

Introduction

As my reading list became more popular, I finally realized that I needed to restructure it to make it easier to read.

This **introductory** reading list covers areas that include but are not limited to:

1. Spiritual growth,
2. Intellectual growth,
3. Defense against abuse / manipulation by others,
4. Promotion of critical thinking,
5. Enhancing personal productivity

I have left business / strategy / finance / investment stuff off the list although I can make recommendations in any if.

I don't include stuff like Covey's 7 Habits and the like because they are so common that it is assumed that you likely have read them. I also haven't included stuff like Ruiz (The Four Agreements), Dyer, Sharma, Ferris, and the like because if I go down that rabbit hole, this email becomes 50 pages long!

On to the books in no particular order.

Stoic Philosophy

Starting the list with the primary the classic stoic philosophy works. The translation noted is important.

Marcus Aurelius – *Meditations* (Gregory Hays translation) -
<https://www.amazon.ca//dp/0812968255> - the notion of rationality and self discipline. This is a light ride and can be absorbed as nuggets.

Epictetus – *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook* (Robin Hard) -
<https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0199595186> - reasoned choice and how we choose to allow specific things into our mind – the deepest of the 3 books in this section. This book is not a gentle read but if you take your time with it, it can have a profound impact on your Life.

Seneca – *Letters from a Stoic* (the translation shown here is the most “approachable” one) -
<https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0008425051> - be meaningful about your existence, enjoy what you have but not in excess, learn from difficulty, etc.

Moving on to modern adaptations of stoic philosophy. Ryan Holiday's works for applying Stoic Philosophy to everyday living (read in any order) can be transformational if you take your time and soak up each nugget.

Ego is the Enemy – <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/1591847818> - self explanatory.

The Obstacle is the Way - <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/1591846358> - the things that impede us contain the answers we need to make progress. The title is taken from a Marcus Aurelius quote.

Stillness is the Key – <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0525538585> - unplug from the world to recharge.

The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations on Wisdom, Perseverance, and the Art of Living - <https://www.amazon.com/Daily-Stoic-Meditations-Wisdom-Perseverance/dp/0735211736> - a “daily devotional” of stoic philosophy. I read this daily.

The Daily Stoic Journal: 366 Days of Writing and Reflection on the Art of Living (accompanies the previous book but is not required) - <https://www.amazon.com/Daily-Stoic-Journal-Writing-Reflection/dp/0525534393> – a guide to journaling about the Daily Stoic entries.

Ryan Holidays **4 Stoic Virtues** Series:

Discipline is Destiny – <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0593191692> – the importance of self discipline – we know this but do we practice it?

Courage is Calling – <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0593191676> – self explanatory – we know we need it but where does it come from?

Right Thing, Right Now – <https://www.amazon.com/Right-Thing-Now-Values-Character/dp/0593191714> - the virtue of justice. This one REALLY resonates with me right now.

Wisdom Takes Work – <https://www.amazon.com/Wisdom-Takes-Work-Repeat-Virtues/dp/0593191730> - the importance of the right effort to acquire wisdom and the intelligent use of its application.

Personal Power

Moving on to books of personal power. Ryan Holiday mentored under Robert Greene – Greene’s books are profound. They are not “Stoic philosophy”, but Greene’s work is heavily influenced by Stoic philosophy. Every book contains hundreds of books of reference compressed into one volume. Because his books are dense with knowledge,

I recommend taking your time reading them. Also, he has an unusual style with a lot of margin notes. To avoid confusion, I would recommend ignoring the margin notes altogether or going back to read them. If you alternate between the main text and the margin notes, it might get confusing. The notes are very useful – just don’t be overwhelmed by them.

I add these books because they are required reading by strategy, business, military, advertising and political folks. For this reason, I recommend these books so that people can defend themselves against long-held, proven techniques for exerting influence / control over others.

Greene’s books:

48 Laws of Power - <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0140280197> - teaching how to leverage power shows us how to protect ourselves from those who would abuse us.

33 Strategies of War - <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0143112783> - “war” is fought every day – war for our attention, our mind, business, etc. We need to learn it to defend against it.

