



To Transcend: Observe Cause and Effect, by Dan Millman

Self-mastery involves recognizing what we are not responsible for -- the thoughts that enter our mind and flow out, and the emotions that pass like the weather -- and what we are responsible for, which is our behavior. My view of self-mastery focuses on acting with kindness whether or not we're in the mood, based on three principles: Accept your emotions; know your purpose; and then do what needs to be done -- whether or not you happen to feel like it at the time.

You see, we humans are filled with tendencies. We tend to be lazy or to overwork. We tend to let our emotions drive our behavior. We tend to indulge or to deny ourselves. We tend to be passive or aggressive, lackadaisical or obsessive, to act without thinking or to think without acting. We tend to deny or avoid dealing with problems until the eleventh hour or a crisis. We tend to be self-centered, defensive and resentful.

Daily life -- spiritual life -- tests us, teaches us, challenges us to transcend our tendencies by observing the consequences of our actions; it's a natural, evolutionary process of living and learning. And self-mastery occurs in those moments when we subordinate our little will -- our personal tendencies and preferences -- to the dominion of our higher will, higher self, higher integrity or higher ideals. It's a conscious movement from "What's in it for me?" to "What will serve the highest good of all involved?" George Bernard Shaw put it well when he said, "Forget about likes and dislikes. They are of no consequence. Just do what must be done. This may not be happiness, but it is greatness."

--Dan Millman