

## Quotes for Living at the “Height of the Times”

from Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* :

“We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk about so much about myself if there were any body else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience.”

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation.... There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.”

“But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however, ancient, can be trusted without proof. ... Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new.”

“How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living?”

“I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.”

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.”

“I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that *is* which *appears* to be.”

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“The more you do what you’ve always done, the more you’ll get what you’ve always got.” — paraphrased from Einstein

“Happiness is not something that happens. It does not depend on outside events, but, rather, on how we interpret them.” — Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*

“We are always getting [ready] to live, but never living.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson, as quoted by Csikszentmihalyi

“One test is worth a thousand expert opinions.” — Anon

“Don’t let the sound of your own wheels drive you crazy.” — The Eagles, “Take It Easy”

“There is only one way to happiness and that is to cease worrying about things which are beyond the power of our will.” — Epictetus

“We cannot command the wind, but we can adjust our sails.” — Author unknown

from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay *Self-Reliance*:

“The virtue most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It [Conformity] loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.”

“What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own. But the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.”

“The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them.”

“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said today.”

“The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions. Your conformity explains nothing.”

“The power men possess to annoy me, I give them by a weak curiosity. No man can come near me but through my act.”

“If our young men miscarry in their first enterprises, they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is ruined. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges, and is not installed in an office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened, and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who teams it, farms it, peddles, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always, like a cat, falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his days, and feels no shame in not “studying a profession,” for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances.”

“Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.”

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“If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimation of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.” — Marcus Aurelius

“A ship in the harbor is safe. But that is not what ships are for.— Author unknown

“Progress has not followed a straight, ascending line, but a spiral with rhythms of progress and retrogression, of evolution and dissolution.” — Goethe

