



GEOFF
THOMPSON

Everything
That happens
to me is good

EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO ME IS GOOD

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Summersdale Publishers Ltd
46 West Street
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1RP
UK

www.summersdale.com

Printed and bound in Great Britain

ISBN: 1-84024-597-2

ISBN 13: 978-1-84024-597-4

As always, with big love and thanks to my beautiful wife Sharon for carrying my bones over some tough terrain.

Thank you to my lovely friend Margaret Ring for being an inspiration to me and my children over many a McDonald's coffee.

Also by Geoff Thompson

Red Mist

Watch My Back: The Geoff Thompson Autobiography

The Elephant and the Twig: The Art of Positive Thinking

*The Great Escape: The 10 Secrets to Loving Your Life and
Living Your Dreams*

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The Formula: The Secret to a Better Life

Stress Buster: How to Stop Stress from Killing You

Dead or Alive: The Choice is Yours

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Foreword

Although I am primarily a writer of books and films, over the years I have also penned a bevy of articles for newspapers, magazines and my website. After many requests from readers (and several prompts from Richard Barnes, my friend and web master) I have decided to collect my favourites into the book you have before you now. I've also added a few extended and revised extracts from my book *The Elephant and the Twig* because they fit the ethos of this work. I personally love an uplifting article on the commute to work or a cerebral snack over lunch. (And whatever you do, don't give me a book to read in the loo – I might never come out again.)

There is something very satisfying and enjoyable (I think) about filling one of life's many stolen or idle moments with a good, quick read.

I hope this proves to be just that.

Geoff Thompson



Chapter 1

Be Nice

I read a fabulous poem once that has always stuck with me, not because it is sweet, rather because it is true. The poem went, ‘I knew a man they called him mad the more he gave the more he had.’

I think we can assume from this small ditty that the man in question was a nice man who had stumbled upon one of life’s great secrets: What you give out will return.

There is a massive profit in being nice, as long as you are not being nice for profit. And yet the mention of the reciprocity of genuine niceness does not seem to find its way into the reams of written work on doing business.

How bizarre.

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In my pursuit of freedom through information I have studied everything from religion to spirituality, from theology to philosophy and law, and of course I have read – looking for inspiration – plenty about business; the art of making a living. I have read books by the guys and gals that have made it, lost it, lost it and made it back again, made it and given it all away, made it and squandered it, and even those that made it and hid the proceeds under the bed in a biscuit tin for fear of losing it all. The books have all been enlightening. Even the ones that were terrible taught me about where I didn't want to be. Many of the books talked about the win-win mentality, about ethics, about morals, about profit and loss, courage in business, risk taking, innovation, speculation, and dedication. Some quoted great sages, philosophers and gurus and taught about the dangers of money and power. But none advised me about the most important lesson in business: Be nice. Simply be nice. It is not hard. It costs nothing and it goes a hell of a long way (and comes back laden with profit).

The business world can often be a very difficult, cynical environment. People are often guilty of believing that everyone has an agenda – especially those who dare to be nice, those that dare to give and ask nothing in return. Those who scratch backs without asking for their own to be scratched are often judged with the utmost scepticism. Nobody does

anything for nothing. There is no such thing as a free lunch.

But of course this is not true. The best, most attractive, most inspiring people in my world are all nice. They all do things for me – and for many others – with no thought of profit. They are all generous. They are all kind and do good deeds purely for the love of doing them.

What you give out always returns. Always. It is the law.

I have a friend, Paul Abbot, who is an incredibly successful writer. For those who don't know him, he is probably the top British TV writer of all time. He is responsible for (most recently) *Shameless*, *Clocking Off*, *State of Play*, *Touching Evil* and *Linda Green* to name just a few of the shows he's created. He is also an extremely generous man, both with his time and his advice. He has deals and contracts and commissions coming out of his very eyes. People are throwing work at him. His work is amazing; his work ethic even more so. You might think that his success is simply because of his hard work. You'd be wrong. If you go to his house and watch how he works you will see why he is so successful. He never stops being nice. He never stops giving. His house is like Euston Station on a Friday afternoon with all the comings and goings of the people he is helping. He is a dynamo. His capacity to help others to fulfil their

own ambitions and dreams seems limitless. He gets in loads and loads of work and gives much of it away to new writers, struggling writers, often writers that the system has chewed up and spat out. And the more he gives away the more he seems to get back.

