

Chapter 19: Beware the Disease of Me

Ego is the Enemy — Ryan Holiday • Executive Breakdown

EGO IS THE ENEMY

1 Pat Riley's Diagnosis of Championship Rot

- ✓ Legendary NBA coach Pat Riley coined 'the disease of me' to describe the psychological rot that destroys championship teams.
- ✓ After winning a title, players stop caring about team victory and start obsessing over minutes, endorsements, and individual stats.
- ✓ Success inflates individual egos, fostering bitter grievances over who deserves the credit and fracturing cohesion from within.

2 The Poison of Credit-Claiming

- ✓ Ego suffers from a severe cognitive bias: it dramatically overestimates its own contribution while erasing the vital contributions of others.
- ✓ When credit is hoarded by the leader or top performers, resentment festers among the unheralded operators who do the heavy lifting.
- ✓ Great leaders like Genghis Khan distributed plunder equally among warriors, recognizing that shared sacrifice requires shared spoils.

3 The Covenant of Shared Glory

- ✓ Sustaining a high-performing culture requires continuous, proactive warfare against selfish entitlement and territorial infighting.
- ✓ Institute a strict cultural norm where praise flows downward to front-line workers and responsibility for mistakes flows upward to leadership.
- ✓ Remind the team daily: nobody achieves anything of significance alone; we rise or fall as an interconnected collective.



Chapter Summary

- ✓ Pat Riley's 'disease of me' explains how championship teams tear themselves apart through petty squabbles over credit and compensation.
- ✓ Ego systematically inflates our perception of our own contribution while remaining blind to the vital groundwork done by teammates.
- ✓ Hoarding praise and accolades breeds toxic internal resentment, guaranteeing the collapse of collaborative excellence.
- ✓ Sustained organizational dominance requires aggressively championing shared credit, humble service, and collective ownership.