

Inspiring and practical self-help tips for men, by a man.

Mike's Tips: Advice for Men Who Think Too Much and Do Too Little

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Contents

About the Author.....	vii
Introduction	ix
Acknowledgments	xiii
Maturity: Like Fine Wine, You Can Get Better with Age	1
Anger: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly	5
Attitude: It Can Make You or Break You	9
Companionship and Friendship: Take a Little, Give a Lot.....	13
Tolerance and Compassion: Even Real Men Have Them	15
Dealing with Difficult People: Mellow but Not Yellow	17
Dignity: A Spiritual Medal You Earn.....	21
Learning: Not Just for Kids.....	23
Fear: Conquering Those Things that Go Bump in Your Head	25
Keeping Secrets and Letting Them Go: The Secret to Secrets	29
Getting Along with Others: It's Up to You	33
Being Grateful: Things Could be a Lot Worse!.....	37
Health and Fitness: Real Basic Stuff	39
Helping Yourself: Taming Runaway Gray Matter.....	41
Inspiration and Imagination: Everybody Can Use 'Em	45
Love and Marriage: She's the Light of Your Life – Keep the Light Burning Bright.....	47

MICHAEL RYAN

The Media: If You Don't Have Any Enemies, They
Will Do.....49

Memory: Tell it Like It Was53

Meeting Life's Challenges and Crises: Surviving with
Your Morale and Spirit Intact.....55

Money: Both Sides of the Coin.....59

Perception: The Double-Sided Mirror.....63

Personal Integrity: "To Thine Own Self Be True"65

A Few Practical, Personal Tips: From Guy to Guy67

Pride: A Force for Good or Evil – Your Choice69

Relationships: Getting Into Good Ones and Keeping
Them Good73

Self Destructive Behavior: Denial Could Be Life-
Threatening79

Religion and Spirituality: Finding Revelation and
Peace of Mind in a Modern World81

The Cave of Remorse: Don't Dwell There87

Safety: Practical Precautions for Longer Life89

Surviving Being Self-Centered: Advice for Refugees
from the "Me" Generation.....91

Sex: Source of Joy and Inspiration for Creativity and
Hope.....93

Socializing: A Preventative for Would-Be Hermits95

Thinking: Life is Better in the Here and Now97

Understanding Humans: Saints and Sinners Both.....99

Working: No Matter Your Line of Work, Aim High
and Let it Bring Out Your Best.....101

Maturity:
Like Fine Wine, You Can Get Better with Age

☞ In our struggle to get along and adapt, we generally develop assets best suited to our survival. An athlete may use his physical prowess, a beautiful woman may use her looks, the funny man his wit, the intellectual his thought processes, and so on. But if we allow ourselves to become dependent upon these mechanisms, they will at some point fail us, proving inadequate in difficult situations when life demands more from us. This is why, even though these God-given gifts are useful, continual reliance on them can blunt or prevent personal growth. This is particularly true when the aging process slips in: it gradually chips away at our looks, intrudes upon physical capabilities, and may take the edge off our wit or sharp mind. Do not be afraid to look for and develop new ways of meeting and dealing with life—your best assets have always been inside, waiting to be brought forth.

☞ The often selfish and self-gratifying fires of youth usually extinguish themselves with growing maturity, as a man's natural inclinations toward domesticity, marriage and children develop. Some men might think that these urges signify the loss of toughness or manhood, when in reality, making a success of marriage and child-rearing may prove to be the most difficult tasks a man ever encounters. Though he may strive for manliness by working out, being the proverbial "bad boy," or even getting pierced or tattooed, no tougher man is made than the one who endures and succeeds in the responsibilities that marriage and commitment to children entail. Putting the needs of your mate and kids ahead of your own has its own sweet rewards and allows you to reside in the far more life-enriching dimension of love and compassion. You will discover that immersing yourself in these character and integrity-building pursuits brings you their own satisfying draft of happiness.

☞ If you're over forty and worried about it, remember that numbers are man-made and have little to do with the ability to feel young at heart. What matters is keeping your inner light shining so there are no shadows in which self-doubt can hide. Your inner light is who you really are—a capable, powerful and honest spirit who believes in himself and acts for the good of those around him; who loves and helps others, even at personal inconvenience; and someone who enjoys and remains interested and involved with life as fully as he is capable. As time goes on, your inner, spiritual life will become ever richer and fuller, serving you well as time takes its toll on your physical self and you put away some of those youthful impulses for a more sublimely inspired state of mind.

☞ When someone proclaims “seen it all, heard it all, done it all,” it is often but one more step in pride's long, downhill journey—in other words, such statements are the self-protective response people use to appear better to others and to assert that they are on top of things. But isn't that the ultimate self-deceit? And isn't this demonstrated in a very real sense as we descend the staircase of time known as

MICHAEL RYAN

the aging process? Your eyesight diminishes so you cannot “see it all,” your hearing dulls so you cannot “hear it all,” and your physical attributes become liabilities so that lastly, even if you still wanted to, you could not “do it all.”

Still, at this stage, if you are open to change and improvement, wisdom and integrity can still be born through becoming aware of, and beginning to practice, philosophical approaches to living. Nature, in its usual economy, provides the comforts of wisdom and integrity to balance the inevitable physical “decompensations” that accompany aging. This makes it possible to grow old gracefully—a worthwhile objective.

