

# Nassim Nicholas Taleb

## Quotes

*People, Thinking, Risk, Errors, Ideas, Doe, Information, Needs, Mistake, Men,  
Want, Knowledge, Mean, Book, Opposites, Odds, School, Matter, Writing,  
Events*

Doctors most commonly get mixed up between absence of evidence and evidence of absence

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The three most harmful addictions are heroin, carbohydrates, and a monthly salary.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

A Stoic is someone who transforms fear into prudence, pain into transformation, mistakes into initiation, and desire into undertaking.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

For many people, commuting is the worst part of the day, and policies that can make commuting shorter and more convenient would be a straightforward way to reduce minor but widespread suffering.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Decomposition, for most, starts when they leave the free, social, and uncorrupted college life for the solitary confinement of professions and nuclear families.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

People used to wear ordinary clothes weekdays, and formal attire on Sunday. Today it is the exact reverse.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Democracies can't handle austerity measures very well.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Missing a train is only painful if you run after it! Likewise, not matching the idea of success others expect from you is only painful if that's what you are seeking.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Someone bemoaned that there were so few women in economics. But there are also very few men in economics.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Love without sacrifice is like theft

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Avoid losers. If you hear someone use the words 'impossible', 'never', 'too difficult' too often, drop him or her from your social network.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Someone who says "I am busy" is either declaring incompetence (and lack of control of his life) or trying to get rid of you.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Karl Marx, a visionary, figured out that you can control a slave much better by convincing him he is an employee.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg didn't finish college. Too much emphasis is placed on formal education - I told my children not to worry about their grades but to enjoy learning.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

A competitive athlete is painful to look at; trying hard to become an animal rather than a man, he will never be as fast as a cheetah or as strong as an ox.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Umberto Eco is the owner of a large personal library of almost 30,000 books that he has not read. [To him] read books are far less valuable than unread ones.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Your reputation is harmed the most by what you say to defend it.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Answer e-mails from junior people before more senior ones. Junior people have further to go and tend to remember who slighted them.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Social science means inventing a certain brand of human we can understand.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Don't cross a river if it is four feet deep on average.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The traits I respect are erudition and the courage to stand up when half-men are afraid for their reputation. Any idiot can be intelligent.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The central idea in *The Black Swan* is that: rare events cannot be estimated from empirical observation since they are rare.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

They think that intelligence is about noticing things are relevant (detecting patterns); in a complex world, intelligence consists in ignoring things that are irrelevant (avoiding false patterns)

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Intelligence consists in ignoring things that are irrelevant.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

People are much less interested in what you are trying to show them than what you are trying to hide.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

If you see fraud and do not say fraud, you are a fraud.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Academia is to knowledge what prostitution is to love.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Hard work will get you a professorship or a BMW. You need both work and luck for a Booker, a Nobel or a private jet.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Only in recent history has "working hard" signaled pride rather than shame for lack of talent, finesse and, mostly, sprezzatura .

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Never, never, never think - that's one lesson you should have in life. Never think that lack of variability is stability.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The difference between technology and slavery is that slaves are fully aware that they are not free

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

People focus on role models; it is more effective to find antimodels - people you don't want to resemble when you grow up

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Learn to fail with pride - and do so fast and cleanly. Maximise trial and error - by mastering the error part.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

It is a sign of weakness to avoid showing signs of weakness.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Life is a tightrope between two errors: generalizing the wrong particular

and particularizing the wrong general.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

You exist if and only if you are free to do things without a visible objective, with no justification and, above all, outside the dictatorship of someone else's narrative.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Anything that provides you with very, very stable income, very stable conditions, maybe generally stable, that often, it masks real risks, risks of blow-ups.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

What I learned on my own I still remember

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

...maximize the serendipity around you.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

This is the tragedy of modernity: as with neurotically overprotective parents, those trying to help are often hurting us the most.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Wittgenstein's ruler: Unless you have confidence in the ruler's reliability, if you use a ruler to measure a table you may also be using the table to measure the ruler.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Go to parties. You can't even start to know what you may find on the envelope of serendipity. If you suffer from agoraphobia, send colleagues.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

To succeed in life requires a total inability to do anything that makes

you uncomfortable when you look at yourself in the mirror.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Comfort makes you weaker. We need some variability, some stressors. Not too much, but just enough.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Prediction, not narration, is the real test of our understanding of the world.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

An ad hominem attack against an individual, not against an idea, is highly flattering. It indicates that the person does not have anything intelligent to say about your message.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Being an entrepreneur is an existential, not just a financial thing.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

You have a real life if and only if you do not compete with anyone in any of your pursuits.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

At no point in history have so many non-risk-takers, that is, those with no personal exposure, exerted so much control.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

If one puts an infinite number of monkeys in front of typewriters, and lets them clap away, there is a certainty that one of them will come out with an exact version of the 'Iliad.'

