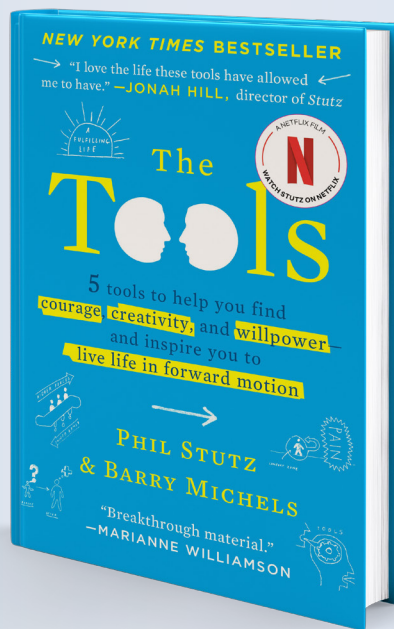


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The Tools

5 Tools to Help You Find Courage, Creativity, and Willpower - and Inspire You to Live Life in Forward Motion

By Phil Stutz and Barry Michels

Phil Stutz graduated from City College in New York and received his MD from New York University. He worked as a prison psychiatrist on Rikers Island and then in private practice in New York before moving his practice to Los Angeles in 1982. He is the subject of the Netflix documentary *Stutz*, directed by Jonah Hill.

Barry Michels has a BA from Harvard, a law degree from University of California, Berkeley, and an MSW from the University of Southern California. He has been in private practice as a psychotherapist in Los Angeles since 1986.

Live Life in Forward Motion

Barry Michels starts the book he co-authored with Phil Stutz, *The Tools: 5 Tools to Help You Find Courage, Creativity, and Willpower - and Inspire You to Live Life in Forward Motion*, by discussing a patient he once had named Roberta. Roberta came into his psychotherapy practice and wanted something she could do right away to feel better. Michels was at a loss because his training did not prepare him to provide Roberta with any such tools. Psychotherapy took time, he was taught. His mentors all urged him to go back to Roberta and tell her that she would have to delve into her childhood to find the basis of her problems. This did not satisfy Michels, but he was not equipped to help her find any better solutions. Then he heard a lecture given by Stutz, and this changed his practice because Stutz gave Michels practical tools that people could implement immediately.

Stutz then goes on to say that he was interested in the questions Michels began to pose to him because he wanted to know where the tools came from. Stutz began developing his tools when he became frustrated with failures in his psychology practice. Eventually he decided that whenever a patient asked him for relief, he would address the problem immediately. He makes the point that his tools are not attitude adjustments. Rather, tools are actual behaviors people can perform to find relief. It took many attempts to find tools that worked. Once he was able to refine a tool, he could see positive results in his patients.

The Reversal of Desire

The first tool the authors discuss is the reversal of desire. They begin this section by discussing a man named Vinny who could very easily make people angry with him. He sabotaged almost every opportunity that came to him. After time, it was revealed that Vinny disliked situations where he felt like his fate was dependent upon another person. The authors explain that many people spend too much time trying to avoid pain, and this is what Vinny was doing by sabotaging situations where he might be at the mercy of others. Many people avoid pain by using alcohol or drugs, pornography, or by spending too much time on the internet. The authors state, "The Comfort Zone is supposed to keep your life safe, but what it really does is keep your life small."

Michels states that taking action is what moves people towards the future, and once they take action, they activate what the

authors call the Force of Forward Motion. This is the first of five higher forces they discuss, and refers to how every living being “is evolving into the future with a sense of purpose.” This force, however, only works if a person is willing to use it. Many people choose avoidance instead.

To explain the reversal of desire, Stutz tells the story of a very successful football player he knew in high school. This player was not necessarily more naturally talented than the other students. His success came because he was not afraid to get hurt. In fact, he would run right into the nearest tackler on purpose. Michels explains that this technique can be used in everyday life when people learn to desire what it is they avoid. Michels explains that people should visualize something they have been avoiding. Then he wants people to put the situation out of their mind and just visualize the pain. While continuing to visualize the pain, they want people to say “Bring it on,” “I love pain,” and “Pain sets me free.” The authors explain that this is helpful because when a person moves towards pain, it shrinks. This tool should be used whenever a person has to do something they wish to avoid or whenever they find themselves thinking about doing something they do not want to do. The authors say, “There is a hidden, inner strength that you cannot find unless you push yourself through adversity.” The reversal of desire helps a person develop courage.

Active Love

Active love is the second tool Michels and Stutz describe. They discuss what they call the maze which is the state people find themselves in when they get angry. Typically people either go on the attack or withdraw when they find themselves in the maze. The problem, they state, is not the original trigger but the reaction of the person who was harmed. The problems with the maze are that it is hard to get out of and it primarily hurts the person who is trapped in it. It can blind people to all the good in other people. The authors claim that one reason the maze is hard to get out of is because people are interested in fairness. They believe they will be letting people off the hook if they let go of their anger.

The higher force that Active Love employs is Outflow. One of the authors explains how when he was a child he got angry with his father as they headed out to sled in the snow. The author was so angry that he refused to go sledding or get out of the car. Eventually his parents gave up trying to coax him out of the car. At that point, he saw a puppy, and as he went towards the puppy, he was filled with overwhelming love. He says, “Everything felt different; it was as if the universe had suddenly tilted on its axis.” His ill feelings for his father turned into positive feelings. He explains that this was a very particular kind of love called Outflow. This “is an infinite, spiritual force that gives of itself without restraint.” Outflow is always there, the authors claim. A person just needs to tap into it.

