

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, PhD.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for December 2015! As we move through the holiday season and approach the end of the year, many people begin to think about the coming year. No doubt many of you have made resolutions over the years and maybe perhaps have broken a few too – we all have. But what about your ‘magic resolution’? What are you aiming to begin, to change or finish as far as magic is concerned? Learning a new effect or routine? Buying less magic and reading more books? Perhaps your resolution is to practice more, or even better, get out there (wherever that is) more often and perform for people, to share your magic and give the gift of mystery and wonder.

This month, I am going to talk just a little about a book that has nothing whatever to do with magic; instead, it is a book that once you read it, you will be able to apply its lessons to all other areas of your life. The book is called **‘Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment’** by George Leonard.

Author George Leonard draws on his experience as Zen philosophy and his work as a Master Aikido practitioner and instructor to give you different tools that will help you accomplish the things that you want. The majority of the message in the book is that you have to love to practice, no matter what it is that you are practicing. It could be basketball, it could be learning to fly a plane or even the things that we magicians do: practicing legerdemain/sleight of hand/magic. Further, he discusses the concept of the plateau – you all know the feeling: you practice and practice and practice over and over, but you still do not seem to further your skill or seem to get any better at what you are doing. This is the aptly-named ‘plateau’. The author encourages us to learn to love the plateau, because whether we know it or feel it or not, it is good for us and it *does* help move us closer to advancing our skill or practice to the point where we do get better, with visible (or emotional) results.

He also talks about three different personality types that are ‘obstacles’ on the path to mastery and he gives you lots of great insights on how to avoid the many pitfalls along the path of your own journey. He gives you tools to overcome even the most stubborn obstacles and how you recognize when you are plateauing and when you are actually progressing. He also talks about resolutions, why they fail and what to do about it. All of the lessons in this book are meant for application in your everyday life, but they can readily be applied to magic and magicians. We all have to learn new things, new effects/routines, we all have to practice and we all have started with something and given up on it. This book can show you why that most likely happened.

There is an old saying about practice and perfection, by my view is that practice does *not* make perfect, practice makes *practical*. Until next year, I hope you all have a fun, safe, magical and Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. Get out there this season and share your mysteries, spread the joy, the love and the magic and I will see you all next year!

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