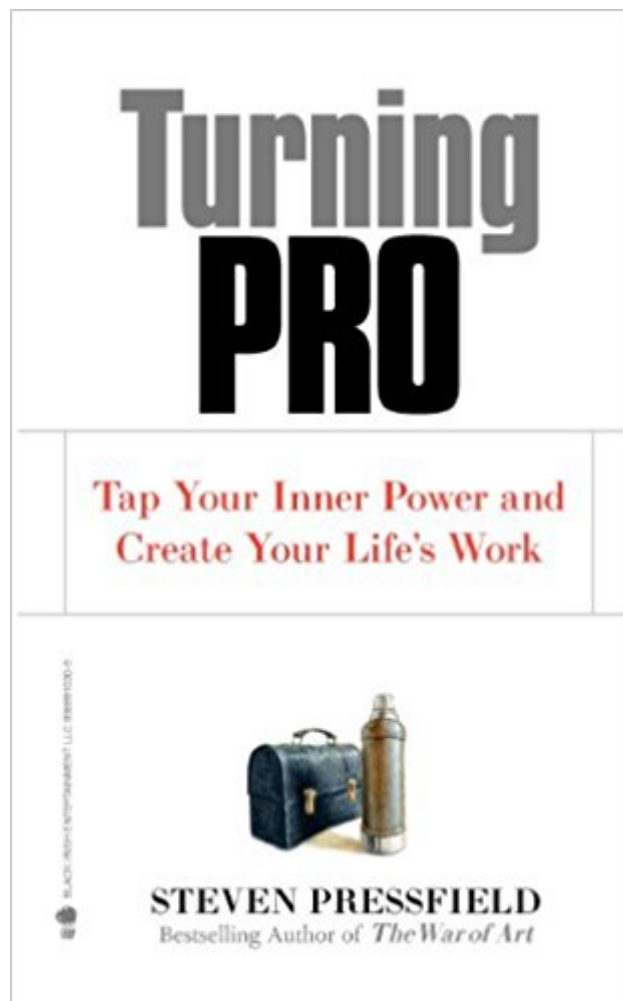




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# Turning Pro: Tap Your Inner Power And Create Your Life's Work



## Synopsis

The follow-up to his bestseller *The War of Art*, *Turning Pro* navigates the passage from the amateur life to a professional practice. "You don't need to take a course or buy a product. All you have to do is change your mind." --Steven Pressfield **TURNING PRO IS FREE, BUT IT'S NOT EASY**. When we turn pro, we give up a life that we may have become extremely comfortable with. We give up a self that we have come to identify with and to call our own. **TURNING PRO IS FREE, BUT IT DEMANDS SACRIFICE**. The passage from amateur to professional is often achieved via an interior odyssey whose trials are survived only at great cost, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. We pass through a membrane when we turn pro. It's messy and it's scary. We tread in blood when we turn pro. **WHAT WE GET WHEN WE TURN PRO**. What we get when we turn pro is we find our power. We find our will and our voice and we find our self-respect. We become who we always were but had, until then, been afraid to embrace and live out.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Steven Pressfield is the author of *Gates of Fire*, *Tides of War*, *The Afghan Campaign*, *The Profession*, *The Warrior Ethos*, *Do the Work*, and *The War of Art* among others. He lives in Los Angeles. In 2008, he was made an honorary citizen by the city of Sparta in Greece.

Let me offer an executive summary of "Turning Pro," before I give my detailed response. I consider "Turning Pro" to be a simple to read yet powerful self-help book. It contains a lot of practical wisdom that applies to almost every area of life. In particular, "Turning Pro" diagnoses the problem many of

