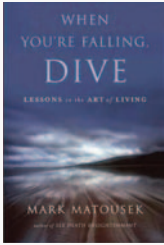


Survival Secrets



“**W**hen You’re Falling, Dive — Lessons in the Art of Living” is a book of short stories depicting real people who have not only endured some of life’s toughest tragedies and struggles, but emerged from these dark moments of loss and trauma into the light of self-discovery.

Author Mark Matousek, an HIV survivor, embarked on a journey to see what he could discover about survival from people such as Elie Wiesel, Eckard Tolle, Joan Didion and Ram Dass — people who have seen and lived through tragedy. Weaving these personal tales with his own life experiences and scientific data, Matousek tells a riveting tale of how pain can lead to life-changing transformation and how we can all not only survive being human, but succeed at it.

TAKEN FROM THE BOOK’S INTRODUCTION:

“How does a person live full out in a world where uncertainty’s king? How do we survive our own days once a fall has already happened? How is it possible to live with ‘what the condemned know’ before we are confronted by crisis, through the course of everyday affairs, in order to live in this illuminated state? Finally, how can we keep our hearts “open to hell,” as the Dalai Lama describes the existence of suffering, in the midst of trouble, when we need compassion most?”

Survival, I came to understand, has less to do with cheating death than with living as brilliantly as possible. (How many oxygenated people do you know who do not appear to be fully alive?) There are new ways of seeing — of being — in a world turned upside down. There’s an art to turning poison into a boon. Even during the worst times, as I plummeted into some squall of fear, it never failed that some involuntary, irrational wave would sweep me up sooner or later as if out of nowhere. Other times there was satisfaction in the battle itself, a tenacious hunger to stay alive, when I was glad to simply be here, to fight — to participate — even when the going was tough.

Every situation has the potential for greening, this *viriditas*, this bringing of beauty, insight, or healing from the manure of suffering. We’re reconstituted after being crushed, fleshed out again after being stripped, by the mysterious, profligate, glowing, extravagant force that courses through and electrifies the phenomenal world. Though we’re immersed in this power at every moment, survivors realize how profoundly quality of life is determined by how skillfully (and quickly) we harness ourselves to that evergreen force at the heart of things. Just as we recognize beauty when we see it, we respond to those who have tapped into this secret. They seem larger and more alive somehow, as if working from a more vivified palette. It’s no accident that such impassioned, inventive people have frequently endured greater-than-usual doses of pain. Where adversity crosses paths with aliveness, there is the potential for art, as well as for artful living. Although we may not all be masters, we can learn from such enlightened souls and witness their greening survivor’s genius for self-renewal ...

... Survival requires a dose of madness — what cynics call “hoping against hope” — just like art does; you conjure your future from white space, locate the hidden person, yourself, against this unfamiliar background, peering through grief and loss at something greater...for this reason, survivors may be our greatest teachers in an increasingly terrorized world.” **EE**



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