior of light, aware now that he is but an instrument, feels calmer and more secure.

Rules for the 21st Century

1. All human beings are different, and they should do everything they can to continue to be different.
2. Each human being is granted two possible courses of action: doing and thinking. Both lead to the same place.
3. Each human being is granted two things: the power and the gift. The power is what drives a man on to meet his destiny; the gift obliges him to share with others what is best in him.
4. Each human being is given a virtue: the capacity to choose. For those who do not use this virtue, it becomes a curse, and others will make their choices for them.
5. Each human being has the right to two blessings: getting things right and getting things wrong. In the latter case, there will always be a kind of apprenticeship that will lead him back to the right path.
6. Each human being has his own sexual identity and should live according to that identity without guilt, provided that he does not oblige others to share it.
7. Each human being has his own Personal Legend to fulfil, and that is his reason for existing in the world. The Personal Legend manifests itself in his enthusiasm for what he does.

Additional clause: one can abandon one's Personal Legend for a short time, provided that one does not forget it completely and returns to it as soon as possible.

8. Every man has a feminine side, and every woman has a masculine side. One must be intuitive when using discipline and objective when using intuition.

9. Each human being should know two languages: the language of society and the language of signs. The first allows us to communicate with each other. The second allows us to understand God's messages.

10. Each human being has the right to seek happiness, happiness being understood as something that makes you happy, but does not necessarily make other people happy.

11. Each human being must keep alight within him the sacred flame of madness, but behave like a normal person.

12. The only truly grave faults are these: not respecting other people's rights, allowing oneself to be paralysed by fear, feeling guilty, believing one does not deserve the good or bad things that happen in life, and being a coward.

Sub-clause 1 - we will love our enemies, but not make alliances with them. They were placed in our path to test our sword and deserve the respect of our fight.

Sub-clause 2 - we will choose our enemies

12a. All religions lead to the same God, and all deserve the same degree of respect.

Additional clause - A man who chooses a religion is also choosing a way of worshipping and of sharing the mysteries collectively. However, he alone is responsible for how he behaves on his path and has no right to make his religion responsible for his steps and his decisions.

14. We hereby declare an end to the wall separating the sacred from the profane: from now on, everything is sacred.

15. Everything that is done in the present affects the future and redeems the past.

All dispensations to the contrary are hereby revoked.

The art of the sword

(An adaptation of a few extracts from a book written for Samurai warriors and entitled Treatise of Tahlan, after the author, who was both a fencing master and a Zen monk.)

1. Keep calm.

Anyone who understands the meaning of life knows that things have neither a beginning nor an end, and that there is, therefore, no point in worrying. Fight for what you believe in without trying to prove anything to anyone else; maintain the calm and silence of someone who has had the courage to choose his own destiny.

This applies to both love and war.

2. Let your heart reveal itself.

Anyone who trusts absolutely in his powers of seduction, in his ability to say the right thing at the right time and how best to use his body, becomes deaf to the 'voice of the heart'. This can only be heard when we are in complete harmony with the world around us and never when we judge ourselves to be the centre of the universe.

This applies to both love and war.

3. Try to see the world through other people's eyes.

We are so focussed on what we judge to be the correct attitude that we forget something very important: in order to attain our objectives, we need other people. It is necessary, therefore, not only to observe the world, but

to imagine ourselves into the skins of other people and to learn how to follow their thoughts.

This applies to both love and war.

4. Find the right teacher.

Our path is sure to cross that of other people who, out of love or pride, want to teach us something. How can we distinguish the friend from the manipulator? The answer is simple: the true teacher is not the one who teaches us the ideal path, but the one who shows us the many ways of reaching the path that we need to travel if we are to find our destiny. Once we have found that path, the teacher cannot help us anymore, because its challenges are unique.

This applies to neither love nor war, but unless we understand it, we will never get anywhere.

5. Never believe in threats.

We often think that the ideal stance is to give up one's life for a dream: nothing could be further from the truth. In order to achieve our dream, we need to preserve our life and we must, therefore, know how to avoid those things that threaten us. The more we plan our steps, the more chance there is that we will go wrong, because we are failing to take into consideration four things: other people, life's teachings, passion and calm. The more we feel we are in control of things, the farther off we are from controlling anything.

Final dispositions:

Therefore, if you want to be in harmony with your love or with your fight, learn to react rapidly. Do not allow your supposed experience of life to transform you into a machine. Use that experience to listen always to 'the voice of the heart'. Even if you do not agree with what that voice is saying, respect it and follow its advice: it knows when to act and when to avoid action.

This applies to both love and war.

