Life (in general)

- The most fundamental question in life is: So?
  -- Some runners up include:
  1. What am I doing?
  2. Where am I going?
  3. What do I really want? And why?
  4. What have I overlooked?

- It can always get worse.
  -- Corollary: Things are never as bad as they seem.
  -- Lemma: The impact of any significant event needs to be re-evaluated at 5 year intervals.

- There are certain things that can only be learned through experience.

- Losing all hope is freedom. -- Line from "Fight Club"

- The things you own end up owning you. -- Line from "Fight Club"

- Political Correctness purports to inspire tolerance--it instead inspires hostility and intolerance.

- Virtue is its own reward

- The end does not always justify the means, but the means always shape the end.
  -- Corollary: What goes around, comes around

- When it becomes apparent that you're wrong, change direction.

- Do good on to others in order to do well for yourself.

- Youth is wasted on the young. -- Line from "Its a Wonderful Life"

- The only limits are money and imagination. -- Line from "Into the Night"

- No good deed ever goes unpunished.

- It’s easy to be smart later. -- Harlan Ellison

- Truth is often stranger than fiction

- Life has meaning only when you can appreciate the world around you.

- Desire is the opposite of death. -- Tennessee Williams

- Quality is usually better than quantity.

- There are very few truly original ideas--most “new” ideas are old ones, rediscovered and cleverly repacked.

- With few exceptions, the devil you know is better than the devil you don't.

- When you dance with the devil, you had better wait for the song to stop. -- Line from "Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels"

- Contrary to popular belief, neither the truth nor the past are static.
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As of Aug 2011

- You often become (are) what you pretend to be.
- 20/20 hindsight is frequently an illusion.
- With few exceptions, perception is reality.
- The conventional wisdom often isn’t.
- “That which is hateful to you, do not do to others. All the rest is commentary.” – Rabbi Hillel, summarizing the Torah.
- It is far easier to build a bridge from scratch than it is to reconstruct one after it has burned down.
- A day is not wasted if:
  ⇒ You learn something new.
  ⇒ You do something that scares you
  ⇒ You challenge your most basic assumptions
- A problem can only be correctly solved if it is first understood.
- Regardless of whether the glass is half empty or half full, it will eventually need to be washed.
- Most people desperately want others to acknowledge their self worth and the validity of their ideas.
- Sometimes the greatest blessing is not getting what you want most.
- Politics is the art of grown men groveling.
- Its always summer somewhere.
- If you want to do something, you probably have to do something else first.
- Sometimes, the more you look the less you know.
- “None of you seem to understand. I’m not locked in here with you. You’re locked in here with me.” – Line from the Watchman (Rorschach)
- One size does not fit all. -- Line from Square Pegs (The Waitresses)
- We are where we are. -- Dr. John Ruddy
- "The individual is always ready to ascribe his good luck to his own efficiency…. But reverses of fortune he always charges to other people…." – Ludwig von Mises
- Only when the tide goes out do you discover whose been swimming naked. – Warren Buffett
- Reality must take precedence over public relations, for nature cannot be fooled. – Richard Feynmann
- The truth will set you free, but it will probably make you miserable first.

- Three Essential Lessons about Life taught by Super Mario Brothers:
  ⇒ Eat or Be Eaten
  ⇒ Time is Running Out
  ⇒ In the End, You Are Alone

  -- From Glamorama (Brett Easton Ellis)
Success/Failure

- Nothings succeeds like success
- Success is the best revenge.
- Perseverance is worth 30 IQ points.
- Criticism is not failure -- *Line from Haliburton commercial*
- Before you climb the ladder, make sure its against the right wall.
- Few things of consequence happen without a guiding vision.
- Vision without funding is hallucination.
- If you don’t take risks & just play it safe and stay comfortable, you won’t leave a very big legacy.
- The brain is a muscle--you must exercise it to keep it fit.
- You are guaranteed to get what you settle for.
- Proper preparation prevents piss poor performance (p6).
  -- Lemma: The bullet shot from the hip often ends up in your foot.
- It is very rare to do things right the first time—if it really is the first time, we know neither what is “right” nor how to do it.
- Attitude is everything.
- A sense of accomplishment is worth (at least) 5 cups of coffee.
- The man who can control the space he’s in without showing the mechanisms of that control—his money, his rank, his possessions, his accomplishments—is a man with true power. – *Tom Chiarella*
- The quintessential skills for success are:
  ⇒ The ability to recognize that which is truly important (the center of gravity).
  ⇒ The ability to thrive on (and bring order out of) chaos
  ⇒ The ability to act when you’re right.
  ⇒ The ability to adapt to your circumstances
  ⇒ The ability to admit when you're wrong (if only to yourself)
  ⇒ The ability to learn from mistakes (yours or someone else’s).
  ⇒ The ability to recognize, and utilize, greatness (or at least people smarter than yourself).
  ⇒ The ability to handle people.
  ⇒ The ability to sell your ideas.
  ⇒ The ability to command respect.

