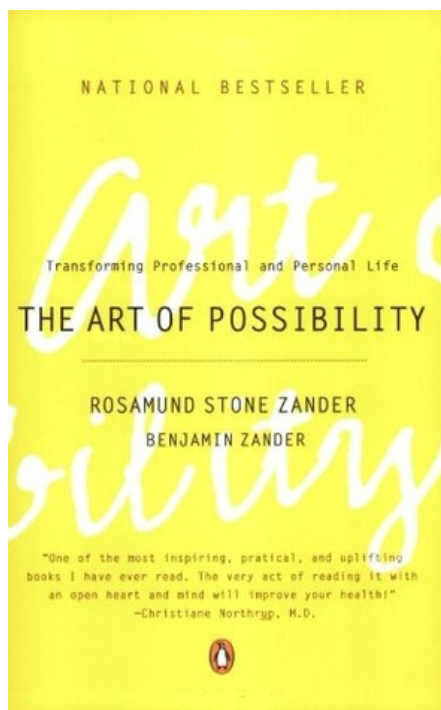




The Art of Possibility

Rosamund Stone Zander , Benjamin Zander

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Presenting twelve breakthrough practices for bringing creativity into all human endeavors, The Art of Possibility is the dynamic product of an extraordinary partnership. The Art of Possibility combines Benjamin Zander's experience as conductor of the Boston Philharmonic and his talent as a teacher and communicator with psychotherapist Rosamund Stone Zander's genius for designing innovative paradigms for personal and professional fulfillment.

The authors' harmoniously interwoven perspectives provide a deep sense of the powerful role that the notion of possibility can play in every aspect of life. Through uplifting stories, parables, and personal anecdotes, the Zanders invite us to become passionate communicators, leaders, and performers whose lives radiate possibility into the world

The Art of Possibility Details

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From Reader Review The Art of Possibility for online ebook

Mindi Vandagriff says

This isn't just a standard self-help type book. It's a change-your-thinking-feel-good-book-written-for-an-educator's-ear-but-can-be-translated-into-everyone-around-you type book. Written through their own accounts and experiences, the Zanders give practical advice on how to, basically, live a fuller life. Their experiences in education, though not typical (Ben was an orchestra conductor and Ros, a therapist) speak volumes to educators alike and different. I am a fourth-grade teacher and where it has reminded me to make the most out of me for my students, it has also reminded me how to be a better wife, mother and friend.

If you are at a dead end looking for a way out, seek help, not necessarily this book, or should I say, not this book alone. If you are simply looking for a way to amplify your life and love those around you to your fullest extent possible, this is the book for you.

It is an easy read, I read the first 6 chapters (half the book) in one evening. It is spiritual, not religious, in a way that will render you speechless and fill you with an inexplicable feel-good, euphoric feeling. Your perspective will change and if the "practices" (the advice given in the book is broken down into simple life practices named cleverly to help you remember why you're even doing it in the first place- like "Giving an A", "Being the Board", "Rule #6") are done daily, your life and coincidentally, those around you, will also begin to change. You'll look for dandelions in empty, drab, fruitless fields where a non-reader would say "No way, don't look there," you'll want to persevere. And then try to convince them that it might actually be possible.

Melanie says

Eh. I did take half page of notes as I read this book, so it does have some good thoughts. I also appreciated that many of the examples were taken from the world of music; so many examples in these types of books are taken from business, so a change was refreshing. All that being said, I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone. I can't really put my finger on it, but there was something about it that bothered me. The ideas and language were often too fuzzy, imprecise, a bit foofy.

Sherri says

I highly recommend the audio version of this because the authors' enthusiasm shines through as they read it, and because, they actually include classical music excerpts to fully elucidate their examples!

At the same time, however, I found myself wishing I had a digital or paper copy so that I could more easily highlight their words to come back to again and again.

The "practice" and the accompanying "rules" are inspiring, and definitely difficult to live by all the time (which is why they call it a "practice"), but they especially spoke to me as a parent and an educator. They pair nicely with another book I am reading at the moment: The Blessing of a B Minus. I love the Zanders language about how everything is invented and how we need to escape from the world of measurement and into a world that emphasizes the "real" self and the "we."

Saleh MoonWalker says

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1. It's all invented
2. Stepping into a Universe of Possibility
3. Giving an A
4. Being a Contribution
5. Leading from Any Chair
6. Rule Number 6
7. The Way Things Are
8. Giving Way to Passion
9. Lighting a Spark
10. Being the Board
11. Creating Frameworks for Possibility
12. Telling the WE Story

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A cynic, after all, is a passionate person who does not want to be disappointed again...the secret is not to speak to a person's cynicism, but to speak to her passion.