Manual for preserving paths

1. The path begins at a crossroads. There you can stop and think about which direction to take, but do not spend too much time thinking or you will never set off. Ask Castañeda's classic question: which of these roads has heart? Reflect on the choices that lie before you, but once you have taken the first step, forget all about the crossroads, otherwise you will be for ever tormented by that futile question: Did I choose the right road? If you listened to your heart before taking that initial step, you will have chosen the right path.

2. The path will not last for ever. It is a blessing to travel it for a while, but one day, it will end. So always be ready to say goodbye to it at some point. However dazzled you may be by certain landscapes or frightened by other difficult sections where it took an enormous effort simply to carry on, do not become attached to any part of it. Not to the moments of euphoria nor to the seemingly endless days when everything is difficult and progress is slow. Don't forget, sooner or later, an angel will arrive, and your journey will come to an end.

3. Honour your path. It was your choice, your decision, and if you respect the ground you tread on, that same ground will respect your feet. Always do what you can to preserve and maintain your path, and it will do the same for you.

4. Be well equipped. Carry a rake, a spade and a penknife. Remember that penknives are useless for raking up dried leaves and that rakes are no

good when it comes to digging up deep-rooted weeds. Always know which tool to use when. And take care of them, because they are your greatest allies.

5. The path goes both forwards and backwards. Sometimes, you have to turn back because you have lost something, or you find that a message you should have delivered is still there in your pocket. A well-kept path allows you to find your way back without too much difficulty.

6. Take care of your path before you take care of anything else around you. Attention and concentration are fundamental. Don't be distracted by the dried leaves along the edges or by the way in which other people are tending their paths. Use your energy to care for and preserve the ground you walk on.

7. Be patient. Sometimes you will have to repeat the same tasks, such as pulling up weeds or filling in holes that appear after unexpected rain. Do not allow yourself to be irritated by this, it is part of the journey. Even when you are tired, even when these tasks become repetitive, be patient.

8. Paths cross. People can tell you what the weather is like. Listen to their advice, but make your own decisions. You alone are responsible for the path entrusted to you.

9. Nature follows its own rules. This means that you have to be prepared for autumn's sudden changes, for winter's treacherous snow and ice, for spring's seductive flowers, for the drought and the rain of summer. Make the most of each of these seasons, and do not complain about them.

10. Let your path be a mirror of yourself. Do not be influenced by the way in which others tend their paths. You have your own soul to listen to, and the birds to tell you what your soul is saying. May your soul's stories be beautiful and pleasing to everything around you. Above all, may the stories that your soul tells you along the way be reflected in every second of your journey.

11. Love your path. If you do not, nothing will make sense.

Manual of reasons to love men

(Originally sent by a reader, Julia Dragan, and complemented with information I found on various chat rooms on the internet.)

1. We love men because they cannot fake an orgasm, even if they want to.
2. Because they will never understand us, but nevertheless keep trying.
3. Because they can still see our beauty, even when we ourselves are incapable of believing in it.
4. Because they can understand equations, politics, mathematics and economics, but not the female heart.
5. Because, as lovers, they only rest when we reach (or pretend to reach) orgasm.
6. Because they have managed to elevate sport to something close to a religion.
7. Because they are never afraid of the dark.
8. Because they insist on trying to mend things that are beyond them, and apply themselves to this task with all the enthusiasm of an adolescent and then despair when they fail.
9. Because they are like pomegranates, large parts of which are inedible, but whose seeds are delicious.
10. Because they never worry about what the neighbours might say.

11. Because we always know what they are thinking, and when they open their mouth, they say exactly what we thought they would.

12. Because it wouldn't occur to them to torture themselves by wearing high heels.

12a. Because they love to explore our body and conquer our soul.

14. Because a fourteen-year-old girl can leave them speechless and a twenty-five-year-old can easily tame them.

15. Because they are always drawn to extremes: hedonists or ascetics, warriors or monks, artists or generals.

16. Because they do their best to try and overcome their weaknesses.

17. Because a man's greatest fear is not being a man, something that never occurs to a woman (not being a woman, that is).

18. Because they eat everything on their plate and never feel guilty.

19. Because they find really boring things fascinating, for example, cars and office politics.

20. Because they have shoulders on which we can easily fall asleep.

21. Because they are at ease with their bodies, apart from minor concerns about baldness and obesity.

22. Because they are incredibly brave about insects.

23. Because they never lie about their age.

24. Because however hard they try, they cannot live without a woman.

25. Because when we say to a man 'I love you', he always wants to know how much.

Manual to help men understand women's behaviour

(as told to me by Kirsten)

1. We women are born detectives. In our eyes, all men are suspect, and any affairs you may have will always be discovered; it's just a matter of time.