us have of being an amateur who settles for the lower things in life, out of fear and distraction. Pressfield then provides a remedy by defining what it means to Turn Pro and get serious about life and offers some wisdom on how to Turn Pro. What made "Turning Pro" most useful for me was that it provided the motivation for an extended self-examination. When you understand what Pressfield means by "Turning Pro" you'll be compelled to examine the beliefs, attitudes, and habits of your life to see if they're leading you where you want to go and be. Pressfield presents his wisdom in easy to read, small chunks. He whets your appetite for becoming a pro and clearly diagnoses the problem. However, even though the final section deals with how to become a pro, I left the book feeling as if there must be more. Maybe I'll need to go back and study the many brief points Pressfield makes: it may be all there, but somehow I felt like something is missing, so I'm giving the book 4 stars. Also, I feel like Pressfield beats a dead horse some times and begins repeating himself. The book needs a Table of Contents, especially since there are so many small sections. It didn't work on my Kindle version of the book. Now for the longer review. For a few years now, I've profited from the works of Stephen Pressfield (as well as Seth Godin, with whom he has now partnered). But this book has a particular appeal to me. Ever since I've been in 2nd grade, I wanted to be a writer. For years, starting high school, I wrote poetry and novels, but never had success in getting my works published. I'm sure, after reading this book that one of the reasons I didn't find "success" as a writer was because I wasn't sufficiently professional in my approach but instead always remained an amateur. Right off the bat, I appreciated the wisdom of "Turning Pro" because of what Pressfield presented as 3 Models of Transformation. His points that the therapeutic model of our problems (we're sick) and the moralistic model (we've sinned) are very similar to those made by Kent Dunnington in his excellent book "Virtue and Addiction". Dunnington's view is that the key to understanding addictions lies in the concept of habit: I highly recommend "Addiction and Virtue"! Pressfield even devotes some time later to the ideas of both addiction and habits. In other words, there's a synergy of ideas that's taking place in our culture that's related to the idea of addiction and habits. At its heart, that's what "Turning Pro" is really about. Pressfield believes that the real problem is that we remain amateurs and never become professionals. Becoming a pro, basically, is about growing up. It's about becoming a man or woman in a world filled with adult children. One of the most important quotes from the book is this: "The difference between an amateur and a professional is their habits." Re-read and memorize this quote, and put Pressfield's wisdom into effect, and you'll see a changed life. Throughout much of my life, I haven't appreciated the power of habits as much as I should have. This is true for me as a Christian, father, and teacher. But the older I get, the more I realize how much of our lives are shaped by our habits. To be an

amateur is to walk or run away from your true calling. This is the life of the addict or amateur: a life being distracted from your true calling. Once again, the application to my life, not just as a writer but also as father, teacher, and priest, is astounding! How much of the good life is about not being distracted from what's really important. Here is a second powerful quote from the book which I recommend reading and re-reading: "The amateur is an egotist. He takes the material of his personal pain and uses it to draw attention to himself. He creates a "life," a "character," a "personality." The artist and the professional, on the other hand, have turned a corner in their minds. They have succeeded in stepping back from themselves." This sounds a lot like Christian love, but regardless of your religious or philosophical stance, it's true. Why do we choose distraction and addiction? Because it's easier in the short-term, and so much of what's wrong with our culture today is explained by what I call the bad trade of "short term gain for long term pain." Addicts and amateurs know that they're called to something great, but then they back away from the hard work and pain necessary to fulfill their calling. (Once again, spiritual analogies to this idea abound.) Addictions are the shadow form of our true calling and a metaphor for our best selves. Pressfield catalogues our addictions and discusses: addictions to failure, sex, distraction (the cures for this are concentration and depth), money, and trouble (the payoff for prison is incapacity and safety). He philosophizes more on the meaning of addiction, saying that "The addict seeks to escape the pain of being human in one of two ways--by transcending it or by anesthetizing it." I believe there's truth in this but also that Pressfield could go deeper on many such points. By the end of Book Two, I got the feeling that Pressfield was more or less repeating himself. In Book Two, Pressfield states that "Fear is the primary color of the amateur's interior world. Fear of failure, fear of success, fear of looking foolish, fear of under-achieving and fear of over-achieving." The professional is also fearful, but the difference between the two is how they handle this fear, something the book deals with in Book Three. There are parts of the book throughout where Pressfield belabors his point, but here's another useful observation he's made: "The amateur allows his worth and identity to be defined by others. The amateur craves third-party validation. The amateur is tyrannized by his imagined conception of what is expected of him. He is imprisoned by what he believes he ought to think, how he ought to look, what he ought to do, and who he ought to be." He also says that the Pro "takes himself and the consequences of his actions so seriously that he paralyzes himself. The amateur fears, above all else, becoming (and being seen and judged as) himself." I went through a long period of being an "amateur," especially as a writer and teacher. But it wasn't because I was afraid of becoming myself: I just wasn't dedicated enough and didn't have enough good mentors. I would agree, however, with his comment that "the amateur seeks instant gratification. In fact, I think this is