MsSmartiePants ...like the candy... says

Tedious. Boring. Slow. Very simple and well known concepts are "rediscovered" by this husband and wife team. While I found them pleasant (they did the audio version of the book, which I usually prefer), listening to the first three CD's was an exercise in patience slogging through elementary concepts as I awaited the 'new' information.

When I questioned my own efforts for the fifth or sixth time, I decided that I'd heard enough. There were no 'new' discoveries hinted at. I found no good reason to continue listening and look forward to exchanging this book for a more interesting one. Thank goodness I didn't purchase it, but used my membership at All Ears Audio Books to check it out.

Jim Dooley says

I have a conflicted rating here. The composition and the presentation of the book rates 4-stars, but the value of the material rates 5-stars. Not unlike Covey's 7 HABITS, seeing a live presentation of the material is more transforming and inspirational than it is in the written format.

The basic premise of the book is as essential for everyone as it is for the apparent target audience of Leaders. When you make others aware that you truly see potential within them, they tend to rise to meet that potential. That is a message that should be lovingly written into every child-rearing book.

The writers focus on how to suspend overly critical judgment of others and center on the very real possibilities contained within. I am an enthusiastic believer of this, although I'll admit that I've had a difficult time of fully incorporating the concept of "Everyone gets an A."

Although I've preferred the live presentations I've seen of this material, I don't mean to imply that the book itself should be ignored. There is a wealth of excellent material here, and the writing style is easy to digest. I've used this as a reference book over and over again.

Lorraine says

The "Art of Possibility" was written by Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander. He is the founder and conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and a music professor (retired now, I believe) and she is a family therapist and landscape painter. It is a "how to" book on how to lift ourselves out of the difficulties we face on a daily basis and walk into a universe of possibility. The authors have not said anything that hasn't already been said in hundreds of other books, but the way they express themselves and examples they use are refreshing. It's a reaffirmation to me of how best to contribute to this world. Here and there I got bogged down with some descriptive examples, but overall, a good read. Ideas I liked. For some people this would not necessarily be rated as a four star, especially since his examples relate to his young musicians.

- Open yourself to possibilities by getting up each morning and instead of figuring out how to survive look at all the ways you can see things as possibilities. Reflection and awareness is the key living in a world you create.
 - Declare yourself a contributor to this world and throw yourself into life.
 - Don't take yourself so seriously.
 - Generate a spark of possibility for others.
 - Create visions and emanate these visions as the sun radiates heat. The opposite is a downward spiral and its gravitational pull is strong.
 - Practice being with the way things are.
 - Tell the WE story; that means we remove the me, me, me statements and turn them into we, we, we. Everyone wins.
-

Kirsti says

Not sure how to describe this--scattershot? Uneven? Wonderful in parts?

I picked this up because I so enjoyed Benjamin Zander's TED talk, which you can watch here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9LCwIL...>

Who can resist a conductor who talks about "one-buttock playing"?

So Benjamin Zander is one coauthor, and his wife Rosamund Stone Zander is the other coauthor. He's a

conductor/teacher/motivational speaker/humanitarian, and she's an "executive coach and family systems therapist." Fascinating combination, right?

But the publisher said the book couldn't be entirely about classical music. It had to appeal to a general audience.

So Benjamin's anecdotes are about conducting orchestras all over the world, and unlocking a passion for music in young people, and making old people cry because they're so moved by the beauty and skill of these brilliant young musicians, and raising enormous amounts of money to further a "dying" art form. And Rosamund's anecdotes are about . . . skiing when it's icy out, and getting a flat tire when biking from Cambridge to Boston. Okay, some of her anecdotes are about her patients, but they're nowhere near as interesting as what Benjamin has to say. And the coauthors and the publisher have tried to impose a structure on the book so that everything hangs together as a coherent whole, and I don't think it works.

I definitely recommend the TED talk, and I think this book is worth a skim, but I can't recommend it overall.

Craig says

On my flights to Belgrade the past couple of days, I finished a great book that has been influencing my thinking in several areas. The book was a thoughtful gift from Gayla Nicholson, a board member with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Park County, Wyoming, a recent client.

I referenced portions of Ros and Ben Zander's 2002 classic, *The Art of Possibility*, in the closing keynote I gave at last week's Department of Education mentoring conference in Seattle, as it is so consistent with my framework for sustainability.

