

The Road Less Traveled is a useful tool for those who are seeking to grow.

Peck begins the book with the statement, "Life is difficult," and he goes on to say "once we truly see this truth, we transcend it." Through reading the text I've come to learn that life is difficult and it can be unhealthy to believe that it's easy. In this same section of *Discipline*, Peck emphasizes the importance of being disciplined enough delaying gratification. He defines this as, "scheduling the pain and pleasure of life in such a way to enhance the pleasure by meeting and experiencing the pain first and getting it over with." I began to examine different times in my life when I was willing to delay gratification. I was taught in sports that you must suffer through conditioning to become fit enough to succeed. However, when it came to money, good grades, sex, and other things, I found I had been trained to "do whatever I had to today to get it."

In problem solving, Peck stresses the courage "to willingly confront a problem early, before we are forced to confront it by circumstances.... rather than choosing to continue present gratification in the hope that future suffering will not be necessary." I found myself confronting problems, such as my health, and suffering through the stress and pain with understanding that future gratification will be rewarded. I realized that I have to take responsibility for my success and not rely on life letting it happen. In his section on responsibility Peck points out that many people suffer from different psychological disorders when dealing with responsibility. For example, neurotics assume too much responsibility and people with character-disorder do not assume enough. Throughout my life when it came to my situation in school I would not take responsibility for my success and rather blame society, teachers, and my parents for my lack of achievement. I think about our current situation in America where times are getting harder. I believe people will either take responsibility for this country's success or continue on with their lives as is and hope that another entity, such as the government, will take care of their problems.

"Truth" has become such a major part of my life. After a very depressing phase, I began to question everything which Peck calls the "path to holiness." I began questioning and challenging the beliefs that I had about myself and society. Why does my neighborhood have so many bars and churches? Why did I believe that I was better than other people? How did I go from a 4.0 class president to a drug addicted college dropout? I became dedicated to truth and reality. In the section titled *Dedication to Reality*, Peck metaphorically describes reality as a map in which, "we use to navigate the terrain of life. If the map is true and accurate, we will generally know where we are, and if we have decided where we want to go, we will generally know how to get there. If the map is false and inaccurate, we will generally be lost." Through a continuance of revision of my "map" with new information, I believe that I have a fully updated and thorough "map" to navigate through this "terrain of life." I have also taken *The Road Less Traveled's* advice to be open to challenge, therefore I offer critique and challenge of my reality. Peck describes "healthy depression," as the "feeling of giving up something loved or at least something that is a part of ourselves and familiar."

One of the most powerful and touching readings that I've done, however, has been on Peck's study of love. Peck attempts to define love as: "The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." This was a challenge to my beliefs of love and my misconceptions of love being the feeling you receive when you give/receive a gift or compliment. Peck describes this as either

happening effortlessly or unconsciously and is motivated by loneliness or sexual reasons. After reading this I began to examine my prior and current “loving” relationships and my intentions and expectations, and I found that I had not been acting in a way that would be nurturing others or my own growth. Peck speaks about love being full of effort and risks to be committed, attentive, independent, confrontational, and disciplined.

Finally, Peck concludes the book with a section on grace which has made me appreciate what is done for me that I do consciously ask for or seek. Also, grace in other people’s lives where they’ve found improbable favor in different situations in life. Peck also talks about conscious and unconscious, and how some psychiatrists summarize psychotherapy as “making the unconscious conscious.” Peck elaborates on the issue of laziness which he views as non-love. Peck views it as laziness in people when they attempt to “avoid necessary suffering, or taking the easy way out.” I agree with this view and have changed some habits in my own life because now I understand why genuine loving seems so rare, one reason being that American culture has many lazy aspects. I have begun to establish what Peck refers to as “the internal debate between good and evil,” and I’m striving to make better decisions.

The final stirring thought of *Road* left me with was the issue of Power. Peck describes two types of power political: the capacity to coerce others, overtly or covertly, to do one’s will,” and spiritual: “resides entirely within the individual,” and is “making decisions with maximum awareness.” I have never been a fan of politics and people have encouraged me to try to become a political leader but I never liked the idea and this book helped me see why. I would prefer to be a spiritual leader that educates which Peck shows its Latin derivation “*educare*, literally translated as “to bring out” or “lead forth.”

I don’t want to be a leader who imposes their beliefs on others but rather bring out vision from within others and *The Road Less Traveled* has inspired me to continue on my journey.