one of the keys to understanding the amateur. Along with seeking instant gratification, the amateur and the addict "focus exclusively on the product and the payoff. Their concern is what's in it for them, and how soon and how cheaply they can get it." I see some of this in myself, and so in many ways "Turning Pro" has helped me conduct a useful self-examination. The next important quote sent chills down my spine because I know it's true for me: "Because the amateur owns nothing of spirit in the present, she either looks forward to a hopeful future or backward to an idyllic past." I have a tendency to keep looking to the future, and I'm quite nostalgic for the times in my life when things looked so much better. Another part I don't agree with is the idea that the Tribe doesn't care and that it's all up to us. One of the problems with a lot of us today is that we're too individualistic and don't realize our need for true community. In fact: I think a lot of postmodernism is being homeless and with no true community. How does Turning Pro change your life? You face your fears, your activities, and your habits. You structure your days to achieve an aim. And it changes how you spend our time and with whom you spend it. Pressfield closes Book Two by saying that Turning Pro involves a painful epiphany. In Book Three, Pressfield finally gets to the payoff: how to Turn Pro. He lists 20 characteristics of a pro: 1. The professional shows up every day 2. The professional stays on the job all day 3. The professional is committed over the long haul 4. For the professional, the stakes are high and real 5. The professional is patient 6. The professional seeks order 7. The professional demystifies 8. The professional acts in the face of fear 9. The professional accepts no excuses 10. The professional plays it as it lays 11. The professional is prepared 12. The professional does not show off 13. The professional dedicates himself to mastering technique 14. The professional does not hesitate to ask for help 15. The professional does not take failure or success personally 16. The professional does not identify with his or her instrument 17. The professional endures adversity 18. The professional self-validates 19. The professional reinvents herself 20. The professional is recognized by other professionals Here are a few bonus characteristics: A pro is courageous; a pro doesn't get distracted; the pro is ruthless and yet compassionate with himself; lives in the present; delays instant gratification; does not wait for inspiration; and helps others. Listen to this next part carefully: it's one of the secrets of life. "The physical leads to the spiritual. The humble produces the sublime. It seems counterintuitive, but it's true: in order to achieve "flow," magic, "the zone," we start by being common and ordinary and workmanlike." I've found this to be true in life, over and over again. Finally, Pressfield gets to some of the "how to" that I was waiting for. The professional mindset is a practice. To "have a practice" in yoga, say, or tai chi, or calligraphy, is to follow a rigorous, prescribed regimen with the intention. This section reminds me of another favorite book of mine: "Talent is Overrated." Our habits, our practices, are what will make us pros. What follows is a

mixed bag of attitudes the Pro needs to have. Some were more useful than others. Out of all of these, the most useful was this: "I have a code of professionalism. I have virtues that I seek to strengthen and vices that I labor to eradicate." Pressfield concludes by appealing to the Kabbalah, Platonic philosophy, and the worldview of the Masai to suggest that in life there is an upper and lower realm (guess which we're supposed to inhabit). By the end of the book I was very clear on what Pressfield was saying about Turning Pro. But I was left wanting more practical insight into how to do it.

A lot has been said about self-help-books, mostly fair criticism, like in Mark Manson's bestseller "The subtle art of giving a \*\*\*\*". Where he argues that not everyone will become a billionaire or superstar by thinking "big". There are no reasons though, for not trying to improve or optimize the hand you have been dealt. And here is where Turning Pro comes in. If you only have the tiniest ambition, you will get contact with that part of yourself, thanks to Steven Pressfield. While doing so you might discover sides about yourself that are less flattering, and would say it's a good thing. It means you can start changing and act in a new way. It is a quick read, if you don't bother that much,, if you do however, you will spend considerable time with this book. Worth noting from personal experience, not everyone appreciates this as a gift while it indicates you are an amateur.

Read all three of these if you need to stop procrastinating about a creative project like a book. Both a lighthearted and very serious book. A real kick in the behind. Explains all the obstacles we all put up to keep us from our life's work. Steven Pressfield's the real deal and will lead you through the battlefield.

"Turning Pro" is a beautifully written journey through concepts and the thoughts of an artist. Snippets of them, woven together masterfully. I appreciate it more because it's as if it was written for me. For my brain, the way I process and think. All leading up to a simple, yet artfully communicated close that'll inspire you to get s\*\*t done. Enjoy the journey! It's worth it.

Steven Pressfield's writing (The Authentic Swing, Legend of Bagger Vance, Gates of Fire, Killing Rommel ) are the product of a disciplined artist. Turning Pro follows that pattern, while it addresses the the core issue of finding your inner power and creating your life's work. Pressfield not only presents a path but demonstrates through the quality of his writing the fruits of dedication and discipline while doing something you love. Every word, sentence and paragraph is carefully crafted,

trimmed of fat and polished to gem like quality. It belongs on every college graduate's bookshelf.

What can be said about a book that's already a classic? Well, there are some good, swift kicks in the rear, for one thing. Writing is serious business, and Pressfield brings that home in a way you won't forget. If you're tired of messing around with unfocused writing and a career that's in puzzle pieces, this book helps you get where you keep saying you want to go.

The War of Art is likely Pressfield's more famous title in this space, with Do The Work getting him great exposure through Seth Godin's audience. But Turning Pro was twice as powerful than WOA at cutting through my mental clutter to get to the heart of my lack of stepping into the professional level to this point. The spotlight on hiding behind shadow careers nailed me, and helped me see that I was ready to come into the light on my own. Reading it for a mental warmup and equipping session is powerful, especially if you're a solopreneur and don't have anyone to start the day to kickstart each other.

The ADD version of the "War of Art". This is a down and dirty, quick look at the habits that separate the serious artist/writer from the hobbyist. This book distills some of the best nuggets of WoA and makes them unforgettable. I recommend you read the WoA first, but keep a copy of this one on hand for quick inspiration and the occasional reminder.

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