



Robert Nozick

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The strictest disciplinarian of the lot, Robert Nozick would whip students into shape—the shape of a spiral. To be accomplished in this world, you must become an accomplished spiral jumper. You must take every opportunity to grow your box by jumping down a spiraling sequence of EXPLORE-RESPOND-RELATE-CREATE-TRANSFORM. This means being open to transformation with every experience—every lecture, every reading. Mastering the art of being taught takes serious listening and reading skills. But it also demands a special, spiraling attitude of fearless openness. Intellectual growth calls for courage, because the spiral nature of experience means you never end up back where you started. You must abandon where you began. And, inevitably, some of your old ideas will get gutted along the way. To see every creative act as an act of destruction and not flinch—that is the resilience you must seek. There are times when each of us questions the purpose of our lives. Are we living up to expectations? Are we making a difference? Nozick's advice is uncomplicated: Engage in an activity that has intrinsic value. For him, this is creativity. But Nozick's prescription does not stop there. Fully engage your experiences, knowledge, abilities not to create a thing, but to create a process. Create a plan that enables others to find their purpose and goal. In this way, endowing their existence with meaning and purpose becomes your purpose.

Is that why being a teacher is so satisfying? Is not Nozick's prescription for satisfaction of purpose a call for great teaching and for the nurturing of the teacher's inner self?

Suggested Readings:

1. Nozick R. *The examined life*. New York: Simon and Schuster; 1989.
2. Nozick R. *Socratic puzzles*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; 1997.

Learn More about Nozick:

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/nozick>