

Advice about the Giving and Receiving of Advice

People will tell you to do what's conventional, but they'll give their respect to the ones who push the boundaries.

When people give advice, it's usually a reflection of what they think is possible for *you* and how much they believe they're going to be on the hook for giving you that advice.

When people give admiration, it's a reflection of what they truly believe is impressive.

This isn't an irrational or arbitrary phenomenon.

Although pushing the boundaries may have a higher upside, people are far more likely to receive harsh criticism if they advise you to "swing for the fences" and you embarrass yourself in the process. And although doing what's conventional may have a lower upside, you can't go wrong if you tell people "do the things that can't go wrong."

Most of us simply aren't incentivized to say stuff like "Go do the kind of crazy things that J.K. Rowling did, or that Sidney Poitier did, or that Steve Jobs did."

For starters, most people aren't willing to gamble on the possibility that *you* can do those things. Secondly, most people aren't interested in having people say "I did what you advised me to do, I'm unhappy with my life, and it's all your fault."

So here's a little advice about giving and receiving advice:

If you want to give advice to others, don't settle for telling them what to do. Instead, help them clarify the results they want to create. Help them understand the costs and benefits involved in their options. Then challenge them to only make the kinds of choices they're willing to fully own. If they're not willing to own the possible consequences stemming from their choices, tell them it's a bad choice.

If you want to receive good advice from others, don't just listen to what people advise. Pay attention to what people admire. This gives a fuller picture of how they see success. Recognize that there are always "secrets" to success that people will never share because they aren't interested in being liable for your life. No matter what kind of advice you receive from others, there are at least a few key insights you'll have to discover or develop on your own. Wisdom can't be acquired just by having a bunch of mentors. It has to be fought for through radical self-ownership. Until you're willing to take responsibility for your dreams, there will be tips, tools, and techniques that will remain hidden from you.