2. Even if we're not in love with you, hearing the words 'I love you' is a balm to our souls. And if you don't say it, we'll notice and feel sad.

3. It's the same with 'you look lovely'. It takes only two seconds to say these three magic words, which are capable of transforming our nightmares into real fairy tales.

4. If we ask you what clothes we should wear, don't get annoyed if we decide to wear exactly the opposite of what you chose; that's just the way we are.

5. At a party, we are capable of scanning the whole room in less than a minute and deciding who looks interesting. Be warned.

6. We think about sex as compulsively as men, or even more so. The difference is that we don't show it.

7. If we don't immediately accept an invitation out to supper, don't worry; we need a few days to lose the extra pounds we always feel are blighting our lives.

8. Women always remember everything. If you ask when we met, we won't say: 'at a party'. We will say: it was on a Tuesday, after a supper where we ate salad and chicken soup, you were wearing a black jacket and your shoes were made by...etc.

9. However much love we are capable of giving, there are seven days in the month when we want to be far away from everything and everyone. You have two options: tie yourself to the mast and wait for the storm to pass or go to the nearest jeweller's and buy a present. We recommend the second option.

10. We are as capable of reasoning as a man, but we prefer not to show it, because that might make you feel insecure. Women who have failed to follow this advice in the past have ended up alone.

11. We love body hair on men, but waxing is our favourite form of self-torture.

12. We hate making love when we're not in the mood, but we'll do it anyway and you won't even notice the difference.

12a. Play with our pets and our children and we will play with you. Ignore them and we will ignore you too.

14. Women are endowed with X-ray vision. We can look into a pair of hard, dark eyes and see the child behind them. We can fix on a pair of angelic blue eyes and see the devil lurking within. We know when men are pretending to be asleep and – even more obvious – when they're pretending they haven't been sleeping with someone else.

15. If we have a problem we want to discuss with you, don't try to offer us a solution, because we already have one. It's merely a way of trying to prevent our relationship dissolving into tedium.

Final statement:

Not all women want marriage and children; many want only orgasms and pets.

Never forget that.

Julia's manual explaining why men love women

1. We men love women because they still think they're adolescents even when they're old.
2. Because they smile whenever they pass a child.
3. Because they walk down the street looking straight ahead and never turn round to say thank you or to return the smile or compliment they receive as they pass.
4. Because they are brazen in bed, not because they are naturally depraved, but because they want to please us.
5. Because they do all they can to keep the house looking neat and tidy, and never expect any thanks for the work they do.
6. Because they don't read pornographic magazines.
7. Because they sacrifice themselves in the name of beauty, and submit to waxing, botox injections, and terrifying machines in gyms.
8. Because they prefer to eat salads.
9. Because they paint their faces with as much care as Michelangelo expended on the Sistine Chapel.
10. Because they want to know everything about their own appearance, but seek out other women to talk to and not bother us with such questions.

11. Because they have their own ways of solving problems, which we never understand and which drive us mad.

12. Because they are kind and say 'I love you' at precisely the moment when they are beginning to love us less, just to make us feel better.

12a. Because sometimes they complain about the same things we complain about, such as colds and rheumatism, and that way, we know they are people just like us.

14. Because they write romantic novels.

15. Because while our armies are invading other countries, they are staunchly engaged in carrying out their own private, inexplicable war on all the cockroaches in the world.

16. Because they melt when they hear the Rolling Stones sing 'Angie'.

17. Because they can happily go to work dressed like men, in their little suits, whereas no man would ever dare to go to work in a skirt.

18. Because in films – and only in films – they never take a shower before making love with their partner.

19. Because they always manage to find a convincing defect when we say that another woman is pretty, and thus leave us feeling uncertain about our good taste.

20. Because they take seriously everything that is happening in the private lives of celebrities.

21. Because they manage to fake orgasms as convincingly as the most famous and talented movie star.

22. Because they adore drinking exotic, brightly coloured cocktails with little umbrellas in them, while we drink our usual glass of whisky.

23. Because they don't spend hours wondering how they're going to get talking to the gorgeous man who just got on the bus.

24. Because we came from them, will return to them, and until then, we orbit ceaselessly around the female mind and body.

(I would add that we men love women because they are women. As simple as that.)

The professional crisis and its booby-traps

(Mario Rosa is one of the most intelligent people I've met. The following list is based on one of his books, The Achilles Syndrome.)

How it starts

1. Watch out for enemies: The crisis comes from outside, even though we sometimes think it's only in our own souls. Some insignificant childhood incident can have major consequences in adult life.

