

Hard Easy: A Get-Real Guide for Getting the Life You Want

Arthur F. Coombs III

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Hard-Easy is an uplifting and encouraging guide to self-improvement.

Arthur F. Coombs III's *Hard-Easy* is an upbeat, comprehensive guide to self-improvement based on the "Law of Hard-Easy," through which practitioners are challenged to choose the harder path now to enjoy an easier path in the future.

The book suggests its Hard-Easy as a universal law that's sequential and causal in nature and that represents an accumulation of small decisions made over time. It proposes that focusing on Hard-Easy activities in the present will bring greater future rewards; in contrast, postponing the hard work (the Easy-Hard path) is suggested to lead to stagnation, even disaster.

The book's twenty-two concise chapters flow in a logical progression, illuminating the book's concepts well. Smart examples drawn from real-life support the book's premises. The book's language is conversational and personal, incorporating believable details and forwarding valuable warnings. Each chapter ends with helpful bullet points that reinforce the topic and suggest action steps.

The book makes a convincing case that choosing its suggested path will improve lives. In one eye-opening story, a teenage boy avoids doing his homework, resulting in low grades. To help the boy see his error, his father brings him to meet workers at a large retailer at 2:00 am to demonstrate the possible consequences of choosing the Easy-Hard path. On the flip is a poignant and hopeful story about assault survivor Elizabeth Smart, who applied Hard-Easy principles to cope with her trauma. Similarly, the attribution of human preferences for instant gratification to Neanderthal DNA is thought provoking, while an informative story about planting and nurturing peach trees for several years before enjoying their fruit functions as a concrete example of reaping the benefits of delayed gratification.

Many of the book's stories use humor to communicate Hard-Easy principles. In the parable of a fisherman and a banker, a banker tries to convince a fisherman to expand his operations and build his business so that when he retires he can enjoy the life of leisure that he already enjoys. Elsewhere, the benefits of goal setting are illustrated with descriptions of spawning salmon, while the amusing concept of a Stupidity Score shows that knowledge and intelligence don't always save people from making foolish decisions.

Beyond its motivational tales, the book's suggestions to avoid complacency, shame, and impulsiveness are hopeful and reassuring. Other provocative insights include the idea that complacency is a form of fear, and that yielding to a crisis mentality can be addictive. Most of the book's recommendations are convincing and achievable, though a far-fetched recommendation advises practitioners to fight against instant gratification by locking up their cell phones at dinner.

The book's switches between perspective are a point of distraction, and the book sometimes feels excessively preachy and directive. The underlying reasons why someone might be unable to choose Hard-Easy, despite having knowledge and awareness, are not addressed. The capitalization of the terms "Hard" and "Easy" is at first jarring, but

becomes more comfortable as the terms appear in numerous examples.

Hard-Easy is an uplifting and encouraging guide to self-improvement.

CAROL BOOTON (April 20, 2020)

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