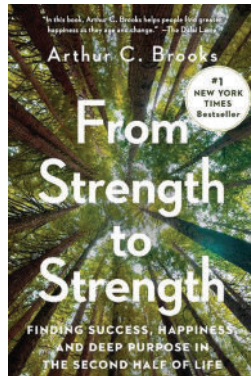




FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH:
FINDING SUCCESS, HAPPINESS AND DEEP PURPOSE IN THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE
BY ARTHUR C. BROOKS



THE BOOK


FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH:
 Finding Success, Happiness and Deep Purpose
 in the Second Half of Life

By Arthur C. Brooks



INTRODUCTION

This one is for professionals, not students...

Are you a 'striver'? Have you pushed hard all your life to be the best you can be? Have you been successful and achieved so much but feel as though something is missing and as though things are getting harder, not easier?

If any of these sound familiar, then From Strength to Strength is worth the read.

Arthur C. Brooks, bestselling author and the columnist behind The Atlantic's "How to Build a Life" series, brings you a highly researched guide to finding fulfilment later in life. He teaches 'strivers' how to let go and find happiness when they pass the point of peak performance and start wondering what it's all about.

From Strength to Strength delivers a few harsh realities (including a middle age 'decline'), but Brooks has the answers for all the issues that arise during a mid-life 'crisis'. With Brooks as your guide, you can learn how to make the jump into a fulfilling later life.



5 BEST QUOTES

"Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad."

"Remember, a classic sign of addictive behaviour is when something not human starts to supplant human relationships."

"Satisfaction comes not from chasing bigger and bigger things, but paying attention to smaller and smaller things."

"There are two pillars of happiness. . . . One is love. The other is finding a way of coping with life that does not push love away."

"At work, successful people are lonely in a crowd."



8 BIG IDEAS

1. STRIVERS

From Strength to Strength is primarily a book for 'strivers'.

Brooks describes strivers as people who strive to be excellent at everything they do but fall under what Brooks calls the 'strivers curse'.

This curse is the fact that strivers find their inevitable 'decline' scary, their success increasingly terrifying, and their relationships lacking.

The point of From Strength to Strength is to help strivers overcome this curse.

2. THE TWO CURVES

Decline is inevitable. In almost every career, there comes a point where the skills honed by years of practice suddenly start to decline. In some careers, like sports, this is so well established that professional athletes are well versed in the fact that they won't be competing past their 30s.

For many other careers, the decline begins in the 40s. Concert musicians suddenly can't hit the notes as well as they used to, scientists no longer make pertinent discoveries, and corporate workers find themselves being shelved.

Brooks claims there is a scientific explanation for this. As you grow older, your fluid intelligence, the form of intelligence that governs innovation and creativity, decreases. This is the first curve, and it starts going downwards in the early 40s.

The good news is that there is a second curve. The second curve is crystallised intelligence, and this curve is still going up through middle age. Crystallised intelligence governs communication skills and the synthesis of ideas. Brooks advises to jump from the fluid intelligence curve, which has been sustaining you to this point, to the crystallised intelligence curve when they cross over.

3. SUCCESS ADDICTION

For strivers, one of the biggest problems when confronting decline is their addiction to success. This can be summed up beautifully in a quote Brooks uses from a striver he was talking to. She said, "Maybe I would prefer to be special, rather than happy."

This is a sign that success and admiration have become a key goal, and worse, an addiction just as bad as alcoholism.

This can clearly be a serious problem for strivers reaching middle age because inevitable decline means success and admiration will begin to wane. The ways to fight success addiction are the subject of the next few chapters in From Strength to Strength.



8 BIG IDEAS

4. CHIP AWAY

One of the ways that very successful people deal with decline is to surround themselves with things. Brooks cites a friend who had huge success in the tech industry, but then his innovation waned. What Brook's friend did was retreat to his 'bucket list', buying countless luxury cars and travelling the world.

The problem is, doing this failed to create a true sense of well-being. What Brooks suggests is to work with a reverse bucket list. Rather than adding to your list a thousand things you want, rather, chip away at what you don't need until you are left with only what is important. After all, you can't take it with you.

