

# THE TWELVE COMMITMENTS TO LIFE

*Partial Bibliography*

*The Art of Power, Thich Nhat Hanh*

*Comfort Remedies (For Life on an Uncomfortable Planet), Gloria Clarke, RN*

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

*The Power of Now, Eckhart Tolle*

*Autobiography of a Yogi, Paramhansa Yogananda*

*Out of My Life and Thought, Albert Schweitzer*

*You Can Heal Your Life, Louise Hay*

*The Body Mind Prescription, John E. Sarno, MD*

*Think and Grow Rich, Napoleon Hill*

*The Four Agreements, Don Miguel Ruiz*

*The Brain that Changes Itself, Norman Doidge, MD*

*Mindsight, Daniel J. Siegel*

*Brain Building in Just 12 Weeks, Marilyn vos Savant and Leonore Fleischer*

*Sex on the Brain, Daniel Amen*

*Love 101, Peter McWilliams*



RICH GUY MILLER

# THE TWELVE COMMITMENTS TO LIFE

By Rich Guy Miller

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## Forward: The Twelve Commitments to Life

The meaning of life is simple and it this: full commitment to it.

I will never forget when this came to me and I realized that the meaning of life is simple, repeatable and simultaneously, profound. It came to me while in a lucid dream state, asleep but in control of the train of thought. (More details on this dream in Chapter One.)

Friends have told me I shouldn't put the answer we have all been searching for in the book forward. They thought I should bury it in the book, where the reader would get a great "AHA!" moment. Am I wrong to tell you up front?

I say, "No!"

I languished so long looking for the meaning of life that I didn't want anyone else to have to go struggle so. After all, I had the dream after losing my father and I don't think anyone should have the pain of losing a parent to discover the meaning of life.

So, I put the nugget we have been looking for right in the forward. This means that *all we have to do is commit to life, and by doing so, the meaning is revealed*. I don't mean committing to life as we want it, having life on our terms. I mean committing to life just as life is. Having read that, you don't need to read another word of this book. Now you know the meaning of life! All that is left is to commit to it.

You and I deserve to know the truth of it, don't you think?

So, why would you buy this book on the meaning of life now that you know what it is? Because this book will help you to re-frame your mindset from wherever it is now to where it is connected to life. It's a short book with short chapters so you can easily re-read it, re-frame your mind and use it as a manual for taking new action.

In this book, you will read about what I call the twelve 'essences' of life. The essences are those things that make life possible. Without them, we could not live or progress. But they are also what make life wonderful and make life worth committing to. When we experience just one of them, we might easily say, "Wow, this is the best life gets." But I would suggest that each serves the larger good of life itself. Each life essence gives us arenas in which to grow, practice and improve the quality of others' lives, too.

These "life essences" include health, connection to our tribe, sex, consciousness, learning, awareness, reduction of suffering, rest, breath, hospitality, balance and love. (Notice how simple they are? Don't let the simplicity fool you.) Each one can bring us full pleasure and personal fulfillment. And each one has more to offer than you have experienced so far.

No doubt you have seen that the essences of life are **not** what we spend most of our time pursuing (unless you are a health maniac and all you do is diet oriented or an athlete and are always in training or sports events). Our efforts are usually focused on things like financial goals, staying relevant, symbols of status, reveling in popular games (spectator or participatory), politics (office, organizational, career), expanding our comfort zone, pursuing an enviable body shape, using or attaining advantage over others, perks and retirement.

All of us have gone after those excitements, like little children attracted to shiny baubles. And when the excitements fail us, we automatically assume we don't have enough of them.

Now, there's a grain of truth in that direction- to get **more**. But what fulfills us is **more commitment**, not more life experience free of meaning. And because commitment to life is where meaning and fulfillment are found, the poor and less advantaged can have **more** meaning in life and have it as easily as the rich and powerful.