2. The crisis is bent on destruction: However hard we try, romantically, to link the word 'crisis' to the word 'opportunity' (as the Chinese do), that is only possible when we are prepared for the unexpected. Since we rarely are, the crisis sweeps in and begins to destroy everything around us.

3. The truth doesn't help: When my book *The Zahir* was published, a Russian dress designer announced in Moscow's most popular newspaper that the story was based on our 'love affair' (the muse who inspired it was in fact Christina Lamb, a war correspondent for the English newspaper *The Sunday Times*). I was foolish enough to send a letter denying it. End result: anyone who hadn't read the original story heard about it through my letter. And speculations were soon rife about how men, when their backs are to the wall, always claim innocence.

4. A problem, however small, can create a gigantic crisis: In Brazil, a charge of bribery brought against a director of the national postal service unleashed a whole series of accusations that affected various members of the government. In a marriage, a husband or wife coming home late from

work can trigger all kinds of repressed emotions, which are then very difficult to contain.

5. Facts don't count, what counts is the public's perception of those facts: I know a girl whose family is always having a tough time of it, whose father hates her mother, and whose other family members fight like cat and dog – but they do so quietly. As long as the girl gets excellent grades at school, as long as the neighbours and 'public opinion' know nothing about the real situation, it will be assumed that everything is fine.

6. Everything becomes a deadly weapon: Since a crisis always involves a dialogue of the deaf, in which one party can't hear what the other is saying, arguments become useless. If you say 'I love oranges', what the other person will hear is that you hate potatoes and are complaining because she served you a plate of French fries for supper.

7. A crisis always needs a symbol: It can be an institution like marriage, a profession, a business, religion, love, or a code of conduct. The person is only the instrument by which harm can be inflicted on that symbol.

Two ineffectual solutions

Once a crisis has begun, the worst possible ways to react are:

A. Ignore the problem. Maria knows that João, her husband, is about to be fired from his job, which will make it hard for the family to survive. However, since João doesn't mention the matter, she pretends she doesn't know.

B. Deny the problem exists. João, for his part, thinks that with the contacts he has made during his working life, he will get another opportunity, thus failing to acknowledge just how serious his situation is. He forgets one of the hardest rules of life, spoken by Jesus: 'From him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has'. The moment he loses his job all those contacts will disappear, because João will have nothing to offer in exchange.

C. Refuse to ask for help. João and Maria have spent many years together, and know each other extremely well. João can only think of his problems, because a crisis absorbs all of a person's energies. Maria might be able to help him, but, out of pride, he cannot share his difficulties. As a result, João, unable to think clearly, sinks further and further into his sea of troubles.

D. Lie or tell half-truths. One day, Maria screws up her courage and, as they about to go to sleep, asks if something is wrong. João answers: 'I'm thinking of changing my job.' Clearly, from a legal point of view, this could be said to be true – since João is about to be fired, he really is considering finding a new job. Maria says nothing more. The pressure in João's mind grows, because he suspects that his wife knows something, but now that he has lied, he can no longer use the truth as a way of saving himself

E. Blame other people. João knows he is a good man, that he has always been an honest worker and has tried to give the best of himself. He thinks his boss is acting unfairly, that he doesn't deserve what is happening to him. The fact is that the boss might be going through exactly the same drama, because all employees are controlled by abstract entities known as 'companies'. Even so, faced by what João considers to be an absurd situation, instead of keeping a cool head, he thinks that the world is full of cruel and evil people.

F. Overestimate your own abilities: João starts saying how talented and capable he is and ends up convincing himself that he is not facing a crisis, but rather a new opportunity. João is very talented, but that isn't enough, because he's not yet ready for the final blow when it comes and which takes away his breath and his enthusiasm.

Since he has done all the wrong things, when the evil day arrives, João is dismissed. From then on, the family stands on the brink of ruin, because of all that precious time wasted denying that disaster was nigh.

What to do then? Well, I have been through many crises in my life and have probably made all the mistakes described above. Until, during what

was possibly the very worst of all my crises, my friends rallied round.

Now, the first thing I do is ask for help. Naturally, the final decision will be my sole responsibility but I have never regretted revealing my vulnerability to my wife and my friends, instead of trying to put a brave face on it.

And as soon as I began to ask for and accept help, my tendency to make mistakes diminished, although it's still there, of course, always waiting to strike.

Manual for real travelling, and not just so that you can tell your friends you've visited other countries

1. Avoid museums. This might seem to be absurd advice, but let's just think about it a little: if you are in a foreign city, isn't it far more interesting to go in search of the present than the past? It's just that people feel obliged to go to museums because they learned as children that travelling was about seeking out that kind of culture. Obviously museums are important, but they require time and objectivity - you need to know what you want to see there, otherwise you will leave with a sense of having seen a few really fundamental things, except that you can't remember what they were.