5. PONDER YOUR DECLINE

To quote From Strength to Strength directly, "Like resistance to death, resistance to the decline in your abilities is futile. And futile resistance brings unhappiness and frustration. Resisting your decline will bring you misery and distract you from life's opportunities"

In other words, don't fight the inevitable. Brooks recommends a tweak on the Buddhist practice of envisioning yourself as a decaying corpse so as to come to terms with your inevitable fate. Instead of contemplating death (although this is also useful) think about your inevitable decline and see it as a fact to be acknowledged and not an abstract thought to be cast aside.

6. CULTIVATE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

In From Strength to Strength, Brooks uses the example of aspen groves. One aspen tree is not the whole organism. Aspen is made up of many interconnected trees forming groves that actually constitute some of the largest single organisms on the planet. The single aspen does not exist without its grove.

In a figurative sense, the same applies to humans. The problem for strivers is that they have often pushed away their friends and loved ones with too many hours dedicated to work and striving.

Brooks recommends that you rekindle these relationships or form fresh ones as you enter middle age in order to build a strong support base for the rest of your life.



8 BIG IDEAS

7. MAKE YOUR WEAKNESS YOUR STRENGTH

Strivers have difficulty admitting to weakness. When decline starts to happen, that difficulty becomes even more pronounced.

Brooks says you should accept and embrace your weaknesses. They are a part of who you are, and denying them is unhealthy. Once you embrace and understand that you have weaknesses and that is ok, then you can finally be comfortable in your own skin.

8. LIMINALITY

Brooks says that liminality is “the time between work roles, organisations, career paths, and relationship stages.”

The time when you are jumping between curves is obviously a liminal time. It is also the time of the classic ‘midlife crisis’. But, Brooks asks, does it have to be a crisis?

In fact, midlife crises are far less common than was once believed and are far from a given. Brooks says you can handle your liminal time much better if you:

- 1. FIND YOUR NEXT MAJOR GOAL**
- 2. LET THE WORK BE THE REWARD**
- 3. DO THE MOST INTERESTING THING YOU CAN**
- 4. DO NOT GET BOGGED DOWN IN A CAREER CHANGE BEING IN A STRAIGHT LINE**

Work through these steps, and you can have a midlife shift rather than a mid-life crisis.

**3 ACTION STEPS****1. UNDERSTAND YOUR CURVES**

As your flexible intelligence curve begins to drop, your crystallised intelligence starts to rise. This is when you should switch your focus from innovation and creativity to verbal communication and the synthesis of ideas.

Making the switch to your second curve is the first key to finding fulfilment in your later years.

2. DEVELOP YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Everyone needs support. Many strivers lose touch with their friends and loved ones when they become too obsessed with work and success.

Take the time to rekindle and nurture the relationships in your life, or you will find yourself alone and lonely.

3. TAKE CONTROL; SOMETIMES

This is a vital step that most strivers neglect. Everyone has weaknesses, but trying to pretend they don't exist is futile.

The best thing to do is to accept your weaknesses and use them to help you in your midlife shift. Once you can embrace your weaknesses and find ways to turn them around, you can finally relax in your own skin.

**1 KEY TAKEAWAY**

The key takeaway of *From Strength to Strength* is that while decline is inevitable, it doesn't have to be the end. If you know how to, you can live out the second half of your life while still feeling useful and satisfied.

By switching your focus from fluid to crystallised intelligence, you can find ways to make life after the decline much more rewarding and fulfilling.

Making this switch and understanding that it is necessary is your key to continued success, as long as you understand how success can evolve to mean something different.



want more?

visit thehopefullinstitute.com
email hello@thehopefullinstitute.com



Read the full book

From Strength to Strength

by Arthur C. Brooks

Arthur Brooks studies what happens when the strengths that carried your early success start to fade, and how to build a second curve on wisdom, teaching and connection. Written for anyone who senses the striving no longer pays off. This summary maps the two curves; the full book shows you how to cross from one to the other.

Get it on Amazon