

Chapter 10: The Danger of Early Pride

Ego is the Enemy — Ryan Holiday • Executive Breakdown

EGO IS THE ENEMY

1 Pride Before Accomplishment

- ✓ Pride takes minor initial victories and inflates them into sweeping declarations of genius, blinding us to the enormous mountain remaining.
- ✓ It makes us defensive against feedback, disdainful of fundamentals, and addicted to the sweet poison of unearned admiration.
- ✓ C.S. Lewis observed that pride is essentially competitive; it derives pleasure not from having something, but from having more than the next person.

2 Benjamin Franklin's Cotton Mather Lesson

- ✓ As a cocky young man, Benjamin Franklin visited the venerable Cotton Mather, who guided him down a narrow corridor with a low ceiling beam.
- ✓ Mather shouted 'Stoop! Stoop!', but Franklin's proud head struck the beam hard. Mather counseled: 'Stoop as you go through life, and you will miss many hard thumps.'
- ✓ Franklin adopted this lesson for life, cultivating deliberate modesty, soft inquiry, and deference that made him the master diplomat of the Western world.

3 Pride vs. Self-Respect

- ✓ Pride requires an audience to applaud and validate it; self-respect is a quiet, self-contained confidence that needs no spectators.
- ✓ Pride is brittle, easily wounded by perceived snubs; self-respect is resilient, anchored in living according to an unshakeable internal standard.
- ✓ Kill early pride before it suffocates curiosity, hardens complacency, and invites the blunt hammer of reality.

Chapter Summary

- ✓ Early pride is a venomous parasite that feeds on minor praise, blinding aspiring creators to their vast remaining ignorance.
- ✓ Cotton Mather's lesson to young Benjamin Franklin teaches that practicing intellectual deference shields you from painful collisions with reality.
- ✓ Pride is fragile and constantly demands external validation; self-respect is self-sufficient and rooted in earned competence.
- ✓ Cultivating deliberate humility and stooping beneath arrogance keeps channels of learning, diplomacy, and growth wide open.