2. Hang out in bars. Bars are the places where life in the city reveals itself, not in museums. By bars I don't mean nightclubs, but the places where ordinary people go, have a drink, ponder the weather, and are always ready for a chat. Buy a newspaper and enjoy the ebb and flow of people. If someone strikes up a conversation, however silly, join in: you cannot judge the beauty of a particular path just by looking at the gate.

3. Be open. The best tour guide is someone who lives in the place, knows everything about it, is proud of his or her city, but does not work for an agency. Go out into the street, choose the person you want to talk to and ask them something (Where is the cathedral? Where is the post office?). If nothing comes of it, try someone else - I guarantee that by the end of the day you will have found yourself an excellent companion.

4. Try to travel alone or - if you are married - with your spouse. It will be harder work, no one will be there taking care of you, but only in this way can you truly leave your own country behind. Travelling with a group is a way of being in a foreign country while speaking your mother tongue, doing whatever the leader of the flock tells you to do, and taking more interest in group gossip than in the place you are visiting.

5. Don't compare. Don't compare anything - prices, standards of hygiene, quality of life, means of transport, nothing! You are not travelling in order to prove that you have a better life than other people - your aim is to find out how other people live, what they can teach you, how they deal with reality and with the extraordinary.

6. Understand that everyone understands you. Even if you don't speak the language, don't be afraid: I've been in lots of places where I could not communicate with words at all, and I always found support, guidance, useful advice, and even girlfriends. Some people think that if they travel alone, they will set off down the street and be lost for ever. Just make sure you have the hotel card in your pocket and - if the worst comes to the worst - flag down a taxi and show the card to the driver.

7. Don't buy too much. Spend your money on things you won't need to carry: tickets to a good play, restaurants, trips. Nowadays, with the global economy and the Internet, you can buy anything you want without having to pay excess baggage.

8. Don't try to see the world in a month. It is far better to stay in a city for four or five days than to visit five cities in a week. A city is like a capricious woman: she takes time to be seduced and to reveal herself completely.

9. A journey is an adventure. Henry Miller used to say that it is far more important to discover a church that no one else has ever heard of than to go to Rome and feel obliged to visit the Sistine Chapel with two hundred thousand other tourists bellowing in your ear. By all means go to the Sistine Chapel, but wander the streets too, explore alleyways, experience

the freedom of looking for something - quite what you don't know - but which, if you find it, will - you can be sure - change your life.

The ten steps of the spiritual search according to the Tradition

1. Restlessness: You realise that you need to change your life, either because it's boring or because it's painful.

2. The search: The decision to change. The search begins through books, courses, meetings.

3. Disappointment: Looking for the right path. You become aware of your teachers' problems and faults. However many strands of philosophy or religion you follow, however many secret societies you join, there are always the same underlying problems: vanity and a desire for power.

4. Denial: Many people abandon the path when they realise that those who are on the path have not yet resolved their own problems.

5. Anxiety: You abandon the path, but a seed has been sown: faith. And it grows day and night. You feel uncomfortable, believing that you found something and then lost it.

6. The return: Some other serious rupture (a tragedy or an ecstasy perhaps) makes you realise that your faith is still alive. And faith, if tended with care, resists all disappointments.

7. The teacher: The most dangerous moment. Teachers are merely people with experience. Each path is different and individual, but, at this point, it risks being sullied and becoming a collective path.

8. The signs: You leave your teacher when the path reveals itself – through signs. Through those signs, God is teaching you what you need to know.

9. Dark night: You have made your choice. You change your life and take your first steps – despite your fear.

10. Communion: This is the moment when, as St Paul, said, the Divinity enters the person. The mystery of miracles reveals itself in all its marvellous grandeur.

Manual for dealing with time

(the following text is based on studies carried out by a friend of mine, Stephan Rechtstaffen, a doctor who set up the highly successful Omega Institute in New York)

1. Time is not a measure, but a quality. When we look back at the past, we are not rewinding a tape, but recalling the gift of our existence on this earth. You cannot measure time the way you measure a road, because we are always taking gigantic leaps backwards (memories) and forwards (plans).

2. Managing time is not living: The idea that time is money is pure nonsense. We should be conscious of every minute, knowing how to take full advantage of it by doing what we are doing (with love) or simply by contemplating life. The day is made up of twenty-four hours and many, many moments. If we slow down, everything lasts longer. It might take longer to wash the dishes, but why not use that time to think about nice things, to sing, relax, and take pleasure in being alive?

