



PATTON'S PRINCIPLES

A HANDBOOK FOR

**MANAGERS
WHO
MEAN IT**

- POHTIR

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Never Fear Failure

" All my life I've been shot at! Quite often by the enemy! Only once did the enemy ever hit me with a bullet. Ofcourse, I've had a Jot of splatter stuff. No matter what you do, people will be shooting at you. Even your friends. It is true that you have to protect yourself from your friends more than your enemies. The more you do, the more your friends and enemies will say you haven't done. That's the law of life. If you are afraid of being shot at, you are whipped before you start." Gen. Patton gave this briefing to new and old staff members.

I remember Gen. Patton saying that men could be divided into two types, command and staff. We will always need staff officers, and some men will always be staff types. Some men can never be trained to be commanders. He lectured, "We will need good commanders. It is difficult to train good commanders. A man is either a commander or he is not. We must have men who can lead men into battle. In the history of the world there have been few commanders. It takes the right mixture of common horse sense and stupidity to make a commander. Smart men know that any battle plan can fail. If I had any good sense, for example, I would not be in the Army! But damn it, we've got a war to win. If we don't kill the enemy, they will kill us. It takes a lot of courage to lead men into battles where they can be killed. A commander does not dare to have any fears. If a commander shows any fear, the men can tell. When there is fear of failure, there will be failure."

It would be many years before I would grasp the full meaning of Gen. Patton's words. I could not believe that some men refuse *to* make decisions. These are the staff types. These types can never command. Some men do not want the lead role where all the blame will fall upon

them for any failure. I can cite Bing Crosby as an example of a staff type. By Bing's own words on national television, he admitted that he never had a lead role and did not want a lead role in any movie. He said, " If the movie flopped, I would not suffer too great a loss if I could stay away from the lead role." Our society in 1940 did not train commanders. We trained followers, not leaders. We had the gifted child program. We had the honors programs for gifted children who could secure high grades from their teachers. We taught our children that it was terrible not to have high grades. Our children were smarter than their teachers. The children learned that high grades were necessary for admission to college so the students echoed the words of their teachers. They took more courses where it would be easy to get high grades. They exerted effort for high grades and not for knowledge. After a generation of this training, we had a generation of children who had accumulated high grades but could not face the battles of life- the fear of failure and death.

I remember a young man who was a " gifted" child in grade school. In high school he discovered girls, and the high school teachers discovered that his "gifts" were not as high as his grade school grades. When he received his first high school grades, he was average! This could not be tolerated by his parents. Neither he nor his parents could take the failure of being average. The young man was placed in a private school where he would be protected from being average. This young man has never recovered from his fear of being average. He could not take failure! He could not face any enemy. He was not ready for the battle of life and death.

Good commanders must be so stupid that they will attack in the face of fear. Churchill was a fool to say, "We will fight on the beaches, in the streets, in our

homes . . . and though this nation last a thousand years, this will be our finest hour!" Not polite words, but he spoke the truth. Any good staff man would have collected all of the facts and said, "We will seek peace in our time." This is an exact quotation from the man who was prime minister of England before Churchill.

A good commander is an expert in facing truth.

Gen. Patton charged, "Any man who is afraid of failure will never win! Any man who is afraid to die will never really live!"

Never Take Counsel of Your Fears

"There is a time to take counsel of your fears, and there is a time to never listen to any fear. It is always important to know what you are doing,"

Gen. Patton admonished. "The time to take counsel of your fears is before you make an important battle decision. That's the time to listen to every fear you can imagine! When you have collected all of the facts and fears and made your decision, turn off all of your fears and go ahead!"

He continued, "Every plan you make in war is going to be a live or-die decision. You will either live or die as a result of your decision. Since we are not afraid to do either there is no reason to take counsel of our fears."

He continued, "The chance of being killed in combat is not as great as being killed on our highways. If you want to take counsel of your fears, stop driving a car! And don't crawl in bed at night! More people die in bed than any other place!" We laughed.

When there was time, Gen. Patton explained his ideas, saying, "The person who cannot face death has truly never faced life because every day of life is a day c loser

to death. To take counsel of fears about death is to destroy every day of living."

I had an experience which proved the wisdom of Gen.

Patton's principle of never listening to your fears.