- “The greatest challenge facing mankind is the challenge of distinguishing reality from fantasy, truth from propaganda. Perceiving the truth has always been a challenge to mankind, but in the information age (or as I think of it, the disinformation age) it takes on a special urgency and importance.”
  – *Michael Crichton*
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As of Aug 2011

Winners/Losers
• “Americans love a winner and cannot tolerate a loser.” -- General George S. Patton
• “It ain't over till its over”-- Yogi Berra  
  -- Corollary: Never assume you've lost!
• Winners write history  
  -- “History is a state of lies agreed upon.” -- Napoleon
• The cooler head typically wins the day.
• It’s not the big that eat the small—it is the fast that eat the slow.
• “Votes are collared under democracy, not by talking sense but by talking nonsense” – H.L. Mencken

Relationships
• Unless a social, professional, or physical taboo exists, it is impossible for a man and woman to be just friends.
• A woman either loves you or she doesn’t--it makes no difference if you give her everything or nothing.  
  -- Lemma: You can’t make someone love you..
• Avoid women who are attracted to men that don’t respect them.
• When it comes to marriage, a mate's most important quality is their sanity.  
  -- Corollary: In the long run, compatibility is more important than beauty or passion.
• Wealth is the most convenient and reliable measure by which women judge men. Sense of humor is a close second.
• A woman’s looks may attract a man, but her personality will make him stay.  
  -- Corollary: Beauty eventually fades, but personality persists.
• People can change--but only when they're ready.  
  -- Lemma: A person will almost never change just because you want them to.
• You meet the most interesting people on the edges of the room.
• Ultimately, you are your most important soul mate—so make sure you can live with yourself!
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As of Aug 2011

Friends-Enemies

• Keep your friends close and your enemies closer. -- Unwritten Military Academy Rule

• YOU are your own worst enemy (is this really a surprise?)
  -- Lemma: The most meaningful victory is victory over self.

• The most meaningful personal insights come from your adversaries.

• If you really want to get to know someone, loan them money.

• In desperation, people tend to mint false saviors

• Avoid making threats—you may have to make good on them!

• Whenever possible, avoid fighting battles alone.
  -- Corollary: One pencil is easy to break; it is nearly impossible to break 20.

Money, Wealth & Investing

• A man cannot be smaller than his money -- Ayn Rand

• Sell the rumor—buy the news

• Eventually, everything regresses to the mean. -- Peter Bernstein

• “Price is what you pay. Value is what you get.” -- Warren Buffet

• “Be fearful when others are greedy, and be greedy when others are fearful.” -- Warren Buffet

• You get what you pay for

• No one ever lost money by taking profits

• Never, ever, buy a timeshare

• Fear and sex sell

• Always question the source of financial advice--what’s in it for them?

• When it comes to real estate, there are only three rules: location, location, location

• People often say that life is not about money—however, they behave as if it is all about money. Only when they are dying does money lose its importance to people.

• You stand to gain the most if you act when the risk is greatest.
  -- Corollary: Only gamble what you can afford to lose.
Luck

- The harder you work, the luckier you become. -- Line from “The Millionaire Mind”
  -- Corollary: Luck usually comes to those who (intelligently) take risks.

- Sometimes you eat the bar….and sometimes the bar eats you. – The (Cowboy) Narrator from “The Big Lebowski

- To be Lucky:
  ⇒ Trust your gut instincts - they are normally right
  ⇒ Keep your ear to the ground and listen
  ⇒ Be open to new experiences and break your normal routine
  ⇒ Spend a few moments each day remembering things that went well
  ⇒ Visualize yourself being lucky before an important meeting or telephone call. Luck is very often a self-fulfilling prophecy
  ⇒ Don’t count on luck--work hard!

Being a Man

- The thing men fear most is that they are not really men.

- Fear is what drives men; virtue is how they respond to fear – Terry Pham, Esquire (May 2009)

- A real man does not find himself—he makes himself.

- A man is best measured by….  
  ⇒ the amount of respect he gets.
  ⇒ who his friends and enemies are.
  ⇒ the quality of his children.

- Women and children can be careless; a man, however, cannot afford to be careless.
  -- Line from The Godfather (Vito Corleone)

- It is generally assumed that the worst thing one can do to a man is kill his self respect.  However, true self respect cannot be killed.  Rather, the worst thing one can do is kill a man’s pretense of self respect.  
  -- Ayn Rand

- Fat, drunk and stupid is no way to go through life. -- Line from “Animal House” (Dean Wormer)

- A fool is a person who won’t ask questions for fear of appearing foolish.

- The pinnacle of being a man (indeed being human) is taking responsibility for your own behavior.

- If you're not living on the edge, then you're taking up too much space
  -- Lemma: Most people spend their lives avoiding tense situations. -- line from "Repo Man"

- With the exception of your own home, its better to be feared than loved.

- The only thing worse than trying and failing is to spend the rest of your life wondering what would have happened if you had only tried.
  -- Corollary: Trying and failing can still be a real bitch.