3. In harmony with life: Artur Rubinstein, one of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century, was once asked by an ardent admirer: 'How do you handle the notes as well as you do?' Rubinstein answered: 'I handle the notes no better than many others, but the pauses – ah! that is where art resides.' Stephan's divorce was very painful, and he thought that by keeping busy, he would get through the difficult times. It didn't work, the pain was still there. After a while, he started to 'use the pauses' – to sit down and allow the pain to enter him and touch him and then pass. Little by little, he began to rebuild his life, gaining a better understanding of the

reasons behind the separation, and now his ex-wife works with him at the Omega Institute – because he was able to face up to the pain and not just hide it away behind a multitude of different tasks.

4. Experiencing things more deeply: A study of visitors to Washington's National Zoo showed that, on average, people never spend more than about ten seconds looking at any group of animals. Why go to the zoo, then? Wouldn't you be better off looking at an illustrated book? People complain that the hippos are always under water; in fact, the average time hippos spend under water varies between 90 seconds and a maximum of five minutes – the visitors are in such a hurry to move on that they miss what they came to see.

5. Knowing when to think and when to act: a seriously obese patient of Stephan's said that she was prepared to do anything to lose weight. He suggested that whenever she felt like eating, she should observe the feeling, but not act. 'But I'm hungry!' she said. 'Exactly! If you can live with that feeling, observe the hunger, allowing yourself to feel it in all its intensity – but not act – soon the urge will diminish, and you will learn to be the mistress of your will and not the slave of your impulses.'

6. Don't remain passive in the face of negative emotions: When we sit down on a sofa and turn on the TV, we are, in fact, turning off from the world. Or else we start to feel anxious, thinking that we're wasting time, that we should be phoning someone, working out, tidying the house. Why? Because when we sit still, a whole wave of repressed emotions washes over us, depressing us and leaving us feeling sad and guilty. The busier we are, the more those emotions will accumulate, with the risk that, one day, they will explode.

Yes, we all have problems that we need to face, so why not do it now? Stop. Think. Even suffer a little. In the end, we might understand who we are, what we are feeling, what we are doing here, in this moment, rather than being ruled by the Diary of Life.

The warrior of life and renunciation

1. Renouncing what you have. This is Mahatma Gandhi's strategy, to which the warrior of light listens with respect, ignoring those people who, incapable of achieving anything, nevertheless preach renunciation:

'When engaged in any activity, one must know what to expect, by what means we will reach our goal, and how capable we are of doing the task in hand.'

'Only someone who has no desire for the results of conquest and remains absorbed in the combat itself can claim to have renounced the fruits.'

'You can renounce the fruit, but that does not mean you are indifferent to the result.'

2. Renouncing vengeance. The warrior of light has the sword in his hands.

He is the one who decides what he will do and what he will never do.

There are moments when life leads him into a crisis; he is separated from things he has always loved; it is then that the warrior reflects. He checks that he is fulfilling God's will or if he is merely acting selfishly. If this separation is really part of his path, then he accepts without complaint.

If, however, such a separation was provoked by someone else's perverse actions, then he is implacable in his response.

The warrior possesses both force and forgiveness. He can use both with equal skill.

3. Renouncing provocation. The experienced fighter puts up with insults; he knows the strength of his fist and the skill of his blows. Confronted by an unprepared opponent, he looks deep into his eyes and conquers him without ever having to resort to a physical fight.

As the warrior learns from his spiritual master, the light of faith shines in his eyes and he does not need to prove anything to anyone. He is not bothered by his opponent's aggressive arguments which say that God is a superstition, that miracles are just tricks, that believing in angels is running away from reality.

Like the fighter, the warrior of light is aware of his own immense strength; he never fights with anyone who does not deserve the honour of combat.

4. Renouncing time. The warrior of light listens to Lao Tzu when he says that we should let go of the idea of days and hours in order to pay more attention to the moment.

Only in this way can he resolve certain problems before they occur; by focusing on the small things, he manages to avoid larger calamities.

But thinking about the small things is not the same as thinking small. Over-anxiety ultimately banishes every trace of joy from life.

The warrior knows that a great dream is made up of many different things, just as the light from the sun is the sum of its millions of rays.

5. Renouncing comfort. The warrior of light studies the two pillars on either side of the door he is trying to open.

One is called Fear and the other is called Desire. The warrior looks at the pillar of Fear and on it is written: 'You are entering a dangerous, unfamiliar world where everything you have learned up until now will prove useless.'

The warrior looks at the pillar of Desire and on it is written: 'You are about to leave a familiar world wherein are stored all the things you ever wanted and for which you struggled long and hard.'

The warrior smiles because nothing frightens him and nothing holds him. With the confidence of one who knows what he wants, he opens the door.

