

Chapter 38 — Triumphant Self-Mastery

from *Worry and Nervousness: Or, The Science of Self-Mastery* (1914)

by William S. Sadler, M.D.

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Sources for Chapter 38, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) George W. **Jacoby**, M.D., *Suggestion and Psychotherapy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912)
- (2) William S. Sadler, M.D., ***The Physiology of Faith and Fear: Or, The Mind in Health and Disease*** (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1912)
- (3) Dr. Paul Dubois, *The Education of Self (L'Éducation de soi-même)*, Authorized Translation by Edward G. Richards (New York, Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1911)

Note: This source is coded **Dubois1.**

- (4) G. E. **Partridge**, Ph.D., *The Nervous Life* (New York: Sturgis & Walton Company, 1911)
- (5) Dr. Paul Dubois, *The Psychic Treatment of Nervous Disorders (The Psychoneuroses and Their Moral Treatment)*, Translated and Edited by Smith Ely Jelliffe, M.D., Ph.D. and William A. White, M.D. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909, Sixth Edition, Revised)

Note: This source is coded **Dubois2.**

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author (or earlier Sadler book) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.

- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) **Bold type** indicates passages which Sadler copied verbatim, or nearly verbatim, from an uncited source.
- (f) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (g) **Red** indicates either (1) an obvious error on Sadler's part, brought about by miscopying or misunderstanding his source, (2) a statement by Sadler that contradicts an earlier statement of his.
- (h) **Gold** highlights words or phrases that will be discussed in a later analysis.

XXXVIII: TRIUMPHANT SELF-MASTERY

38:0.1 AND now we have come to the summing up—the round up. We have carefully gone into the causes of nervousness and have freely discussed the cure of worry, and now in this chapter, I must take leave, say farewell to my readers. And I somehow feel I will be forgiven if I presume to exhort a bit—to indulge in a little preachment, for in the writing of this book I have endeavored to come very close to the reader, just as I would in the consulting room.

THE MASTERY OF YOUR MOODS

38:1.1 All the advice contained in this book will do you little good unless you begin to put some part of it into actual practice; unless you really begin to act on it, resolve from now on to be a mental master of your own moods, a brave captain of your own mind. Practice grit and gumption on yourself and see that things begin to happen in the long drawn out battle with your nerves. Teach yourself not to want the things you cannot get—to be satisfied with what you are and what you have. Practice contentment with the things of today, while you intelligently and diligently sow the seed for a better tomorrow. Live successfully and efficiently one day at a time. Do not waste your strength in grieving over the past or squander all your energy in an effort to encompass the future. Do the real things of today and let the rest go undone.

38:1.2 Brace up and be a man. Cheer up and be womanly. Don't allow your digestive disturbances, rainy days, hot weather, business troubles, or family friction, to get on your nerves or upset your mental equilibrium. Stay on your feet, don't be flabbergasted by every silly emotion that threatens to sweep over your soul. Stand up like a brave soldier in the struggle of life, be a fearless fighter in the battle of faith against fear. The fight may be hard and the struggle may be long, but the victory of self-mastery will more than a thousand times repay you for every effort and hardship which the conflict may impose.

EMOTIONAL TRAINING

38:2.1 Every human emotion, however overpowering and unruly it may appear in one's life today, is susceptible of being trained—of being intelligently and completely controlled. Even if we are not able to educate animals, we can efficiently train them; and so the most lawless of emotional neurasthenics and hysterics can be retrained if they are but willing to submit to the necessary discipline.

38:2.2 The real work in the training and disciplining of the emotions should begin in early childhood, and in this connection I can do no better than to quote Dr. Jacoby's well chosen words:

II: SPECIAL APPLICATION OF PSYCHOTHERAPY (Jacoby 282)

2. PSYCHO-PROPHYLACTIC TREATMENT (Jacoby 307)

To impress the youthful brain with noble and beautiful thoughts is but one function of educational training.

It is quite as important to regulate by means of habit the flow of ideas, the impulses of the will, and their dependent actions, so that, as an integral possession, they will fortify the personality for its battle of life.

It is true the ideal, a healthy mind in a healthy body, can but rarely be fully realized, but it is better to have a healthy and efficient brain in a crippled body than a crippled mind in a normal body (J 312).

[contd] Child-training, however, is not the sole task of psycho-prophylactic treatment.

Adults, too, require training—frequently more so than children.