## Magic 13 Organizational Plan

As it happened, this book took the form of 13 chapters. Besides the first chapter, "Commitment to Life," each chapter is based on one particular essence. This makes it easy to put into practice.

Fortunately, 13 works out brilliantly for a discipline Benjamin Franklin made popular. Mr. Franklin wrote about his character improvement system in his Autobiography. It's simple and effective. He took 13 qualities he wanted to work on and gave one week to work on each. Then he repeated the round. By the time he had done this for one year, he had experienced focus on each quality for nearly a month. And he saw remarkable improvements.

The reason you might try the same is because spending one week on each essence works out to be a nearly perfect amount of time to really get into it and learn...and then move on, before it gets too boring. Working on one essence at a time is also a much more effective method than trying to work on all 13 at once (or even two at a time). A single, weeklong focus creates a time of exploration and commitment that multi-tasking cannot duplicate.

For my readers that feel the ninety or so pages of this book appear to be too much of a time commitment, I have a plan. Read the first chapter, then for the rest of the book, read the seven suggestions at the end of the chapter. (You might do one for each day of the week). This will reduce the amount of time required to read, while still taking advantage of the real meat of commitment. The result will still be you knowing the meaning of life.

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I dedicate this book to my father, Ted Miller. Ted was a focused and exceptional writer and editor, a father of four and a husband for sixty-five years to my mother. It was his passing in April of 2011 that brought me to deeply question the meaning of life.

I also dedicate this book to my wife, Gloria Clarke, my wife and best friend. Her support in my emergence as a writer and publisher was instrumental in getting this book to press. But even more important is her complete belief in me.

As I began my transformation from copywriter to passionate blogger following my father's death, I tore into the issues of mortality/immortality, life extension, living fully each moment, the meaning of death, technology that extends life, adapting to change and how the brain develops belief systems.

About two weeks after his passing, I had the dream that gave me the meaning of life. I invite you to come explore with me what I discovered in that dream state, especially if, like me, life's meaning, despite your inquiries, has passed you by.

*"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor." - Vince Lombardi*

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## Chapter One: Commitment to Life

I remember getting married at 18. I thought I knew what commitment was as I had lived for as many years watching my parents' commitment. And maybe I did have an inkling of what being committed is; I went on to spend thirty-five years with that choice, in spite of the many hardships that are bound to arise in that length of time. But my commitment was not to life- it was a commitment to showing I could be as committed as my parents. And when it became apparent to me that our marriage had ended, I realized that my "commitment" had missed my target.

Now at fifty-nine years old, I have begun to understand commitment to life. This is not a commitment to an arrangement, to proving myself or to achieving a romantic ideal. What I am advocating is more than a commitment to me. It is a commitment to Life as I experience it.

Gloria, my wife of almost five years, is one of my best living examples of commitment to life. Being a nurse is not just a job for her. She advocates for life every day, whether she is on the job or at home. Professionally, she advocates for life as a hospice nurse. She monitors the progress of the terminally ill and helps the family members to understand and care for the remaining lifetime of their loved one. Her work makes their time as full as it can be. And because of the way Gloria ministered to us during my father's last days, my mother and I are eternally grateful.

## Dealing with Death

Each of us deals with loss through death in our own way. I began journaling and blogging, sharing my story and connecting with others that had lost their loved ones. Rather than being resigned to or defeated by death, I focused on learning the value of life, love and wisdom. And now that I have a feeling for the loss others go through, I have emerged with a strong sense of commitment to life.

My mission now is simple: live fully now and stop death. This mission requires a level of commitment that does not allow for failure. To fail to live fully now is to accept death. To accept death is to deny life its mission: to thrive.

## The Meaning of Commitment

Like my former thirty-five year marriage, I have learned that many things in life can feel like commitment but fall short of it. Often the feeling is supported by optimism or it contains a grain of truth so essential that it begs for a commitment.