First, I should relate that my service with Gen. Patton ended in August of 1942. The Army needed pilots, and I was young enough to qualify for the pilot training program. Every pilot was needed because of the high loss-rate of pilots in the bombing missions over Europe. Gen. Patton called me into his office, "Williamson, I cannot hold onto you much longer. The pressure is on to release every man your age for pilot training. I will miss you!"

Months later I was selected to be a Squadron Commander of the first Night Fighter Squadron, flying always at night and in all weather conditions. I am sure

I was selected because of my service with Gen. Patton. The task of getting young pilots to fly at night and in all weather conditions was not easy. Every decision was a life and death decision.

Early one morning I was flying a P-70 twin-engine

Night Fighter aircraft on a test flight with a rebuilt engine. When only ten feet in the air, the rebuilt engine exploded. There was no time to take counsel of fear. All of the time was spent in trying to get that plane high enough to bail out or to find a suitable place to crash. I finally nursed the plane into the air and back to our own landing field. As I used the good left engine to turn off the landing strip, I called the control tower to ask, 'Can you send a tow truck to pull this plane back to the line? I have had some trouble!'

I had previously advised the tower to clear the field of all aircraft for an emergency landing. The tower operator did not need to be told that I was in trouble! He could see the black smoke pouring from the right engine. He called, "Don't worry if you cannot get out of the plane! The ambulance and fire truck will be here in a minute!"

I came out of my never-listen-to-fear battle plan and looked at the flames near the gas tank. It was then that I listened to my fears and flipped open the top canopy and jumped off the left wing without a ladder.

In times of danger from fires, floods, combat, cancer, old age, or any serious problem, the mind does not gain by taking counsel of fears. We will get older whether we listen to fears or not. The fear of age can be worse than age. Cancer can cause death from worry as easily as from the disease. If this were not true, so many people would not fear cancer so much that they refuse to have the examination which could result in treatment to destroy cancer.

About a year later, my military service ended with a telephone call from a doctor saying, "We must amputate our leg because of bone cancer."

A few weeks earlier a tumor had been removed from my left knee. Cancer had not been mentioned. I was flying again although with a brace on my left leg. I had returned to San Francisco from an inspection trip in Florida. War does not provide time for proper bedside manners for a doctor. I asked the doctor, "What if I refuse amputation?"

"You have only about two years to live even with an amputation!" The doctor did not waste words.

There was only one decision. With my fellow officers we made up a slogan, "Don't hesitate! Amputate!"

Gen. Patton's principles helped me through the amputation, and I kept repeating, "Never take counsel of the fears of cancer!" Every day of life was another day. Every day of life pushed death back one day. No one knows how many more days of life remain. If we take counsel of our fears of death, we will never enjoy life.

Ten years later the doctor advised, "You have whipped cancer!" Nine more years and a doctor told me, "Something has to go! You have bone

cancer again! We have to take off more of your leg or you will die!" The doctors amputated and left me with only three inches of left leg. They are still three inches from where I live! This second amputation was fifteen years ago. Gen. Patton's principle has helped me through thirty-four years!

There are many examples of the wisdom of refusing to take counsel of fear. An example for me is in walking. With the leg amputations I have been compelled to learn to walk with many different legs. Every fitting of a leg requires learning to walk again. There is a time to be cautious and listen to our fears of falling. However, if, when we walk we constantly look at our shoes, we are sure to stumble and fall. Whether we walk with artificial legs or our own legs, we must not look at the ground. Gen. Patton would advise, "Walk tall!" With a wooden leg, if I do not walk tall, the leg does not swing forward properly. When I watch for my left wooden foot to come forward, I am sure to fall. The person with good legs who looks at the ground will fall more often than the "walking tall" person.

Gen. Patton would often give an example to the troops by discussing marriage. It was a humorous lecture. "Fear of combat is just like fear of marriage. When you have dated every girl in the neighborhood, you know enough to either get married or stay single! You have all of the facts. When you have the best training and the best equipment for war, you are ready to kill, and you will not be afraid. There might be a shot fired here and there that might come close, but nothing important to worry about. It is just like marriage; that is, combat and marriage. A stray shot now and then is the same as a fight in marriage—a little spat could make the marriage better. Combat will make all of us better soldiers!"

There was laughter, but the men learned to silence

their fears. Gen Patton would conclude, “After you make a decision, do it like hell—and never take counsel of your fears over whether you made the right decision or not!”

Brain Power Comes from the Lungs

Gen. Patton did not order any man to stand erect, but he gave every man the reason for standing erect.