The Art of Seduction (the most complex read of all of them) - <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/0142001198> – how do people sell to us? How do we sell to others? How do we protect ourselves from such activity?

The Laws of Human Nature - <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/014311137X> – why do we do what we do? When is it optimal and when does it get in the way? How do we maximize the good and neutralize the bad?

Mastery (personal mastery) - <https://www.amazon.ca/dp/014312417X> – self explanatory - powerful – complex – eye opening.

The Daily Laws: 366 Meditations on Power, Seduction, Mastery, Strategy, and Human Nature - <https://www.amazon.com/Daily-Laws-Meditations-Seduction-Strategy/dp/059329923X> – A “daily devotional” that takes daily readings from the other Greene books. I read this daily.

The 50th Law (with 50 Cent) - <https://www.amazon.com/50th-Law-50-Cent/dp/006177460X> - Applying Robert Greene’s theories to a real-world experience

Then there's books by Ray Dalio – unrelated to Greene but weaving with them perfectly:

Principles: Life and Work - <https://www.amazon.com/Principles-Life-Work-Ray-Dalio/dp/1501124021> - living a principled, authentic life

Principles for Dealing with the Changing World Order: Why Nations Succeed and Fail - <https://www.amazon.com/Changing-World-Order-Nations-Succeed/dp/1982160276> - understanding how to navigate through a changing world

Spiritual Growth

Spiritual Growth is a complex beast to make recommendations for. However, I will dare to make some suggestions. I have read hundreds of books in this genre and will suggest a handful. I always welcome titles that are important to you – please feel free to share them with me!

The Essential Rumi - <https://www.amazon.ca/Essential-Rumi-reissue-New-Expanded/dp/0062509594> – Sufi poetry about guarding, recharging and honoring the Spirit. I also recommend other authors like Hafiz (another Sufi poet), but I would like to see if you like this one first.

The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh (Shambhala Pocket Classics) - <https://www.amazon.com/Pocket-Thich-Nhat-Shambhala-Classics/dp/1590309367> – an intro to the writing of Thich Nhat Hanh - a Buddhist monk who felt that monks should be in the streets doing things and not just hanging out in the monasteries. I have a lot of other recommendations for this guy, but I won't make them unless you enjoy this intro.

The Pocket Pema Chodron (Shambhala Pocket Classics) - <https://www.amazon.com/Pocket-Pema-Chodron-Shambhala-Classics/dp/1590306511> – a powerful female Buddhist monk. I can make other recommendations for her stuff if this book resonates.

The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi - <https://www.amazon.com/Forty-Rules-Love-Novel-Rumi/dp/0143118528> – a powerful fiction about Rumi and his mentor. There are a couple of Persian / Arabic words in there that I can translate if you get stuck.

Gradual Awakening: The Tibetan Buddhist Path of Becoming Fully Human - <https://www.amazon.com/Gradual-Awakening-Tibetan-Buddhist-Becoming/dp/1683642090> - A Tibetan Buddhist path to personal awakening

The Spirituality of Imperfection - <https://www.amazon.com/Spirituality-Imperfection-Storytelling-Search-Meaning/dp/0553371320> - a powerful exploration of the origins of storytelling and the search for meaning

Habits – Forming and Rewiring

The ability to create strong habits has been reduced to a science and yet most people never develop strong habits. These are the two best books out there.

The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We do in Life and Business (Charles Duhigg) - <https://www.amazon.ca/Power-Habit-What-Life-Business/dp/0385669763>

Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones (James Clear) - <https://www.amazon.ca/Atomic-Habits-Proven-Build-Break/dp/0735211299>

Negotiation and Influence

The art of negotiation and influence is important for every person to understand and the skills are used everything in personal and professional life. Some of the good titles:

Never Split the Difference – Negotiating as if Your Life Depended on It (Chris Voss) - <https://www.amazon.ca/Never-Split-Difference-Negotiating-Depended/dp/1847941494> (understanding negotiation is essential in life).

Influence – The Psychology of Persuasion (Robert Cialdini) - <https://www.amazon.ca/Influence-New-Expanded-Psychology-Persuasion/dp/0063136899> – required reading for many industries.