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

You get pseudo-order when you seek order; you only get a measure of order and control when you embrace randomness.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

If you hear a "prominent" economist using the word 'equilibrium,' or 'normal distribution,' do not argue with him; just ignore him, or try to put a rat down his shirt.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The imagination of the genius vastly surpasses his intellect; the intellect of the academic vastly surpasses his imagination

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Meditation is a way to be narcissistic without hurting anyone

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The inability to predict outliers implies the inability to predict the course of history

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Failure saves lives. In the airline industry, every time a plane crashes the probability of the next crash is lowered by that.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The curious mind embraces science; the gifted and sensitive, the arts; the practical, business; the leftover becomes an economist

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The psychologist Gerd Gigerenzer has a simple heuristic. Never ask the doctor what you should do. Ask him what he would do if he were in your place. You would be surprised at the difference

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

You will get the most attention from those who hate you. No friend, no admirer and no partner will flatter you with as much curiosity.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb



To bankrupt a fool, give him information.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The fastest way to become rich is to socialize with the poor; the fastest way to become poor is to socialize with the rich.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Never think that lack of variability is stability. Don't confuse lack of volatility with stability, ever.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The person you are most afraid to contradict is yourself.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Don't aim to be perfect! Aim to be antifragile

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Don't ask the barber whether you need a haircut, and don't ask an academic if what he does is relevant.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The fragile wants tranquility, the antifragile grows from disorder, and the robust doesn't care too much.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The irony of the process of thought control: the more energy you put into trying to control your ideas and what you think about, the more your ideas end up controlling you.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The same past data can confirm a theory and its exact opposite! If you survive until tomorrow, it could mean that either a) you are more likely to be immortal or b) that you are closer to death.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Remember that you are a Black Swan.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

A man without a heroic bent starts dying at the age of thirty.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

You find peace by coming to terms with what you don't know.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Randomness works well in search sometimes better than humans.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

If you want to annoy a poet, explain his poetry.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Heroes are heroes because they are heroic in behavior, not because they won or lost.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

You don't become completely free by just avoiding being a slave; you also need to avoid becoming a master.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The only valid political system is one that can handle an imbecile in power without suffering from it

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

I always remind myself that what one observes is at best a combination of variance and returns, not just returns.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Suckers try to win arguments, nonsuckers try to win.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The classical man's worst fear was inglorious death; the modern man's worst fear is just death

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

An option hides where we don't want it to hide.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The sucker's trap is when you focus on what you know and what others don't know, rather than the reverse.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Stoicism is about the \*domestication\* of emotions, not their elimination.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Paul Krugman is a danger to society!

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Those who do not think that employment is systemic slavery are either blind or employed.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

I remind myself of Einstein's remark that common sense is nothing but a collection of misconceptions acquired by age 18.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

This is the central illusion in life: that randomness is a risk, that it is a bad thing.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Suckers think that you cure greed with money, addiction with substances, expert problems with experts, banking with bankers, economics with economists, and debt crises with debt spending

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Simplicity is not so simple to attain.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

What fools call "wasting time" is most often the best investment.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

We tend to treat our knowledge as personal property to be protected and defended. It is an ornament that allows us to rise in the pecking order. [...] We take what we know a little too seriously.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Things always become obvious after the fact

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

For the robust, an error is information.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

You will be civilized on the day you can spend a long period doing nothing, learning nothing, and improving nothing, without feeling the slightest amount of guilt.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Modernity: we created youth without heroism, age without wisdom, and life without grandeur

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

The weak shows his strength and hides his weaknesses; the magnificent exhibits his weaknesses like ornaments.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Experience is devoid of the cherry-picking that we find in studies.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

When an investor focuses on short-term investments, he or she is observing the variability of the portfolio, not the returns - in short, being fooled by randomness.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

Is the economy something organic or is it something engineered? I think it's closer to the organic. You harm it by artificially suppressing volatility in it.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

If I could predict what my day would exactly look like, I would feel a little bit dead.

~Nassim Nicholas Taleb

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