Consider, for example, those drones of wealth whose entire lives are filled with outward form and trivialities, whose lack of serious purpose makes them easy victims to the unbridled play of their imaginations.

Constituting, as they do, so large a proportion of sufferers from neurasthenia and other psycho-neuroses, they teach us particularly that inordinate relaxation leads to imaginary disorder, ideational diseases, quite as much as does over-taxation through work (J 312-13).

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[contd] Let us here emphasize the principle that health cannot, as Hoffmann expresses it, be absorbed in comfortable repose with the aid of a drug, but must be acquired and maintained through useful work.

When races or individuals, enervated through luxurious living, unwilling to accept further cares or obligations, tend toward “race-suicide” through their need for repose, and, worshipping a morbid feminism, look on hard work as a disgrace,

they represent the dead twigs of humanity, which have fallen and must be replaced by fresh shoots; they have become useless and must give place to those who, through earnest work, have remained young, strong, and active (J 313).

XXIX: MENTAL MEDICINE AND MORAL HYGIENE (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 311)

THE MORAL MASTERY (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 318)

[contd] The so-called moral powers are capable of exerting a tremendous influence in the control of both mind and body.

When the moral mandates are reinforced with a positive will, there is absolutely no limit to their far-reaching influence and their great power for good in the regulation of mental habits and physical practices (*PF&F* 318).

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

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THE MORAL MASTERY

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SOURCE

[contd] The moral mastery of the individual is the one safeguard against all those mental tortures and physical sufferings, which so certainly come from conscious sin and moral depravity.

The moral mastery gives birth to an invincible and determined spirit.

The spiritual sovereignty creates a sense of conscious superiority, which contributes much to the mental peace and physical health.

Spiritual peace and moral satisfaction carry with them the ability to ignore trifling worries and the power to rise above our common everyday harassments (*PF&F* 318-19).

[contd] No stronger illustration of the efficacy of the moral mastery in the psychic and physical realms can be cited than the case of the habitual drunkard, the dipsomaniac.

The author has seen many a case who had in no way been helped by treatment in various sanitariums—to say nothing of fraudulent liquor cures and various other fakes—who was sobered up by religious enthusiasm and kept sober year after year by the moral mastery of constant faith.

In fact, in the opinion of the author, about the only sure cure to be recommended for dipsomania is religionmania (*PF&F* 319).

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

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CULTIVATE SELF-CONTROL

38:4.1 Let those who have lost the power of self-control become intelligent concerning the physiology, anatomy, and hygiene of the human nervous system. Read this book through again and again until you become thoroughly acquainted with your emotional self. Become a master of every teaching that has to do with self-control, and then cultivate it like a farmer cultivates the soil, and you will be sure, sooner or later, to obtain a satisfactory harvest yield.

VI: MORAL CLEAR-SIGHTEDNESS
(Dubois 123)

Many of my patients whose chief weakness is their emotivity come to me and say: “My feelings exist by themselves quite apart from my reason;

between the two, there is as it were a water-tight partition, which does not permit of my reason keeping order among my feelings.”

I reply: “You are mistaken;

there are no primary feelings;

they are all related to a mental representation of an intellectual order,

accessible to the criticism of the reason.

38:4.2 Entirely cure yourself of that nonsensical doctrine that

your feelings exist separate and apart from yourself—from your reason and judgment.

Such teaching is the sheerest of nonsense.

There are no fundamental or primary feelings which exist separate and apart from your voluntary mental powers.

They are all a part of your consciousness,

and as such are subject to criticism and susceptible of control.

SOURCE

So there is a *logic of sentiments*;

they may only penetrate our mind and persist there when they have received the assent of the reason.

Your tendency to separate these two departments is equivalent to the common and foolish saying, 'It is stronger than I.'

That is not the spirit in which we gain victory" (D1 130-31).

Hear what Pascal says, that mystical neurasthenic, who wrote so well and so often thought incompletely:

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

38:4.3 It is true that certain sentiments

as well as fears and anxieties may persist in occupying a place in your mental consciousness quite independent of your will, which would immediately cast them out.

It is true that

notions may persist in your mind without the assent of your reason,

but these lingering doubts, straggling fears, and pestiferous emotions, while they may thus remain in one's mind, are in no sense able to dominate or control you.

It is ourselves, our wills, that should be in command and in control.