Attitude: It Can Make You or Break You

☞ An optimistic attitude engenders lightness of heart and mind, allowing you to remain full of hope when the inevitable life crisis rears its ugly head. This type of optimism bears offspring in the form of integrity and courage and nurtures in you the ability to be of service to others—a pretty big insurance policy to offset the terrifying times when you feel lost, or at a loss.

☞ Nothing pays off like persistence. This statement, reiterated throughout the ages, acknowledges that just showing up, stepping forward, and taking the necessary action as you work toward a desired goal, will in the end help fulfill that goal. Though getting underway and disciplining yourself into action may be tough, the more you do, the more your mind and spirit will follow and “get with the program.” Then you will experience satisfaction and fulfillment at your progress. For example, you can possess superior intellectual faculties, but if you lack persistence, you will not obtain your Ph.D. On the other hand, you can possess average intelligence,

MICHAEL RYAN

but if you have persistence you will be able to achieve your chosen goal.

☞ Consulting with an intelligent pessimist can sometimes provide you with a needed reality check if your expectations in certain circumstances have ballooned to the point of unreality. On the other hand, don't let them convince you the sky is falling when the sky is cloudless, sunny and blue. Obviously it is not possible for everything to "go right" all the time, though we err if we avoid risk just to prevent the possibility of failing.

☞ It's not possible to mold society and people to the exact form and pattern we would prefer, no matter how desperately we might try. But just as our parents strangely seem to get smarter as we get older, if we change ourselves and our own attitude, then somehow the people around us miraculously change, too!

☞ The words “psyche” and “psycho” are closely related. If you don’t heed the reality and voice of the former, you may indeed become the latter.

☞ There is more to taking a vacation than simply going to the destination you have chosen. In taking a vacation, we are also “vacating” our everyday lives in order to rejuvenate ourselves through rest or an adventure. If you take the attitude that the journey is always more interesting than the destination, you may prevent disappointment if the resort is not everything you thought it would be or the weather turns bad as you backpack into an unknown wilderness. Use “getting away” to change not only your geography or usual living routine, but to experience different thoughts and feelings as you do. By taking this attitude, you may also make discoveries about yourself – not just about the place to which you travel!

☞ When wrapped up in a problem or difficult situation, learn to recognize whether you are letting shallow values and concerns rule your thoughts. Society and the world at large sometimes seem to impose standards on us that are actually shortsighted, selfish and narrow. If we let them govern us, they can overwhelm our true insight and sense of knowing and result in unease and discontent. But paying heed to our higher faculties of self-awareness engenders contentment with the person we know ourselves to be. Everyone is a unique being with various strengths, weaknesses, and his own individual direction in life. Viewing your differences as better or worse, more or less valuable, by *someone else's* standard, is to fail to appreciate your own personal humanity and innate worth. Rely on your *own* best judgment as you make your decisions in life.

Dealing with Difficult People: Mellow but Not Yellow

☞ Be alert to the presence of a particular type of narrow-minded person who habitually ignores widely agreed upon standards of human decency and fairness. Incapable of observing or caring beyond their limited, self-centered world and oblivious to humanity, these people's cleverness lies in their exercise of self-will. This works exclusively to serve their own needs and satisfy themselves above all else, while judging and manipulating others around them to suit these selfish ends.

Such people, life's natural creeps, are found in all strata of human society. Sometimes their inner hostility is made worse by the costume of an extensive formal education which only allows them to be cleverer in their pathology. Sometimes they are very persuasive or charismatic, but most of the time they can be depended upon to be themselves and reveal their all-consuming self-absorption. Regardless, do not become distracted by imbecilic behavior, and seek always to maintain the decency of self-composure when dealing with such persons.

MICHAEL RYAN

Seek out, befriend and ally yourself with wonderful people who bring out the best in you. You'll find many such kindred souls who amply demonstrate admirable and practical standards of human decency.

☞ Some people are merely digestive machines traveling through their dark, sublunar worlds with an open mouth and a closed mind. They consume everything and everyone they deem delicious—or those who just happen to be standing there—to feed their insatiable egos. When you encounter one of these people, it's not difficult to tell them apart from others. They leave you feeling drained, they sap you of vital strength and leave you angry and desirous of doing them some kind of violence—which if indeed acted upon, could destroy your life and freedom. If you find yourself in the position where you must tolerate someone like this every day, you may find yourself angry all the time. Though you may not be able to change the way they behave, you can change your attitude about them. Pray for them on a daily basis—it works!

☞ When you hear someone talk about “they” and “them,” as in “they” think this, and “they” want that, make it a point to find out exactly who “they” are. If it is a specific reference to the powers that be, there may be information it behooves you to get. But beware, because the general use of “they” and “them” may also just be an excuse to spread alarm or sow unfounded doubt.

☞ It’s impossible to entirely avoid rude and ill-behaved people, so the occasional encounter with these types is something you must get used to—for wherever you go, there they may be! Don’t let their arrogance and conceit ensnare you into chronic resentment—such people have no peace of mind, so why let them destroy yours as well? Instead of fantasizing about choking them to death, practice tolerance and consideration toward them. This approach will keep you from stooping to their level and harboring resentment toward them, and may also save you from the potentially unpleasant consequences of insulting or injuring them. Remember, it is always easier to hate than to love, and there is a test for this: if you resent someone,

MICHAEL RYAN

you will find yourself thinking about them more
than you think about your loved ones!

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