

Turning Pro

Steven Pressfield—2012.

- Sometimes, when you're terrified of embracing our true calling, will pursue a shadow calling instead. That shadow career is a metaphor for our real career. Its shape is similar; its contours feel tantalizingly the same.
- If you're dissatisfied with your current life, ask yourself what your current life is a metaphor for. That metaphor will point you toward your true calling.
- The difference between an amateur and a professional is in their habits. Amateur has amateur habits. Professional has professional habits.
- **The addict is the amateur**; the artist is the professional. Both addict and artist are dealing with the same material, which is the pain of being human and the struggle against self-sabotage. But the addict/amateur and the artist/professional deal with these elements in fundamentally different ways. (When I say "addiction," by the way, I'm not referring only to the serious, clinical maladies of alcoholism, drug dependence. Domestic abuse and so forth. Web-surfing counts too. So do compulsive texting, sexting, twittering and Facebooking.) Distractions. Displacement activities. When we're living as amateurs, we're running away from our calling—meaning our work, our destiny, the obligation to become our truest and highest selves.
- The actions and shadow careers are messages in a bottle from our unconscious. Our Self, in the Jungian sense, is trying to get our attention, to have an intervention with us. The question we need to ask of a shadow career or an addiction is the same question the psychotherapist asks of a dream. **"What is our unconscious trying to tell us?"**
- Resistance hates two qualities above all others: concentration and depth. Why? Because when we work with focus and we work deep, we succeed.
- Have you checked your e-mail in the last half hour? When you sit down to do your work, do you leave your web connection on? It can be fatal, keeping up with the Kardashians.

BOOK TWO SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS

- **The amateur** fears that if he turns pro and lives out his calling, he will have to live up to who he really is and what he is truly capable of. The amateur is terrified that if the tribe should discover who he really is, he will be kicked out into the cold to die.
- Becoming himself means being different from others and thus, possibly, violating the expectations of the tribe, without whose acceptance and approval, he believes, he cannot survive. By these means, the amateur remains inauthentic. He remains someone other than who he really is.
- My beef with American culture is that almost every aspect, including the deliberations of the legislature and the judiciary, has been debased to pander to the culture of amateurism. The promise that our products and politicians proffer is the promise one might make to an infant or an addict: "I will get you what you want and it will cost you nothing."
- Two Hollywood producers were talking. "I've got good news," said one, "and I've got bad news." "Gimme the good news." "Remember that mansion we were trying to rent for the big party scene, but we couldn't get because it cost \$50K for e night." Well, I just talked to the guy

and he'll give it to us for \$10K." "What's the bad news? "He wants a hundred bucks up front." The sure sign of an amateur is he has a million plans and they all start tomorrow.

- **The amateur dreads** becoming who she really is because she fears that this new person will be judged by others as "different." The tribe will declare us "weird" or "queer" or "crazy." The tribe will reject us. Here's the truth: the tribe doesn't give a shit. There is no tribe. That gang or posse that we imagine is sustaining us by the bonds we share is in fact a conglomeration of individuals who are just as fucked up as we are and just as terrified. Each individual is so caught up in his own bullshit that he doesn't have two seconds to worry about yours or mine, or to reject or diminish us because of it. When we truly understand that the tribe doesn't give a damn, we are free. There is no tribe, and there never was. Our lives are entirely up to us.
- Do you understand? I hadn't written anything good. It might be years before I would, if I ever did at all. That didn't matter. What counted was that I had, after years of running from it, actually sat down and done my work.

Qualities of the professional:

1. The professional shows up every day
 2. The professional stays on the job all day
 3. The professional is committed over the long haul
 4. For the professional, the stakes are high and real
 5. The professional is patient
 6. The professional seeks order
 7. The professional demystifies
 8. The professional acts in the face of fear
 9. The professional accepts no excuses
 10. The professional plays it as it lays
 11. The professional is prepared
 12. The professional does not show off
 13. The professional dedicates himself to mastering technique
 14. The professional does not hesitate to ask for help
 15. The professional does not take failure or success personally
 16. The professional does not identify with his or her instrument
 17. The professional endures adversity
 18. The professional self-validates
 19. The professional reinvents herself
 20. The professional is recognized by other professionals
- I'm guilty of checking my email. Aren't you? We're crazy. What do we imagine we're going to find in our Inbox? The children who were able to sit for three minutes with a marshmallow on the table in front of them without eating it were rewarded with two marshmallows when the experimenter returned.
 - In her book: improv wisdom, is on my short list of indispensable.

- The amateur believes that she must have all her ducks in a row before she can launch her start-up or compose her symphony or design her iPhone app.
 - The professional knows better.
 - Athletes play hurt. Warriors fight scared. The professional takes two aspirin and keeps on truckin’.