VIRTUS *et* AMOR · CONSULTANCY



ANDREW MITS

CONSULT YOURSELF

Be the grandmaster of your own board: the questions, the cards and the weekly loop.

VIRTUS ET AMOR · THE THIRD BOOK OF THE GRANDMASTER POSTURE

CONSULT YOURSELF

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01 · THE CONSULTANT INSIDE

You already give great advice. To everyone except yourself.

Ask people for advice about a friend's problem and they become wise: calm, fair, ten moves ahead. Ask them about the same problem in their own Life, and the wisdom often walks out of the room. Science has a name for this.

> **THE SCIENCE**
>
> Across three experiments with 693 people, participants reasoned more wisely about a friend's relationship problem than about the same problem in their own Life. When they thought about their own problem from a distance, in the third person, the gap disappeared. The researchers called it Solomon's paradox, after the king famed for wisdom who often chose badly for himself. (Grossmann and Kross, Psychological Science, 2014.)

That is the whole idea of this book. The wisdom is already in you. What is missing is distance: the consultant's chair, where you can see your own board the way you see everyone else's.

WHY WE WROTE IT

Virtus Et Amor is a consultancy. It might seem strange for a consultancy to teach people to consult themselves. It is not. Our work has one aim: to return you to your own discernment and freedom, so that you need us less, not more. This book is that aim, in your hands.

> *The work must return people to their own discernment and freedom.*
>
> ANDREW MITS

> **THE PRACTICE**
>
> Think of the problem you have been carrying longest. Now imagine your best friend described it to you. Write down, in one paragraph, the advice you would give them. Read it back. That paragraph is your first consultation.

02 · THE CONSULTANT'S CHAIR

Step back far enough to see the board.

The first power of any consultant is distance. Not coldness: distance. From the chair across the table, the fear is smaller and the board is bigger. Here are three ways to take that chair in your own Life.

1. SPEAK TO YOURSELF BY NAME

> **THE SCIENCE**
>
> In experiments on giving a speech and making a first impression, people who spoke to themselves silently using their own name or "you", instead of "I", handled the stress better than those who used "I". (Kross and colleagues, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 2014.)

Not "Why do I always do this?" but "Andrew, what is the next right move?" The name is a small step back, and a small step back is often all it takes.

2. THE FRIEND'S CHAIR

Ask: "What would I tell my best friend if this were theirs?" Then take your own advice, which is usually kinder and smarter than the voice in your head.

3. THE TEN-YEAR VIEW

Ask: "How will this look in ten years?" Most storms shrink to their true size the moment you see them from the future.

> **THE PRACTICE**
>
> Next time a hard moment arrives, say three sentences to yourself by name, as a coach would: what is happening, what matters, and what the next move is. Out loud if you can.

03 · THE SESSION

Run the loop on yourself.

Every Virtus Et Amor session runs one loop, the Grandmaster Posture: Stand, Breathe, See, Speak, Move, Love. You can run it alone, in twenty minutes, with a pen. Here are its questions.

1. **Stand.** Where am I, honestly, today? What do I stand for in this?
2. **Breathe.** Three slow rounds before thinking: a breath in, a second short breath in, a long breath out.
3. **See.** What are the facts on the board? What are the next three moves, theirs and mine?
4. **Speak.** What am I telling myself about this? What would I tell a friend instead?
5. **Move.** What is the one decision? If this happens, then I will do that.
6. **Love.** Who is this for? What am I grateful for, even here?

20 minutes, six questions, one decision. Run it once on your hardest problem this week and you will understand the method better than any description of it.

THE RULES OF THE SESSION

- **Write, do not only think.** Thoughts run in circles; ink runs in lines.
- **One problem per session.** A grandmaster plays one game at a time.
- **End with a move.** A session without a decision is only a conversation.

> **THE PRACTICE**
>
> Book your first self-session in your calendar now, with yourself as the client. Twenty minutes, phone away, this page open.

04 · THE HONEST BOARD

See what is, not what you fear.

A grandmaster does not win by hoping. He wins by seeing the board as it is: every piece, every open line, every weak square. Fear paints the board darker than it is; pride paints it brighter. The consultant paints it true.

> **THE SCIENCE**
>
> Chess masters rebuild real game positions from memory far better than beginners, yet their advantage all but disappears when the pieces are placed at random. Mastery is pattern, and patterns are built by looking at real boards again and again. (Chase and Simon, Cognitive Psychology, 1973.)

THE FOUR CORNERS OF YOUR BOARD

- **My pieces.** What do I have? Skills, people, time, money, health.
- **Their pieces.** What is against me? Competition, deadlines, habits, doubts.
- **Open lines.** Where is the opportunity nobody is using yet?
- **Weak squares.** Where am I exposed? What would an opponent attack first?

FACTS AND STORIES

Draw a line down a page. On the left, the facts: what a camera would have recorded. On the right, the stories: what you have added. Most suffering lives on the right side of the page.

05 · THE DECISION CARD

Data for the moves you can take back. Gut for the moves you cannot.

That is Andrew Mits's rule, and it is the heart of the card. Some decisions can be taken back: a new routine, a price test, a message. Make those quickly, with data, and correct as you go. Some cannot: a resignation, a signature, words that cannot be unsaid. Make those slowly, after stillness, with your whole self.

Jeff Bezos described the same split to Amazon's shareholders in 2015: one-way doors, which you walk through only once, and two-way doors, which you can walk back through. The mistake is to treat every door as the same.