Carlos Castañeda and the sacred lineage

(A selection based on texts by Carlos Castañeda, 1925-1998)

1. Behaviour. A man goes to knowledge as he goes to war: with fear, respect and absolute assurance. He should behave as if he knew where he was going, although, in fact, he has no idea what he will find; what matters is that he is following the path he chose.

2. Nothing to lose. A warrior considers that he is already dead. Since he has nothing to lose, he proceeds calmly and with heart. Fear no longer drains his energy, and he can apply that energy to living each moment as intensely as possible. The warrior is sure that he has in his hands all the tools he needs to face future difficulties, and it is the use of those tools, also known as experience, that will allow him to overcome obstacles.

3. Acting and knowing. A warrior is always a hunter. He thinks everything through and only acts after reflecting carefully on what he should do. No one can force him to do things he doesn't want to do. He lives because he acts, and not because he thinks he is acting. Knowing that he will be in this world for only a brief period, he tries to experience all the world's marvels. He speaks little, never thinks about fear, and takes responsibility for his actions.

4. Death as companion. A warrior-hunter knows that each decision could be his last. Death is his companion, always seated at his left side, at least a metre away. That is why he goes to the battlefield totally focussed on his

life, knowing that most people go from action to action without really thinking about it.

5. All paths are the same. All paths are the same and lead nowhere. Therefore, the warrior chooses a path that has a life of its own, and from the moment he begins to follow that path, he feels glad and becomes the path. His decision to continue along it depends entirely on his happiness, not on his ambition or his fear. However, before he acts, he always asks himself: 'Does this path have heart?'

6. Other people's opinions. A warrior doesn't waste precious time worrying about what other people think. He knows people who think they are important, and who, because of that, are fat, arrogant and unbending. For a warrior, the art of combat must be combined with lightness and a lack of tension and ambition. A warrior is kind to other people because, above all, he is kind to himself.

7. Intention. A man's intention is not a thought or an object or a desire, but what makes him go forwards even when everyone is telling him he will be defeated or that his chosen course of action makes no sense. Having a clear intention helps the warrior to be invulnerable, to behave like a shaman, capable of walking through walls and touching the infinite.

8. The choice of path. Nothing in this world is given to us as a gift. The most important lessons are always learned with great effort and difficulty. With this in mind, the warrior-hunter never despairs or wastes his time blaming others, because he knows that whatever he does, he bears sole responsibility for his choices. A warrior cannot complain or have regrets: his life is a constant struggle, and the challenges he meets are neither good nor bad, they are merely challenges.

Manual for being accepted in society as a normal person

1. Accept anything that makes us forget our true identity and our dreams and obliges us to work solely in order to produce and reproduce.
2. Accept that it is possible to draw up rules for a war (the Geneva Convention).
3. Spend years studying at university and then fail to find a job.
4. Work from nine to five on something that gives you no pleasure, so that in thirty years' time you can retire.
5. Retire, discover that you no longer have enough energy to enjoy life, and die after only a few years – of boredom.
6. Use botox.
7. Try to be financially successful rather than go looking for happiness.
8. Ridicule people who look for happiness rather than money, saying that he or she 'lacks ambition'.
9. Compare objects such as cars, houses, clothes, and define your life according to those comparisons, instead of trying to find out why you're alive.
10. Don't talk to strangers.
11. Always believe that your parents are right.

12. Marry, have children, stay together even when love has died, saying that it's for the good of the children (who, of course, barely notice the constant rows).

12a. Criticise anyone who tries to be different.

14. Wake up to a hysterical alarm clock every morning.

15. Believe everything you read.

16. Wear a piece of coloured cloth tied around your neck, which serves no obvious function, but which goes by the name of 'tie'.

17. Never ask direct questions, even if the other person knows what it is you want to know.

18. Keep smiling even when you feel like bursting into tears. And feel sorry for all those who show their feelings.

19. Believe that art is either worth a fortune or worth nothing at all.

20. Always despise anything that was achieved too easily, because it did not involve the necessary sacrifice and therefore lacks the required qualities.

21. Keep up with fashion, even if the clothes are ridiculous and uncomfortable.

22. Believe that all famous people have tons of cash stashed away.

23. Invest time and money in outer beauty and pay scant attention to inner beauty.

24. Do everything you can to show that, although you are a normal person, you are infinitely superior to other human beings.

25. When travelling on public transport, never catch the eye of another passenger, in case he or she thinks you're flirting.

26. When you get into a lift, stand facing the door and pretend that you're the only person there, however crowded it is.