The Five Tool Negotiator: The Complete Guide to Bargaining Success - <https://www.amazon.com/Five-Tool-Negotiator-Complete-Bargaining/dp/1324091517> - a modern revisiting of negotiation.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking and executing in an evidence-based way is another essential skill that should be taught to everyone.

How to Become a Really Good Pain in the Ass: A Critical Thinker's Guide to Asking the Right Questions (Christopher diCarlo) - <https://www.amazon.ca/How-Become-Really-Good-Pain-ebook/dp/B006U478EQ>

The Critical Thinking Toolkit - <https://www.amazon.com/Critical-Thinking-Toolkit-Galen-Foresman/dp/047065869X> - more textbook-like than the previous book but pretty cool for people who like complex things.

The Road Less Stupid - <https://www.amazon.com/Road-Less-Stupid-Keith-Cunningham/dp/0984659269> - a treatise on sharp personal and professional execution. It's not quite "critical thinking" but dovetails nicely with the other books here.

How to Think like Leonardo da Vinci - <https://www.amazon.com/How-Think-Like-Leonardo-Vinci/dp/0440508274>

The How to Think like Leonardo da Vinci Workbook - <https://www.amazon.com/Think-Like-Leonardo-Vinci-Workbook/dp/0440508827>

Personal Safety

I recommend these books in the personal safety space to women, parents who have daughters and people in general:

CIA Street Smarts for Women: Spy Skills to Tell the Prince from the Predator - <https://www.amazon.com/CIA-Street-Smarts-Women-Predator-ebook/dp/B0172NFIOA> – this one is getting hard to find outside of the Kindle edition. I know the author – a former CIA agent.

The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals That Protect Us from Violence - <https://www.amazon.com/Gift-Fear-Survival-Signals-Violence/dp/B00ERK0HES> – de Becker is a world famous provider of security services for important people. I'm not sure if this is the most recent edition.

Hunting Humans (The Rise of the Modern Multiple Murderer) - <https://www.amazon.com/Hunting-Humans-Modern-Multiple-Murderer/dp/0786712287> - a very dark discussion on serial killers. This book is NOT for everybody.

BIFF: Quick Responses to High-Conflict People, Their Personal Attacks, Hostile Email and Social Media Meltdowns - <https://www.amazon.com/BIFF-Responses-High-Conflict-Personal-Meltdowns/dp/1936268728> - industry-standard, self-explanatory title

5 Types of People Who Can Ruin Your Life: Identifying and Dealing with Narcissists, Sociopaths, and Other High-Conflict Personalities - <https://www.amazon.com/Types-People-Ruin-Your-Life/dp/0143131362> - industry-standard, self-explanatory title. **The entire Bill Eddy series is worth exploring, depending on personal need.**

Personal Growth

A few more titles in personal growth – this is such a large genre that is it impossible to cover everything:

Power Tools for Men: A Blueprint for Healthy Masculinity - <https://www.amazon.com/Power-Tools-Men-Blueprint-Masculinity/dp/B0C2SMCT3H> – Leonard has been a dear friend of mine for years and I'm proud to say that I was on the edit team for this book (noted in the back).

101 Essays That Will Change The Way You Think - <https://www.amazon.com/Essays-That-Will-Change-Think/dp/1945796065> – the author has several powerful books on personal growth but I will start with this one. 😊

Practicing the Tao Te Ching - <https://www.amazon.com/Practicing-Tao-Te-Ching-Steps/dp/1622036034> – There are MANY versions of the Tao out there but this has amazing explanations in it. I read this daily and is not to be confused with the I Ching (which I also do daily).