- Never touch another man's rhubarb. -- Line from "Batman" (the Joker)

- A liberal is a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel. – Robert Frost

- The true measure of a man is what is worth divided by what he thinks he is worth. -- Eric Hoffer
Workplace Philosophy

- Nerve is more important than skill  -- *Line from Player Piano* (*Kurt Vonnegut*)
  -- Corollary: Competence by itself will not guarantee professional success.

- The most valuable workplace asset is the ability to make your Boss look good.
  -- Lemma: Successful employees deliver solutions, not problems.

- No one is irreplaceable.

- There are really only two types of people: relevant and irrelevant

- Showing up on-time and appearing professional is often half the battle.

- Organizations take care of those who take care of themselves.

- Everything that sucks isn't necessarily bad.

- Golden opportunities often masquerade as the most thankless tasks.

- False choices are often packaged as limited alternatives.

- There are five pillars to an organization: purpose, people, professionalism, pride, and product.
  -- *Gen William Creech*

- An expert's most important asset is the ability to speak the language of their profession.

- Longevity is the cure for most professional wounds.

- To optimize your outcomes: maximize awareness and minimize assumptions.
  -- Corollary: Be very careful about what you take for granted.

- The most wasteful, yet common, activity is re-inventing the wheel.

- People who tout their ability to multitask are usually just good at being a jackass and a moron at the same time.

- It is very difficult to cut fat without also cutting muscle.

- Never mistake equality for equivalence.

- It is not what you know, its how you network and market what you know.

- Conflict causes clarity.

- No invention can take the hard work out of creativity.

- Ridicule is mans most potent weapon.

- It is amazing how much phoniness is needed to produce a grain of originality.  -- *Eric Hoffer*

- The bigger your head, the easier your shoes are to fill.  -- *Phil Jackson*

- Advice for how women should compete in the workplace: look like a girl; act like a lady; think like a
man; work like a dog. – Betty Snyder Holberton

**Warfare**
- If you want peace, be prepared for war. – ancient Roman military proverb
- The loser, not the winner, decides when a conflict is over.
  - Corollary: Wars don’t really end until one side is exhausted and broken.
- Never give a sucker an even break. -- W.C. Fields
- Fear and confidence are force multipliers.
- Coincidences should always trigger suspicion.
- The contingencies always outnumber the knowns.
- No plan survives contact with reality. -- generalization of Von Clausewitz
- Fortune favors the those who embrace preparation and redundancy
- When someone attacks you, your reply should be at least as hard. After a while, they’ll look for an easier target.
- One who is merciful to the cruel will ultimately cause cruelty to the merciful. -- from the Talmud

There is nothing less civilized than rewarding evil and thus guaranteeing more of it. High-minded as it is commonly made to sound, it is not civilized to appease evil, to treat it with “dignity and respect,” to rationalize its root causes, to equivocate about whether evil really is evil, and, when all else fails, to ignore it — to purge the very mention of its name — in the vain hope that it will just go away. Evil doesn’t do nuance. It finds you, it tests you, and you either fight it or you’re part of the problem. – Unknown

**Communication**
- The most common illusion is that communication has taken place.
- Communication is not just about the clarity of your message—the importance of the speaker’s presence, confidence, body language, and the existence of a shared context cannot be underestimated. Getting all of these right is extremely difficult, but essential for true communication.
- Convincing people of anything is very hard work. It requires rigor, clarity, confidence, and patience.
- Ambiguity is the rule, not the exception!
- Sometimes the trick is not having an answer.
- You can prove anything if you make enough simplifying assumptions.
- Most people only hear what they want to hear. Hucksters and bullies depend on this. You’ve got to train yourself to get beyond this bias and nail down the specifics.
- The devil really IS in the details.
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Character & Leadership Qualities

• Courage is the most important characteristic of a leader--it is what makes everything else possible.
  -- General George Marshall

• Quitting is the worst addiction.
  -- Lemma: Quitting can become addictive.

• If you can’t find a man of integrity, look for a man of ambition
  -- Line from “I, Claudius”

• Character counts--don’t be afraid to judge it.

• You can count the number of seeds in an apple; however, you can’t count the number of apples in a seed.

• Who is more foolish: the fool or the fool who follows him? -- Obi-Wan Kanobi
  -- Lemma: In many cases, “fools” are the only ones willing to provide leadership.
  -- Lemma: The difference between a “fool” and a “hero” is often luck

• Always be wary of:
  ⇒ The low bidder,
  ⇒ People who work on commission,
  ⇒ People who want to get paid in advance,
  ⇒ People who ask for your social security number,
  ⇒ People who flatter you,
  ⇒ People who talk very fast,
  ⇒ People who are too smooth or polished,
  ⇒ People who smile too much,
  ⇒ People who are too image or career conscious,
  ⇒ People who assure you that they are trustworthy,
  ⇒ People who always want to hear good news

• When in doubt, always ...
  ⇒ Look for precedent.
  ⇒ Follow the money.
  ⇒ Above all...do what you think is right!

• Few things are as devastating as being caught in a lie--even a white one.