Never will we bow down and admit that

any of these notions, emotions, and passions are stronger than we are.

The science of self-mastery demands that we shall unceasingly deny them this power and unfalteringly challenge their usurpation of that place and function in human experience which alone should be occupied by a supreme and sovereign will.

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SOURCE

“Man’s conversion is prevented by his idleness, his passions, his pride,—in a word, by self-love.

We cannot expect to conquer this sentiment by an *idea*; a passion yields only to a passion.” (D1 125)

[contd] Yes, truly, a passion yields only to a passion, a sentiment yields only to a sentiment; it could not be better put.

But how did Pascal not see that all our passions, excepting those that are purely animal (hunger, thirst, sexual desires and desire for physical comfort) are *ideas become sentiments* by reason of being imposed upon our understanding! (D1 125)

This continued culture leads us not to liberty, but to *self mastery*; that is to say, to a beneficent *slavery* in regard to the moral sentiments which are imposed upon our minds.

It is here that one might speak of a categoric imperative, not native and reduced to an imperceptible kernel of conscience, but acquired and firmly based upon knowledge.

In this noble spirit of moral determinism the immortal Guyau said:

“He who does not act according as he thinks, thinks incompletely” (D1 124).

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THE OPTIMUM LIFE

[Every person born into this world, their work is born with them.—James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)]

38:5.1 When human beings are born into this world their work is born with them.

That complex interplay of heredity, environment, and educational forces has in accordance with the laws of accident and averages, created a more or less definite range of destiny in which any single individual may live and move and have his being; and it is one of the fascinating tasks of life to explore one's range of possible activities and ascertain one's real "optimum of life"; and in furtherance of this idea, I can do no better than to quote Partridge, who says:

II: THE OPTIMUM LIFE (Partridge 59)

[contd] THE personal problem can be expressed, in biological terms, as a search for an optimum mode of life.

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They are equipped with special instincts which direct them, and they also profit by experience, which enables them to choose that mode of life, and that habitat, which is for them, the best.

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They migrate here and there, seek those conditions of heat, food supply, and shelter, that are best suited to them.

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And, as is the case with man, their adaptation is not entirely for the individual, but for offspring and for the community to which they belong (P 59).

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SOURCE

If a man can learn to live wisely for one day, he can be said to have succeeded, in a great measure, in solving his personal problem (P 60).

The optimum day will differ vastly among individuals, and it is this difference that indicates the mode of progress by specialisation.

It is conceivable that for one, the only day which can in the end produce any practical values in life, is a day of almost complete rest;

but it is not a complete day, a unit of a life, unless it accomplishes something, however little it may be, that represents the life purpose of the individual.

For another, the optimum day may be one of the most self-forgetful and strenuous activity.

For the great majority, it will be neither of these extremes, but it must be for each a day of maximum fulfilment of purpose, with a minimum of waste (P 61).

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

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THE CONQUEST OF CIVILIZATION

38:6.1 The science of self-mastery demands that we come to possess a more or less perfect control over ourselves in the presence of the complexity and complicated demands of modern civilized society.

It demands that we shall be able to mingle with the crowd and move with the current, or that we have the power and poise which shall enable us to withdraw from the common herd and stand aloof in our own conscious completeness, in no wise embarrassed by our isolation, or confounded with being enforced to associate only with ourselves.

XL: THE EMANCIPATED LIFE (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 493)

THE BONDAGE OF CIVILIZATION (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 493)

[contd] Man is a sovereign being with soul freedom, mental independence, and moral option; but to-day our complex civilization and highly developed commerce are rapidly turning men and women into highly specialized intellectual and industrial machines (*PF&F* 493).

One would naturally think that the sacredness of the sovereign individuality which has been given to man would naturally protect us against the slavery of imitation, but this is not so.

The power of suggestion, the dread of adverse criticism, and the fear of ridicule, make of otherwise intelligent men and women, abject slaves to the prevailing fashions.

Man has largely lost sight of the fact that diversity of character and expression is the law of creation.

No two leaves, even on the same tree, are exactly alike.

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SOURCE

The race is losing sight of the fact that the supreme duty of man is to live at his best - ascertain the conditions essential thereto, and faithfully adjust his life to them. (*PF&F* 494).

PHYSICAL EMANCIPATION—THE SIMPLE LIFE FOR THE BODY (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 495)

[contd] As we increase the complexity of modern living, it becomes necessary that very simple and hygienic habits should be generally adopted.