Thinking Body, Dancing Mind: Taosports for Extraordinary Performance in Athletics, Business, and Life - <https://www.amazon.com/Thinking-Body-Dancing-Mind-Extraordinary/dp/0553373781>

A Course in Miracles - <https://www.amazon.com/Course-Miracles-Combined-Helen-Schucman/dp/1883360250> - a unique spiritual self-study program

A Course in Miracles Made Easy: Mastering the Journey from Fear to Love - <https://www.amazon.com/Course-Miracles-Made-Easy-Mastering/dp/1401947344> - an excellent summary of A Course in Miracles

The Tao Made Easy: Timeless Wisdom to Navigate a Changing World - <https://www.amazon.com/Tao-Made-Easy-Timeless-Navigate/dp/140195362X> - a great introduction to the Tao Te Ching

The Path of Least Resistance: Learning to Become the Creative Force in Your Own Life - <https://www.amazon.com/Path-Least-Resistance-Learning-Creative/dp/0449903370> - fascinating discussion of the psychological reasons why we choose what we choose, but written by a non-psychologist!!

The Way of the Superior Man - <https://www.amazon.com/Way-Superior-Man-Challenges-Anniversary/dp/1622038320> - creating healthy personal lives, relationships and work routines

Unconditional - <https://www.amazon.com/Unconditional-Through-Limits-Transform-Future/dp/1443470465> - break through limiting thoughts. Written to women (technically) but in reality, it is applicable for everyone.

Three books of **ancient Hindi knowledge** often referenced by Wayne Dyer and others. They are a set written by Eknath Easwaran:

The Dhammapada - <https://www.amazon.com/Dhammapada-Easwarans-Classics-Indian-Spirituality/dp/1586380206> – the writings of the Buddha. Easwaran’s translation is considered one of the best!

The Upanishads - <https://www.amazon.com/Upanishads-2nd-Eknath-Easwaran/dp/1586380214> – ancient Hindi wisdom.

The Bhagavad Gita - <https://www.amazon.com/Bhagavad-Gita-2nd-Eknath-Easwaran/dp/1586380192> – the classic Hindi text on love, service and everything else.

Alan Watts books are wonderful also but his stuff is a world until itself. Enjoy the journey exploring his stuff.

General Science and Psychology

Some titles in general science and psychology just to round out the preliminary list:

The Emotional Brain: Lost and Found in the Science of Emotion - <https://www.amazon.com/Emotional-Brain-Found-Science-Emotion/dp/1443470597> - an interesting analysis of emotion, its origins and its impact on us.

The Courage to be Disliked - <https://www.amazon.com/Courage-Be-Disliked-Phenomenon-Happiness/dp/1668065967> - Adlerian psychology and its role in moving past the things that hold us back (don’t be fooled by the title). There is another book by the same author (*The Courage to be Happy*) but I haven’t read it and therefore don’t know if it’s a recommended read or not.

Morning Devotions

Some titles from my morning devotion reading pile. All of these are daily devotionals.

Everyday Osho - <https://www.amazon.com/Everyday-Osho-365-Meditations-Here/dp/1250782260> – Osho has some controversial stuff in his history but if one separates the inspiration from the man, the musings in here can be very powerful.

The Book of Awakening - <https://www.amazon.com/Book-Awakening-Having-Present-Anniversary/dp/1590035003> - a powerful, spiritual guide

Journey to the Heart: Daily Meditations on the Path to Freeing Your Soul - <https://www.amazon.com/Journey-Heart-Daily-Meditations-Freeing/dp/0062511211> - thoughts on expanding our creativity, embracing our powers, and opening our hearts

The Pivot Year - <https://www.amazon.com/Pivot-Year-Brianna-Wiest/dp/1949759628> - one of the most powerful daily devotions that I have read – always perfect timing

Science Fiction (The Hard-Core Stuff)

Coming soon ... but I will start you off with a few fun one.

A Canticle for Leibowitz - <https://www.amazon.com/Canticle-Leibowitz-Walter-Miller-Jr/dp/0553273817> - 800 years in our future and after a nuclear holocaust, humans have lost the knowledge of what wiped most of humanity out. They start finding “artifacts” that could possibly save humanity.

Proteus Operation - <https://www.amazon.com/Proteus-Operation-James-P-Hogan/dp/0553050958> - Germany has won WW II and scientists in the 1970s discover that humans in the future gave Nazis the knowledge they needed to win the war. So they travel back to the 1940s to rewrite history.