THE PREMORTEM

> **THE SCIENCE**
>
> Imagine it is a year from now and the plan has failed, then write down why. Gary Klein named this the premortem (Harvard Business Review, 2007). It builds on research in which imagining an outcome as already done raised people's ability to find its reasons by about 30%. (Mitchell, Russo and Pennington, 1989.)

THE IF-THEN PLAN

> **THE SCIENCE**
>
> Deciding in advance, "if this happens, then I do that", helped people reach their goals with a medium-to-large effect (0.65) across 94 independent tests and more than 8,000 people. (Gollwitzer and Sheeran, 2006.)

THE CARD

1. Can I take this move back? One-way door or two-way door?
2. What do the facts say?
3. What does my gut say, after three slow breaths?
4. It is a year from now and this failed. Why?
5. If ____ happens, then I will ____.
6. Who is this for?

06 · THE WRITTEN MIND

Ink is a mirror.

The most powerful man of his age consulted himself in a notebook. Marcus Aurelius, emperor of Rome, wrote his *Meditations* to no one but himself; their Greek title means *To Himself*. He never meant them to be read. They have been read for eighteen centuries.

> *Such as are thy habitual thoughts, such also will be the character of thy mind; for the soul is dyed by the thoughts.*
>
> MARCUS AURELIUS, MEDITATIONS, TRANSLATED BY GEORGE LONG

TWO QUESTIONS A DAY

Benjamin Franklin kept a daily schedule with two questions written into it. In the morning: *What good shall I do this day?* In the evening: *What good have I done to-day?* Two questions, every day, for a life that changed a nation.

THE SCIENCE

In the first study of its kind, students who wrote for fifteen minutes on four days in a row about their deepest feelings on an upsetting experience visited the health centre less in the following months. The authors called the results preliminary, and later studies found the effect smaller and more variable, but writing to understand your own experience has been studied ever since. (Pennebaker and Beall, 1986.)

THE PRACTICE

Tomorrow, write Franklin's morning question at the top of a page and answer it in three lines. In the evening, answer his second question beneath. Do it for seven days and read the week back.

07 · YOUR 54% LAW

Small edges, every day.

Roger Federer won almost 80% of his 1,526 singles matches, and only 54% of the points he played. He told the graduates of Dartmouth College so in 2024. When you lose almost every second point and still win four matches in five, you learn not to dwell on any single point.

54% of the points won, across a career of 1,526 singles matches. A small edge, held point after point, compounds into dominance.

> *When you lose every second point, on average, you learn not to dwell on every shot.*
>
> ROGER FEDERER, DARTMOUTH, 2024

Your Life runs on the same law. You do not need to win every moment. You need to win slightly more of the small ones than you lose: the bed made, the breath taken, the hard thing done first, the kind word said, the phone left outside the bedroom.

THE DAILY SCORECARD

Choose five small moments you want to win every day. At night, mark each one won or lost. Aim for more than half, every day, and watch the weeks compound.

08 · THE WEEKLY LOOP

Thirty minutes that steer a year.

Once a week, sit with yourself as if you were your own client. Same day, same time, the same seven steps.

1. **Review.** What happened this week? Facts only.
2. **Score.** Your scorecard and your one virtue, marked honestly.
3. **Learn.** Three lessons, one line each.
4. **Board.** What changed on the board? New pieces, new threats, new open lines.
5. **Moves.** Three moves for next week, and when you will make them.
6. **If-then.** One plan for the hardest moment you can see coming.
7. **Gratitude.** Three names, and why.

26 hours a year: 52 weekly sessions of thirty minutes. Less than the length of a single day, to steer the whole year.

> THE PRACTICE
>
> Put the weekly loop in your calendar as a repeating meeting with yourself. Give it a name you respect: The Board Meeting.

09 · WHEN TO CALL A CONSULTANT

Consult yourself first. Call when you are too close.

Even grandmasters have coaches, and even the best consultants hire consultants. Consulting yourself does not mean never asking for help. It means you arrive with your board already drawn, and you know exactly what to ask.

CALL WHEN

- The decision is a one-way door, and the stakes are high.
- You have run the loop three times on the same problem and you are going in circles.
- The feelings are so loud that you cannot hear the facts.
- You are simply too close: Solomon's paradox, in your own house.

WHAT A CONSULTANT BRINGS

Distance, pattern and accountability. Distance, because the consultant is not inside your fear. Pattern, because they have seen many boards like yours. Accountability, because someone is waiting to hear what you did.

At Virtus Et Amor, the first conversation is free: up to two hours, in Cavan or online. Bring your board. You will leave with one clear next move that is yours, whether or not we work together.

Consult yourself first. Then come and play the game with us.

10 · YOUR WORKSHEETS

The Posture Plan, on one page.

Copy this page or write on it. Fill it in during your first self-session, and read it every Monday.

MY CODE: THREE VALUES I WILL NOT TRADE

MY BOARD: WHERE I TRULY STAND TODAY

MY THREE MOVES FOR THE NEXT THIRTY DAYS

MY IF-THEN PLAN FOR THE HARDEST MOMENT

WHO THIS IS FOR

SOURCES

The research behind the method.

Every study in this book was checked against its source. Studies describe groups, not you: use them as a compass, never as a promise.

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- Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, book 5, translated by George Long. Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography: the morning and evening questions.
- Roger Federer, commencement address at Dartmouth College, 9 June 2024: 1,526 singles matches, almost 80% won, 54% of the points.

THE NUMBERS

- 26 hours: 52 weeks × 30 minutes = 1,560 minutes = 26 hours.
- Four matches in five: almost 80% of 1,526 matches.



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The Grandmaster Posture for athletes, leaders and merchants.

Book a free first conversation
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A Gratitude Xpressed house · Nothing is sold but wisdom.
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