27. Never laugh out loud in a restaurant, however funny the joke.
28. In the northern hemisphere, always dress according to the season: bare arms in spring (regardless of how cold it is) and woollen jacket in the autumn (regardless of how warm it is).
29. In the southern hemisphere, deck the tree with fake snow, even though winter has nothing to do with the birth of Christ.
30. As you grow older, believe that you possess all the world's wisdom, even though you haven't necessarily lived enough to know what's right and wrong.
31. Go to a charity tea party and think that you have thereby done enough to abolish social inequality in the world.
32. Eat three times a day, even if you're not hungry.
33. Believe that everyone else is better than you – better-looking, more capable, richer, more intelligent. It's very dangerous to go beyond your own limits, best do nothing.
34. Use your car as a way of feeling powerful and master of the universe.
35. Swear at the traffic.
36. Believe that whenever your son does something wrong it's because of the company he keeps.
37. Marry the first person who offers you a good position in society. Love can wait.
38. Always say 'I tried', even when you haven't tried at all.
39. Postpone experiencing the most interesting things in life until you're too weak and tired to do so.
40. Fend off depression with long daily doses of television.
41. Believe that it's possible to be sure of everything you've achieved.

42. Believe that women don't like football and that men don't like interior design.

43. Blame the government for everything that goes wrong.

44. Believe that being a good, decent, respectful person means that others will think you weak, vulnerable and easily manipulated.

45. Be equally convinced that treating other people rudely and aggressively is synonymous with having a powerful personality.

46. Be afraid of a fibroscopy (men) and childbirth (women).

47. Finally: believe that your religion is the one absolute truth and that anyone else on this vast planet who believes in some other manifestation of God deserves to be condemned to the fires of hell.

Manual for climbing mountains

1. Choose the mountain you want to climb: Don't be influenced by what other people say: 'that one's prettier' or 'that one looks easier'. You are going to put a lot of energy and enthusiasm into achieving your objective, and you are the only person responsible for your choice, so be quite sure about what you are doing.

2. Find out how to reach the mountain: Often you can see the mountain in the distance – beautiful, interesting, full of challenges. However, when you try to reach it, what happens? It's surrounded by roads; forests lie between you and your objective; and what seems clear on the map is far more complicated in reality. So you must try all the paths and tracks until, one day, you find yourself before the peak you intend to climb.

3. Learn from someone who has been there before: However unique you may think you are, there is always someone who has had the same dream before and who will have left signs behind that will make the climb less arduous: the best place to attach a rope, trodden paths, branches broken off to make it easier to pass. It is your climb and it is your responsibility too, but never forget that other people's experiences are always helpful.

4. Dangers seen from close to are controllable: When you start to climb the mountain of your dreams, pay attention to what is around you. There are, of course, precipices. There are almost imperceptible cracks. There are stones polished so smooth by rain and wind that they have become as

slippery as ice. But if you know where you are putting your foot, you will see any traps and be able to avoid them.

5. The landscape changes, so make the most of it: You must, naturally, always keep in mind your objective - reaching the top. However, as you climb, the view changes, and there is nothing wrong with stopping now and then to enjoy the vista. With each metre you climb, you can see a little further, so take time to discover things you have never noticed before.

6. Respect your body: You will only manage to climb a mountain if you give your body the care it deserves. You have all the time that life gives you, so do not demand too much from your body. If you walk too quickly, you will grow tired and give up halfway. If you walk too slowly, night might fall and you will get lost. Enjoy the landscape, drink the cool spring water and eat the fruit that Nature so generously offers you, but keep walking.

7. Respect your soul: Don't keep repeating 'I'm going to do it'. Your soul knows this already; what it needs is to use this long walk in order to grow, to reach out as far as the horizon, to touch the sky. Obsession will not help you in the search for your goal and will end up spoiling the pleasure of the climb. On the other hand, don't keep repeating 'It's harder than I thought', because that will sap your inner strength.

8. Be prepared to go the extra mile: The distance to the top of the mountain is always greater than you think. There is bound to come a moment when what seemed close is still very far away. But since you are prepared to go still further, this should not be a problem.

9. Be joyful when you reach the top: Cry, clap your hands, shout out loud that you made it; let the wind (because it is always windy up there) purify your mind, cool your hot, weary feet, open your eyes, blow the dust out of your heart. What was once only a dream, a distant vision, is now part of your life, you made it, and that is good.

10. Make a promise: Now that you have discovered a strength you did not even know you had, tell yourself that you will use it for the rest of your

days and promise yourself, too, to discover another mountain and set off on a new adventure.

11. Tell your story: Yes, tell your story. Be an example to others. Tell everyone that it's possible, and then others will find the courage to climb their own mountains.



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