It could be commitment to an agenda or an ideal. It could be commitment to growing a business or personal development. I spent forty-plus years committed to a religious faith that promised life's answers. But that "commitment" did not give me what I have now: commitment to life.

Allow me to indulge in an obvious example of misplaced commitment: Nazi Germany. Here was a nation committed to raising itself up from poverty and subservience to the rest of Europe. Yes, they felt a commitment. They swore allegiance to their "race." Some gave their lives to creating and expanding the "Master Race." They started wars, killed "disagreeable elements" that didn't fit their concept, working harder and making more sacrifices than they had before. But the evidence shows that it was a commitment to a duty or an agenda and not to life. The agenda required the loss of life. The same could be said of the American doctrine of Manifest Destiny. (Watch out for any commitments and agendas that do not support life.)

Commitment to life puts me squarely in the camp of being against war, against executions and being “pro-life,” though I refuse to enter the divisive religious or political debate as to when life begins. (Is it at conception when cells begin to divide? The third trimester when a premature fetus has a very good chance of survival? At birth? How does consent affect these questions?)

Commitment to life means being present in each moment and the promises of life into the future. It makes me plead for and believe in human longevity. Commitment to life makes acceptance of death the ultimate enemy and the ultimate good becomes a fully lived life.

### My Life Changing Dream

About two weeks after beginning my new mission (researching, blogging and building awareness of the issues of living fully and avoiding death), I had a life-changing dream. The dream told me the meaning of life. Here is my journal entry:

I was partially awakened this morning in the midst of a dream that was saying quite clearly, “The meaning of life is...” Without warning, there was a loud creak outside the room. It partially awakened me. But the sentence hadn’t finished and I could still feel it coming forth. Slipping back into the dream flow, I “knew” the sentence would be completed.

My mind wandered down the feeling thread. Before long, I heard it. “The meaning of life is found in commitment to it [life].” Then a corollary came: *life has less than full meaning when we do not commit to the essences of life.*

At that point I wanted to know more. What kind of commitment? I followed the dream feeling again. The commitment to life I was sensing is this: commitment to those parts of life that are its essence, that are essential to experiencing life, that add to its quality and perpetuation. Such essences would include:

- Food (not junk food) and water
- Health (mental, physical and spiritual) for all stages of life
- Learning (self-consciousness that develops into larger awareness)
- Reduction of suffering, illness and poverty
- Sleep, rest and relief
- Sex for its pleasures, commitment to a loving partner and species propagation. (Sex is not just for propagation of the species; it is also propagation of ideas and learnings that naturally arise from succeeding generations.)
- Breath, other vital functions and meaningful stillness of mind
- Group consciousness and teamwork balanced with individual consciousness, responsibility, freedom and human rights.
- Balance/ homeostasis, especially with regard to activity and quiet.

As I wrote these essences in my journal, it came clear to me that they made a perfect structure for the book I had planned to write. Each essence is the basis of a chapter and each chapter is an exploration in living fully, committed to life as it is committed to gifting us.

The celebrated horticulturalist Luther Burbank was committed to improving the life and production of plants. He told Paramhansa Yogananda, "In the span of my own lifetime I have observed such wondrous progress in plant evolution that I look forward optimistically to a healthy, happy world as soon as its children are taught the principles of simple and rational living." This book is full of simple principles that are as rational and practical as Life itself.

### **Seven Ways to Focus on Commitment to Life:**

At the end of each chapter, I will suggest at least seven ways to focus on and commit to action the chapter's topic. (You can try one each day of the week, part of or for the entire week.) Here are at least seven ways to commit to life:

Present awareness practice (to include letting go of concerns based on performance, rewards, popularity or career goals),

Art and music appreciation

A feast that brings together food and good friends

Time spent with nature (in a garden, making a walk, a picnic, a camp out) to appreciate life in its many forms

Blood donation

Study of the life cycle or habitat of a different species

Volunteering at a soup kitchen, animal shelter or crisis line