

How to Plan Your Life: Lecture 2 – The Walled Garden

Confronting Chaos Anywhere

"It doesn't matter where you encounter chaos. It just matters that you do."

- Every point of entry into the unknown is equally valid.
- **King Arthur's knights** sought the Grail by entering the forest where it looked darkest to *them personally*.
- *Your darkness is your doorway.*

Psychotherapy: Telling the Truth as Confrontation

- Truth-telling is a form of confronting chaos.
- Therapy = helping someone organize the **past, present, and future** through honest speech.
- Telling painful stories repeatedly condenses them into useful markers — a tool for growth.

Chaos Is Always the Same Dragon

- Any specific fear is a **gateway to the same fundamental vulnerability**.
- Exposing yourself to a specific fear doesn't just reduce fear — it **builds courage**.

"Braver means there's more to you than you realized."

Listening and Diagnosing: Let People Wander

- Don't jump to conclusions too quickly — let people talk until the real issue emerges.
- Men often want to fix; women often sense threat without clear logic — both need

patient space.

Self-Inquiry as Secular Prayer

- Ask: "What's really bothering me?" and be **willing** to hear the answer.
- Truth often shows up as something uncomfortable: "Oh God, really? That?"

Exposure and Bravery

- People with panic disorders aren't scared of *elevators* — they're scared of **death and humiliation**.
- Helping someone approach small fears is helping them confront **their own mortality and vulnerability**.

"You're not just less afraid — you're more capable."

Overprotectiveness Is Devouring

- "Care" can be disguised control. E.g., "You don't have to try today, dear." → Disempowering.
- Don't steal people's growth.

"Don't do anything for someone they can do themselves."

Revising the Past Through a New Vision

- When you change your vision of the future, you also reinterpret the past.
- Taking responsibility for patterns (like bullying) helps **rewrite the narrative**.

"The past is less fixed than you think."

Confession and Correction

- Confession = voluntarily facing your errors
- Corrective truths are *painful but necessary* — they let a part of you die so something better can emerge.

Parenting, Discipline, and Social Success

- Discipline = teaching kids how to behave *so others want to include them*.
- Rules aren't oppression. They're **enabling constraints** — tools for higher games.

"Socialization isn't suppression, it's integration."

Discipline Is Freedom

- A good schedule should feel like **an ideal day**, not a prison.
- Don't impose a tyrannical calendar — plan the day you'd **love** to live.

Don't Assume You Know Yourself

- Treat yourself like someone you want to help — ask *what you want*, gently.
- Honesty with yourself is **risky** — it makes you vulnerable.

"What you want can be used against you. But it can also be fulfilled."

Past, Present, Future Are Intertwined

- Clean your past → reduce stress reactivity in the present.
- Unresolved memories = high alert system.

"Signal to yourself that you're now large enough to confront it."

Obstacles as Opportunities

- Every fear you avoid **expands in power**.
- Practice truth-telling even when terrifying — especially at work or in marriage.

"Are you more afraid of conflict, or 30 years of resentment?"

Walls and Boundaries

- Medieval city (e.g. Carcassonne) = metaphor for the **psyche**.
- You wall off chaos until the environment is **manageable enough to master**.
- **Walled garden = paradise** — a small domain of structured opportunity.

Constraint Enables Play

- Limitations **create freedom**.
- Too many choices → paralysis.

"A bounded task invites participation."

Institutions as Walls

- Your life is protected by countless invisible structures.
- Understand, appreciate, and **be grateful** for the systems that protect you.

Betrayal Destroys the Past

"If your partner betrays you, it doesn't just destroy the present. It destroys the past."

- Trust is a **wall**. Once broken, everything floods in — chaos returns.

- Dante placed betrayers in the deepest part of hell.

Making Progress: Wall Off a Tiny Task

- Writing a book? Start with **15 minutes per day**.
- Even a sentence a day becomes a book.

"There's no difference between breaking down a task and learning to love yourself."

Fear Is Infinitely Divisible

- Any fear, no matter how big, can be **fractioned down** until it's tolerable.
- Start where you **won't** run.

"Stand at the edge. Look at the dragon. Stay. Then take a step forward."

Relationships as Play

- Ideal partner = *beneficial adversary*.
- Push each other to the edge of growth — respectfully.

"If you're both creative and honest, you don't compromise — you find better solutions."

Collaborative Empiricism

- Try a small change → observe → refine.
- Solve the **micro-problems that repeat**, e.g. dishes, bedtime, coming home.
- If 90 minutes/week saves your marriage, that's a bargain.

Moses and the Rock

- Moses hit the rock with his staff (force) instead of asking (speech).
- God denies him entry to the Promised Land.

"Force and manipulation won't get you where you want to go. Only invitation will."

Final Notes

- Don't start with what you *can't* do — start with what you **can**.
- If the task is too big, **make the wall smaller**.
- From one smile at the store clerk to writing a book, all growth is the same pattern.

Ready for Lecture 3 when you are!