It is highly essential that men and women of the twentieth century should give daily study and intelligent thought to the cultivation and preservation of health.

The integrity of the civilized races is dependent upon getting away from the house—from the sedentary life.

Man is in every sense an outdoor animal, and sunshine and fresh air are indispensable to his health and happiness.

Many of our modern maladies, such as bronchitis, pneumonia, catarrh, and tuberculosis are purely and simply house diseases (*PF&F* 495).

INTRODUCTION TO THE SIXTH AMERICAN EDITION (Dubois2 v)

Self-education ought precisely to lead us to this moral clairvoyance which

suspends the impulsion of a sentimental motive

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

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MENTAL MASTERY

38:7.1 Self-education and mental training ought early to lead us to that place and power of moral supremacy which would enable us to

suspend sentiment and impulse, to control the emotional motives,

SOURCE

until the moment when sane common sense has given its consent.

It is precisely this mastery which we ought to teach our patients

to make them less open to suggestion

[!]

and more open to reason;

to snatch them from the clutches of autosuggestions or of outside suggestions that may do them harm. The exercise of reason alone can produce this perspicacity (D2 xv).

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

for a sufficient length of time to allow our mental operations to be calmly reviewed by judgment and soberly passed upon by reason.

This is the sort of mental self-mastery we are seeking to cultivate in our patients—

a self-control that will make them less open to suggestion,

even autosuggestion,

but more open to sound reason and amenable to sane judgment.

38:7.2 Our patients are all the time telling us when we are exhorting them to renewed zeal and increased energy in their battles to conquer self: “But, doctor, I can’t do it. I have tried it a thousand times. I simply can’t help it. I have always been like this. It’s my temperament, I was born that way.”

And I am forced to admit that what the patient is telling me is partially true, but that is a matter of the past. I am compelled to advise them on this order: “All this I willingly grant you, but you overlook the fact that we are engaged in the task of creating a new temperament, we are at work changing your viewpoint, controlling your emotions, creating new habits;

why, we are actually modifying your temperament and slowly changing your character, and in time we shall have you created into a new personality, you will hardly know yourself; even your friends will remark, ‘what a change has come over him,’ ‘how different she is from what she used to be.’”

THE VICTORIOUS LIFE

XL: THE EMANCIPATED LIFE (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 493)

MENTAL EMANCIPATION—THE SIMPLE LIFE FOR THE MIND (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 495)

[contd] Civilized people have not yet reached the place where they are willing to break away from that debilitating and fear-ridden practice of constantly worrying about what other people think of them.

We are more or less victims of blind and unreasoning prejudices—and prejudice is a sort of mental cork, which prevents good ideas from entering the mind, and sometimes also prevents splendid thoughts escaping therefrom (*PF&F* 495-96).

Self-control is the great secret and source of human health and happiness.

Study how properly to work both mind and body, but also study the divine law of mental rest.

Studiously shun cankering care and that life of perpetual anxiety and suspense to which so many are unfortunately addicted.

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SOURCE

Avoid fear thought and worry and all their mental cousins; and remember it is time to take a vacation, to call a halt, when you find you are dreaming at night about your work (*PF&F* 497).

An uncontrolled and explosive temper is like dynamite to happiness.

A single fit of anger is able to destroy the tranquillity of the mind for days and even weeks.

The serpent of suspicion is a mind poison, a thing to be greatly feared and constantly shunned; while despondency is inhuman and unnatural; every intelligent man and woman should maintain perpetual quarantine against it (*PF&F* 496).

SOCIAL EMANCIPATION—THE SIMPLE LIFE FOR THE COMMUNITY (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 497)

[contd] Thousands of women are rendered exceedingly nervous and held in social bondage by their foolish endeavors to shine in society.

Thousands of both men and women labor under the lash of debts and mortgages for no reason other than that they may enjoy the delusions of luxury.

The idea that one must have fine clothes, diamonds, or automobiles, in order to maintain his place in society, has wrought the ruin and compassed the downfall of many otherwise intelligent and happy families (*PF&F* 497).

[contd] Modern society is suppressing and deforming the individuality of its devotees.

Social usages and conventionalities are producing the “social stereotype.”

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

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Social usages and conventionalities are producing the “social stereotype.”

SOURCE

The rising generation are taught to uphold and ape the customs, habits, and mannerisms of the preceding generation.

