

HOW TO LIVE AS DOCTORS

Our lives are shot through with “shoulds”. We *should* all enjoy complete physical, mental and social well-being and *should* all realise happiness and inner tranquillity. Underpinning the “shoulds” are the “how to” books, such as those on how to lose weight, be fit, eat for health, or deal with depression, diabetes or dementia. Books on how to create wealth, succeed in business, cope with office politics, and so on, cater for many in the community, but how should doctors live?

In *The art of living... the art of medicine. The wit and wisdom of life and medicine: a physician's perspective*, Edward C Rosenow III, a US physician, tackles this question. His insights and advice — such as “unless the physician has a balanced life and is truly enjoying life, then he or she can't effectively practice medicine, the science, as well as the art” — are interspersed with many arresting or amusing quotations. For example, in *The art of living*, he cites the transcendentalist Ralph W Emerson on living: “We are always getting ready to live but never living!”, and Abraham Lincoln on happiness: “Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be!”.

When analysing the art of medicine, advice and aphorisms come thick and fast. For example, in the interactions between doctors and patients “It is amazing how much you'll hear when no one is talking!” or with other doctors, or others involved in healthcare (citing Mark Twain): “I can live a month on a good compliment”.

Interestingly, Rosenow's overall message is simple and timeless. He is convinced that the art of medicine cannot be taught; it is imparted by role models and mentors.

If doctors ever need a guide for living — this is it.

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