Similarly, I am always hearing stories about how nice my friend Glenn Smith is, and how many people he helps without asking anything in return. And my Auntie May (sadly now deceased) literally filled the room with her capacity to be nice and to give for no other profit than the joy it brought her. The great thing about Paul and Glenn and May is that most of the people they look after are not even in a position to return the favour, or offer them anything other than gratitude. And yet the more they give the more they seem to get. The effect is amazing. Glenn is thriving in business and life, as is Paul, and although my Auntie May is no longer on this plane, she has found immortality in the minds of many people (not least mine) just because she was so generous and nice.

Ultimately, I have found that people want to work with people who are nice. Even if – at this present moment in time – their game is not as sharp as it might be. If they are nice, people will help them tighten their game, people will go out of their way to find, even create work for them. People will bend themselves into all sorts of contorted shapes (including over backwards) so that they can help. And I am not talking

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about pseudo-nice, nice for the effect, nice to fit in or even nice to impress. If the nice you are offering is not of the genuine variety then it is a lie. Dishonesty in business is always the eventual harbinger of doom. I am only talking about the genuine article. Being nice because it helps others.

There is no profit in being nice, unless being nice is congruent with who you actually are. I am sure that to some of the hard-line business people out there this might sound a little trite: 'Be a nice person. People like it when you are nice.' I have even been told that there is no room in business for nice people. (Business types often mistake nice for weak.) But I would argue that if you are not nice, there will ultimately be no room in business for you.

The meek (as they say) will inherit the earth, and whilst profit may sojourn with those who do not heed the rules, it will only find permanent abode with those who do.



Chapter 2

Carp Fishing

I can remember (as though it were yesterday) a troubling internal conflict that I was wrestling with about five-years ago. I was teaching in the beautiful city of Edinburgh, Scotland with my friend Peter Consterdine. But teaching was just one of the myriad balls I was juggling at the time. I was also right in the middle of a very big book signing tour (for *Watch My Back*) that saw me visiting 60 shops in about 32 cities, of which Edinburgh was but one. As well as the tour, the teaching, and the heavy travelling schedule, I had also undertaken a huge financial risk when I decided to amalgamate all my bouncer books (*Watch My Back*, *Bouncer* and *On The Door*) into a hardcover omnibus edition and self-publish it in a bid to make *The Sunday Times* bestseller list. As you can imagine

I was stretched. But I was handling it OK, that is, until fate intervened. Someone – disgruntled by my work, my success, my profile, by me – decided to make it their life’s mission to slander and threaten me via the Letters page of the very magazine I was a columnist in. Now you might think that this is par for the course when you are a profiled author, but with everything I was already carrying this one thing seemed to tip me over the edge. I was becoming anxious and angry. The nature of the letters – very personal and derogatory – were both unjustified and unfair, but they nevertheless found page space and were read by thousands. The publication of these letters actually made me question whether I really wanted to write for this magazine anymore. It made me question whether I wanted the profile I was receiving and, in fact, whether I wanted to actually be on the martial-arts scene at all if it spawned and seemingly encouraged such inane negativity. At any other time I probably would have left the slander where it belonged – in the bin. But with my mind stretched and vulnerable it found its way through my bullshit detector and was stabbing at my sensitive underbelly. I was troubled so I spoke with Peter about it one night in the bar of the Malmaison Hotel.

Peter has always been a mentor to me. In fact, he was the one who initially took me under his wing and helped me develop some very raw ideas into books, tapes and

seminars. He is largely responsible for the success I enjoy in the martial arts today. Peter listened intently, nodded wisely (as he does) and said, 'Geoff, it's carp fishing!'

I said (more than a little confused), 'Carp fishing?'

Peter explained.

He told me that he was watching television one day and happened to catch a news story about a professional angler who appeared on TV regularly and had won a lot of major championships. He'd been riding the high-tide of success when something happened that changed, nay ruined, his life.

Just before one of the major championships, he was accused of using illegal bait. Now Peter didn't say whether our man was guilty or innocent, but what he did say was that the guy became so worried/angry/incensed and stressed about the accusation that he became depressed, started taking medication, split up with his wife and even lost his home. Peter told me how he'd watched the story unfold on television and, dumfounded, thought to himself, 'It's just carp fishing. It's not cancer, it's not war in the Middle East, it's not starving children in Africa. It's carp fishing.' This guy had become so engrossed in his sport that, what had started out as a gentle pastime, had actually become his whole world, it had become everything. It was more important to him than his wife, his family, his home. Apparently it had become more important than his health and his sanity.