A person should use the tool of Active Love whenever they are tempted to enter the maze. There are three steps to using Active Love. First is called concentration. Here, a person tries to gather up all of the love they can feel around them and

concentrate it on their heart. The next step is called transmission. During this step, they should act as a conduit, transferring that love from this higher place into the world. The third step is called penetration. When the person feels that love enter the other person, they will feel an acceptance. Active love can be used any time a person feels injured, remembers past injuries, or is preparing to deal with difficult people.

Inner Authority

When discussing Inner Authority, Michels and Stutz discuss insecurity. They say, “insecurity destroys people’s ability to connect with one another.” This is important, in part, because people give other people opportunities when they feel connected to them. They say that the reason insecurity is so hard to get rid of is because there is a second self hidden inside of everybody, and people are ashamed of this second self. They call this second self the Shadow. “The ‘shadow’ is everything we don’t want to be but fear we are, represented in a single image.” The authors explain that the Shadow is different from other archetypes as it does not affect how someone sees the world but rather affects how they see themselves.

To find the shadow, the authors urge the reader to focus on being in front of a group of people who make them feel very insecure. Then the reader should push those feelings out in front of them and imagine the feelings with a face and body. This visualization is the Shadow. They believe that the Shadow “is the source of one of the most basic human conflicts.” In short, everybody wants to feel that they have value, but they are ashamed of the Shadow inside of them.

The higher force at play with the Shadow is self-expression. This force propels people to express themselves in a truthful manner without caring what others think. “When you’re connected to the Force of Self-Expression, a part of you speaks that’s usually silent. You’re speaking from your deepest, inner self,” they say. As people grow into adults, they tend to turn from their inner self. Through this process, people turn their inner selves into their Shadows.

In order to use Inner Authority, a person should gather an image of their Shadow in their head. Next they should connect with it and then command the Shadow to listen as they approach the people who intimidate them. The authors want readers to use this tool any time they are preparing to be judged in any manner. They recommend practicing it first in situations that are less intimidating so they can gain experience with it before they approach larger challenges.

The Grateful Flow

The authors discuss fear in this section. To explain fear to a patient, the authors explain how they told a patient to call to mind a fear. The woman described it as a cloud. The woman did this again with another fear and felt the same cloud. The authors call this the Black Cloud. They say, “When you worry incessantly, regardless of the subject, you’re creating a negative energy that hands over you like a cloud.” To experience the Black Cloud, a



The more specific the question, the more ideas can be generated. . .”

person can close their eyes and call to mind worried thoughts. These should be repeated in intensity to mimic real anxieties. The person can then focus on their inner state and what it feels like. This is “a mild version of the Black Cloud.”

The problem with the Black Cloud is that it takes away peace, making everything into a crisis. Also, positive thoughts do not have the power that negative ones do, making the technique of merely replacing negative thoughts with positive thoughts unhelpful. In addition, many people believe that their negative thoughts actually can help ward off bad things from happening.

The higher force that the Grateful Flow employs is gratefulness. Stutz explains a scare he had when, as a child, he thought he might have the same type of cancer that had killed his brother. When the tests came back negative, he was able to experience everything differently. He said that he “was in the presence of an all-giving power.” The authors name this power the Source. It is always there, and it is what created everything. This Source lives in the spiritual world. Gratefulness is the way in which people perceive the Source.

The tool the authors want readers to use when they experience fear is the Grateful Flow. To do this, first a person needs to think back to something beautiful that they did not create themselves. Then they should imagine the gratefulness they felt at the time. Finally, they should trace that gratefulness back to an “unimaginably generous force.” At first, people can list things they are grateful for. Eventually, however, they should try to feel gratefulness emanating from themselves when they think of what they are grateful for. The authors want people to pay attention to their thoughts and use Grateful Flow whenever they start to notice negative thoughts. This does not need to just be used with worry. It can also be used whenever thoughts are undirected. This process is especially helpful because people are always vulnerable in the physical world. They are not vulnerable, however, when they are connected to the Source.

Jeopardy

The final tool the authors describe is Jeopardy. The authors notice that many patients eventually stop using the tools. They explain that people like to think that they are finished products, and when that happens, they believe they do not need to use the tools. They have an idea that there is a destination a person can arrive at where they will no longer have to work. This is not the case. They believe that deep down, everyone believes that there is one thing that they could achieve that would make all their troubles go away. The authors tell the reader to imagine this something and imagine it taking away all struggle. Then they say the reader should squash that visualization because it is

not real. Exoneration, the name they give to the belief that one day everything will fall into place and struggle will become a thing of the past, leads to demoralization.

The higher force Jeopardy taps into is Willpower. The authors tell the reader that changing their life will be difficult. The other higher forces were outside of a person. Willpower needs to be generated within the individual. They say, “To act right now requires a sense of urgency. But urgency is uncomfortable. The only time we feel it is when we’re in jeopardy of losing something important.” People need to realize that their future is always in jeopardy as they are always at risk of stopping using the rules. This sense of jeopardy will encourage willpower.

To use Jeopardy, a person needs to see themselves on their deathbed. The person can imagine this dying version of themselves getting up and yelling at them for not properly using their time. This will create the pressure to use the tools. Stutz says that people need “a permanent source of jeopardy.” People should use this tool when they feel demoralized and when they are experiencing success that can make them feel exonerated.

Throughout this book, the authors provide three main keys to each tool: the tool, the higher force behind it, and cues as to when to use it. Their hope was to create a highly practical book that people could use immediately to help them with their problems. They clearly lay out the steps and walk the reader through each tool, providing a clear blueprint for how to succeed. Michels ends the book by explaining that he was able to come to terms with the spiritual principles in the method that he had previously rejected because he realized they worked.

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