Thrice Upon a Time - <https://www.amazon.com/Thrice-Upon-Time-James-Hogan/dp/0345275187> - a thriller that spins a compelling time travel narrative where the future of the Earth is at stake

Giant Star Trilogy (James P. Hogan):

The galactic origins of man and the alien race that has been looking out for us. Other books were added to the series but the original trilogy is best.

I’m looking for affordable copies to share the links for.

Inherit the Stars

The Gentle Giants of Ganymede

Giants' Star

Other James P. Hogan titles to be added. 😊

Fiction (Not The Fluffy Stuff)

Coming soon.

More titles?

I can offer specific reading lists in any of the genres noted above!

Also, please send me your recommendations!

And More Titles

I'm including titles recommended within the orgs that I create or mentor including domestic violence prevention groups and such. Because I also distribute this list separately, there may be some overlap with the list on the previous pages.

You can search out the links yourself: 😊

Core Strategy & Systems Thinking

- *The Art of Strategy* – Dixit & Nalebuff (game theory for decision-making)
- *Good Strategy / Bad Strategy* – Richard Rumelt (clarity and leverage in strategy).
- *The Fifth Discipline* – Peter Senge (systems thinking + learning organizations).
- *Thinking in Systems* – Donella Meadows (a practical guide to systemic leverage points).
- *Scenario Planning* – Gill Ringland (future-oriented planning essential for backcasting).

Investment & Capital Stewardship

- *The Intelligent Investor* – Benjamin Graham (fundamentals of capital stewardship).
- *Principles* – Ray Dalio (investment frameworks + decision principles).
- *Private Equity at Work* – Eileen Appelbaum & Rosemary Batt (how capital impacts organizations and people).
- *Venture Deals* – Brad Feld & Jason Mendelson (structuring funding partnerships).
- *Impact Investing* – Antony Bugg-Levine & Jed Emerson (social impact + capital alignment).

Technology & Innovation

- *The Innovator's Dilemma* – Clayton Christensen (why disruption happens).
- *The Second Machine Age* – Brynjolfsson & McAfee (technology and economic shifts).
- *Prediction Machines* – Ajay Agrawal, Joshua Gans, Avi Goldfarb (AI economics and decision frameworks).
- *Designing Regenerative Cultures* – Daniel Christian Wahl (holistic, future-oriented design thinking).

Trauma-Informed Leadership & Human Services

- *The Body Keeps the Score* – Bessel van der Kolk (understanding trauma in survivors and staff).
- *Trauma and Recovery* – Judith Herman (foundational framework for trauma services).
- *The Sanctuary Model* – Sandra Bloom (organizational culture for trauma-informed care).
- *Radical Acceptance* – Tara Brach (Buddhist/Taoist integration in leadership and healing).

Spiritual, Ethical, and Philosophical Foundations

- *Tao Te Ching* – Lao Tzu (Taoist wisdom on balance and flow).
- *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* – Thich Nhat Hanh (practical Buddhist insights).
- *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers* – Leonard Koren (embracing imperfection and beauty).
- *Meditations* – Marcus Aurelius (stoic grounding in leadership).
- *The Book of Five Rings* – Miyamoto Musashi (strategic adaptability).

Organizational & Leadership Practice

- *Execution* – Larry Bossidy & Ram Charan (bridging vision to operations).
- *Leadership in Turbulent Times* – Doris Kearns Goodwin (historical leadership under stress).
- *Reinventing Organizations* – Frederic Laloux (evolutionary organizational models).
- *Drive* – Daniel Pink (motivation and purpose-driven work).
- *The Advantage* – Patrick Lencioni (organizational health frameworks).

Specialized for Domestic Violence Prevention Mission

- *Domestic Violence: Intersectionality and Culturally Competent Practice* – Lettie Lockhart & Fran Danis (grounded DV practice).
- *Violence Against Women: Current Theory and Practice in Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence, and Exploitation* – Nancy Lombard.
- *Crucial Conversations* – Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler (for high-stakes dialogue with police, donors, legislators).
- *Blue Ocean Strategy* – Kim & Mauborgne (strategic differentiation, vital for Apricity).
- *Doing Good Better* - William MacAskill (being more strategic about effective altruism)