As I remember his advice he would say, "In war, as in everything else, a man needs all of the brains he can get. Nobody ever had too many brains. Brains come from oxygen. Oxygen comes from the lungs where the air goes. This oxygen in the air gets into the blood and travels to the brain. Any fool can increase the size of his lungs by at least fifty per cent. Many can double their lung power. If you can double your lung power you could be twice as smart! Just breathe more air into your lungs. Take ten deep breaths several times a day. Take all the air you can get in and then hold it as long as you can. Air does not cost a dime! It takes brains to win wars and avoid the traps the enemy will set for us. Try this deep breathing and holding for ten seconds on each breath. Hold it until you pop! It will expand your lungs. Do this deep breathing when you are standing around wondering what to do. No reason for any man to be idle. He can always be doing something such as deep breathing. We are a bunch of lazy breathers. We use our lungs less and less, so we increase our dumbness. Some of us smoke, like me. This cuts down on the power of the brain. But I don't smoke much. You breathe deep--every one of you. We want every advantage we can get. We are going to kill the enemy because we will be smarter."

Gen. Patton did not order the staff not to smoke, but he did try to stop those that smoked excessively. All of his advice pertained to combat. I remember his saying, "You don't dare strike a match at the wrong time at night. Could reveal our position to the enemy. Many a gun has been aimed at a match at night. With powerful field glasses, those matches stand out like search lights."

men."

Smoking was a personal habit which Gen. Patton could not stop by giving an order, but he warned the staff about excessive smoking. If any staff officer smoked too much at our officers' mess (meals), this officer would feel Gen. Patton's hand on his shoulder, "Lieutenant, you know you are smoking too much!" Gen. Patton never gave the man a chance to reply. The lieutenant had the message.

After a briefing on Jung power and breathing, Gen. Patton would march out of the room or area as straight as an arrow and with his chest as big as a barrel. The men had the message. George Scott had the message when he played the role of Gen. Patton in the movie. He was barrel-chested throughout all of the movie! This lung-oxygen-brain principle was given by Gen. Patton in early 1942, at least thirty years before I remember any doctor prescribing oxygen for patients with failing memories. I have given this deep breathing principle to luncheon clubs and would ask the listeners to try the full lung inflation principle. After one meeting a doctor suggested that this was dangerous for some patients who had never taken a full breath! When I report this suggestion to Gen. Patton in hell or heaven, I am sure he will explode, "Deep breathing dangerous? Do the American people use their lungs so little they cannot breathe?"

I continue to follow this principle especially when I get sleepy on a long drive in a car. One doctor suggested that deep breathing could add ten years to my life.

There Is No Power in a Bushel of Blubber

Gen. Patton was not the type of commander who would order men to stand at attention or stand straight to satisfy a whim. His instructions on stature were as humorous as many of his statements. Although the men laughed, they received the instructions.

He would instruct, "A man who cannot see his shoes without bending halfway to the ground has a real problem! He is spending all of his energy driving around a bushel of blubber! Every man needs all of the power he can get. Power comes from that engine in the belly. Great piece of machinery, that belly. Put in good food and you get good power back out. If you keep the belly muscles tight you can increase the power of the whole body. I will see that you get the best food I can wrangle out of the quartermasters even if I have to pay for it out of my own pocket. The food you eat turns into power just like gasoline in a car. Your belly should be strong and tight enough to take a dozen saber wounds and never stop going forward. Don't laugh! It can be done! If you can keep going after the enemy has given you several saber jabs, you'll scare the hell out of the enemy!"

The men would laugh but Gen. Patton continued, "It's no big deal to get more power out of the belly. Just pull it in and hold it for ten seconds. Pull it in ten times every time you think of it. That will give you lots of power, and you will be tuned-up like a good engine. A man is a damn fool to die just because he forgot to pull in his bushel of blubber. Every man ought to be able to look down and see his shoes without bending to the ground!"

This principle of strain and pressure was pushed by Gen. Patton long before the term "isometrics" became a household word. Everyone laughed at the General, but his words were not wasted. Every man started pulling in his bushel of blubber for the ten seconds. The troops did

increase their power! They did stand straight! They laughed at the idea of taking a dozen saber jabs to scare the enemy, but some of them did go ahead after severe injury. And the enemy was shocked! So shocked that many thousands of the enemy troops surrendered at the sound of Gen. Patton's tanks and soldiers.