Genius, talent, and personality are choked and strangled by this insane desire to run the rising generation into our standard social moulds (*PF&F* 497-98).

[contd] The civilized nations are rapidly creating false and arbitrary standards of taste.

Our methods of living are becoming increasingly extravagant, and all this results in producing dissatisfaction and discontent on the part of the lower classes of society, when they are unable to secure these material possessions, which they are being taught to regard as essential to happiness and good living (*PF&F* 498).

The social functions, banquets, and other lavish entertainments of modern society constitute an appalling waste both of time and money.

The energy and means foolishly and often harmfully squandered by one-half of the world, would, in a short time, result in educating and delivering the other half from its intellectual slavery and industrial bondage (*PF&F* 498-99).

DOMESTIC EMANCIPATION—THE SIMPLE LIFE FOR THE HOME (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 499)

[contd] The life of the average housewife and mother is too often made one of unnecessary drudgery and useless anxiety.

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38:8.8 The life of the average housewife and mother is too often made one of unnecessary drudgery and useless anxiety.

SOURCE

In the modern home life there is altogether too much of a tendency to confuse the tasks which are secondary in importance with those duties which are essential and vital.

Housekeeping is made burdensome by the necessity of giving attention to a hundred trifles, the utter neglect of which would in no wise interfere with the happiness and usefulness of the home life.

Remember that the house is not the home—the home is made by the character and spirit of the people who live in the house.

Do not forget the value of the porch, the yard, the garden—and the children (*PF&F* 499).

How long before otherwise intelligent men and women will dare to recognize the folly of false etiquette and the uselessness of the extreme demands of modern civilized society?

Instead of running our children into the stereotyped social mould of life, why not encourage the development of the individuality and temperament of each child?

And it is in this connection that our modern stereotyped methods of education become apparent.

Why should children be compelled to pass through a routine system of education, and allowed to exercise their talents only in certain specified lines?

Let us hope that the educational systems of the future will make provision for the individual growth and development of the child (*PF&F* 500).

38: WORRY AND NERVOUSNESS

In the modern home life there is altogether too much of a tendency to confuse the tasks which are secondary in importance with those duties which are essential and vital.

Housekeeping is made burdensome by the necessity of giving attention to a hundred trifles, the utter neglect of which would in no wise interfere with the happiness and usefulness of the home life.

Remember that the house is not the home—the home is made by the character and spirit of the people who live in the house.

Do not forget the value of the porch, the yard, the garden—and the children.

38:8.9 How long before otherwise intelligent men and women will dare to recognize the folly of false etiquette and the uselessness of the extreme demands of modern civilized society?

Instead of running our children into the stereotyped social mould of life, why not encourage the development of the individuality and temperament of each child?

And it is in this connection that our modern stereotyped methods of education become apparent.

Why should children be compelled to pass through a routine system of education, and allowed to exercise their talents only in certain specified lines?

Let us hope that the educational systems of the future will make provision for the individual growth and development of the child.

38:8.10 Whatever may be the vicissitudes which attend us in the battle of life as regards the struggle for dollars and fame, there is great satisfaction in the knowledge that when we engage in the conflict with self—when we fight the good fight of faith against the selfishness of fear—that victory, success, triumph, shall ultimately crown our efforts, if we but fight according to the “rules of the game”—the laws of our mental and moral being.

38:9.1 And now that I have told my story, now that I must take leave of the reader, it does not seem that I have written a book. I rather feel that I have written you, the reader, a series of letters, each chapter for a letter, and that is why I have written in such a free and easy manner. I somehow feel that I know you—that I have met you. Perhaps I have typically, in the person of some other nervous sufferer who has passed through my hands. At any rate, I trust that you have gathered this same spirit as you have gone through the book, chapter by chapter; and further, that you will be able to carry out the advice and utilize the information you have herein found, if it be possible, in the same successful manner that you would had it been given by me personally and directly to you. So here is wishing you success in your grand and glorious struggle to achieve the mastery of self and the conquest of selfishness, while I extend to you my sincerest sympathy for every failure you may make, and offer you a helping hand of courage and confidence

as you reenter the arena to continue the combat that will one day make of you a complete man, a complete woman, fully restore you to that heavenly estate which represents our highest destiny, that full restoration of the divine image—our glorious restitution which shall proclaim us the redeemed sons and daughters of God.