

BOOK REVIEW

DIE EMPTY: Unleash Your Best Work Every Day[#] Todd Henry

Reviewed by:

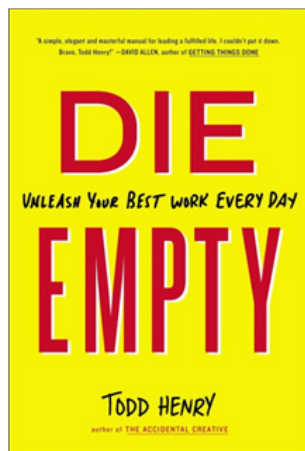
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Are you a procrastinator by default? Interested in changing your settings to alacrity? Then you have bumped into just the precise self-help book, Todd Henry's "DIE EMPTY: Unleash Your Best Work Every Day."

The reader recovers from the initial shock of the unconventional title of the book and a few blatant statements like – 'Your days are finite, one day they will run out', 'Death rate is hovering right around 100%' – by the end of the 1st chapter when the author clarifies what "Die Empty" doesn't mean and what "Die Empty" means. The content of the book is presented in three segments. The first three chapters clarify 'why' work is important and 'why' many talented people fall prey to mediocrity; the next seven chapters direct 'how' to design and build a mindset to tackle mediocrity consciously to achieve excellence in work and the last two chapters offer to operationalize strategies to bring a deeper sense of unity of thought and actions to bring meaning and purpose in daily life through work.

The author, Henry, defines work as 'any instance where an effort is made to create value with limited resources – effort & focus, assets at disposal, time available and expendable energy – where it didn't previously exist be it in job or relationship or parenting'. Henry classifies work as mapping work, making work, and meshing work (traditionally it means working with concepts, people, and physical resources). The

alliteration: mapping, meshing, making resonates with the reader for long in memory. Henry goes on to map the mind set of many potentially creative individuals and states that to achieve short-term results many gravitate towards one work at the expense of the other two resulting in mediocre performance and thus fail in the long run. Depending on an individual's commitment to the three kinds of work, he created four profiles of people, namely Developer, Driver, Drifter, and Dreamer. To add value to work one should engage in all three types of work and should emerge as a Developer. It won't happen by default but can transpire only by design. The author gives useful tips to develop the appropriate mindset to design apt methods required to build and sustain the required enthusiasm to push through mental barriers, and to unleash the best work each day. But as individuals tend to compromise their abilities and potential to achieve short term success, they become stagnant and fall in the domain of mediocrity. However, relying on existing skills, they earn respect in their work domain and may be successful in their endeavours, but deep down they know that they are NOT doing best work; that nags the core. Through interviews, discussions, and his own personal experiences, the author brings out this painful understanding that dawns on the individuals and the yearning of the soul to pour out the stuff buried deep inside. The book hovers around this problem finding,

[#]Henry, Todd. (2013). DIE EMPTY: Unleash Your Best Work Every Day. Publishers: Penguin Group. ISBN: 978-I-59184-589-8 (hc.); ISBN: 978-I-59184-699-4 (pbk.) Genre: Self-help book; Pages: 229

gives useful tips to identify them, and gives practical and logical ways of handling them.

The focus of the book is on such individuals who are willing to break unproductive patterns of thought that prevent the blossoming of their inherent talents. Henry details the seven deadly sins of mediocrity, not only at work but also in other areas of Life, as Aimlessness, Boredom, Comfort, Delusion, Ego, Fear, Guardedness [A, B, C, D, E, F and G] and describes each factor and suggests ways to combat them.

The style of Henry is that of a friendly conversation over a cup of tea, not a decree of do's and don'ts and that sets it apart from other 'self-help' series. The content and the interesting fillers in the form of stories, anecdotes, apothegms, interviews, and quotes are nicely balanced with practical applications and probing questions at the end of every chapter which kindles the reader's cognitive impulse. The readers are not stuffed with information but are encouraged to analyse and come up with a decision of their own. *Die Empty* is less instructive about accomplishing set goal and more suggestive about adopting a different mindset to bring more meaning to the goal set.

However as you flip through the pages you get a feeling of familiarity and feel numbed to move further. True, information looks repetitive and redundant but I would suggest that when such a feeling creeps in, finish the chapter at hand and close the book. Each chapter is a self-contained unit and makes sense as an independent component; read till you reach the saturation point, reflect, and work on the suggested practice exercises at the end of each chapter. You will be fuelled to come back. It is a book to read, reflect, and apply the knowledge gained in your work environment [Note: Work does not represent job alone but all walks of life]. As you skim through the book you will find and fit yourself somewhere and learn new perspectives to bring more meaning to your work and life. With suitable reasoning and practical suggestions the author guides you through a path of life to enable you to realise the potential and "empty" yourself to bring more meaning into your life.

"Die Empty" has plenty of takeaways like – Define your battles wisely; ask yourself what I can add, not what can I get; be fiercely curious; find the space you occupy in the lives of others; be willing to dig through the rubble to find the gold; stretch yourself out of your comfort zone, refuse the lull of fear, familiarity and ego that prevents you from exploring uncharted areas; cultivate a love for the process; greatness emerges when you consistently choose to do what's right even when it is uncomfortable and many more - you can use them as sticky notes around your space; nothing new. But what is new is the author gives candid strategies that you have to operationalize to make them happen. You take the initiative and you take the credit and that is fun and fulfillment.

Die Empty urges you to ACT NOW. It reiterates that the effect of inaction is stagnation; choked creativity; and a net deficit to the world; our families; our organisations and to our selves. It makes it loud and clear that each one of us is capable of making a unique contribution to the world that only we can make. The last subunit of the last chapter 'Don't hold out on us', where the author gives his personal early life experience, echoes this view and it reverberates long after you close the book.

Henry, the author, makes a clarion call to the readers and reminds them of the importance of today; need to act now; disrupt the procrastinating attractions; and unleash the best now. For, we won't have a conducive tomorrow to do our best and no one can do our contribution. The book ends with an ideal yet practical note - Don't take your best to your grave; give them away, for, you are remembered for what you give and not for what you take. Live forever in the space of the world around you by giving your best.

Die Empty is recommended for readers who are prepared to step out of their comfort zone and are willing to spend their limited resources, be it time, energy or otherwise, for their best work every day, and make a lasting difference to the world around while living and leave the world with satisfaction sans regrets.