The book is inspiring, thought-provoking, and packed with strategies and actions that each of us can take to transform our thinking and our lives. This is one of those books that you could read ten times and still find something new. It reminded me of one of my all-time favorites books, Richard Bach's *Illusions* (*Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah*)—a book I've read and given away to friends over and over again. It reads quick, like the Zanders' book.

Kevin Beasley says

Paradigms.

They stick to us like that glue that comes with packaged toys that you pull off one finger just to find it stuck to another. The more you try to discard it, the more it seems to hang on for its life. That's how paradigms work, they just don't want to die or be replaced. Paradigms are necessary storage spaces for our beliefs and attitudes, but they can also blind us and take away promise and hope for something better. When I accept my paradigms as the only way of life, not only I suffer, but also those around me.

Paradigm Shifts.

They are uncomfortable, even painful at times. I hang on to my paradigms because they work for me. They

are the canvas upon which I paint my life and I like their colors. I may have a clue that they are unhealthy and damaging, but I do not want to move from my comfort zone to the place of the unknown, so I just live in my paradigms. They are not necessarily world-views and they are not even Biblical. I have simply found a way to make them work for me. I get anxious when someone challenges them, but paradigm shifts can be tremendously liberating if I move from unhealthy to life-giving actions and attitudes.

Jesus.

He was the ultimate paradigm shift. He came to change minds!

The Zanders are certainly not Jesus, by any stretch of the imagination. I'm not even sure if they follow Him. However, they succeeded in shifting my personal paradigms as I read the book they authored called "The Art of Possibility".

As I read, I was forced to think. Some of their philosophies I sifted out because they were beyond my beliefs about God and people. But most of them began the deep work of shifting the way I live out and experience my world-view and faith, especially regarding other people.

The book is built upon 12 practices. I will briefly review them here and then encourage you to dig deeper by reading the book.

1.) It's All Invented

How we view life and opportunity is determined by our attitude toward circumstances. Therefore, every opportunity is either stifled or embraced. Therefore, we have the responsibility to "invent" our opportunities.

How to Practice "it's all invented" (page 15)

Ask

What assumption am I making,
That I'm not aware I'm making,
That gives me what I see?

After you have an answer, Ask
What might I now invent,
That I haven't yet invented,
That would give me other choices?

2.) Stepping Into a Universe of Possibility

Possibility is a universe we step into when we step out of the universe of the world of measurement.

"Let us suppose, now, that a universe of possibility stretches beyond the world of measurement to include all worlds: infinite, generative, and abundant. Unimpeded on a daily basis by the concern for survival, free from the generalized assumption of scarcity, a person stands in the great space of possibility in a posture of openness, with an unfettered imagination for what can be." (page 19)

3.) Giving an A

How would people react, respond and perform if we gave them an A up front and allowed them to either live up to the A or reject our early assumption? In a world of measurement, we try to make people earn their grade, but in a world of possibility, we allow them to live into an A+.

4.) Being a Contribution

In a world of possibility... “absent are the familiar measurements of progress. Instead, life is revealed as a place to contribute and we as contributors. Not because we have done a measurable amount of good, but because that is the story we tell.” (page 56)

5.) Leading from Any Chair

Not only are we responsible to lead wherever we find ourselves, but as leaders we are responsible to give others the opportunity to contribute as “silent conductors”. A team is not simply as good as it’s leader, although that is important. A team is as good as it’s silent leaders... those who lead from wherever they find themselves in an organization.

Every leaders should ask himself when most frustrated with the performance of his team, “Who am I being that they are not shining?”

6.) Rule Number 6

Lighten up! We are only here for a short time and why should we spend it refusing to laugh at ourselves? In the midst of tight tension, one of the most powerful things you can do is laugh and make others laugh.

7.) The Way Things Are

“...be present to the way things are. Being present to the way things are is not the same as accepting things as they are in (a) resigned way. It doesn’t mean you should drown out your negative feelings or pretend you like what you really can’t stand. It doesn’t mean you should work to achieve some ‘higher plane of existence’ so you can ‘transcend negativity.’ It simply means, being present without resistance: being present to what is happening and present to your reactions, no matter how intense.” (Page 100)

Why fight with ourselves with what is? It’s OK to hurt and be confused. Rest in it. Do what you have to do to change things, but it is not helpful to live in resigned defeat.

8.) Giving Way to Passion

“If I were to wish for anything I should not wish for wealth and power, but for the passionate sense of what can be, for the eye, which, ever young and ardent, sees the possible. Pleasure disappoints, possibility never. And what wine is so sparkling, what so fragrant, what so intoxicating as possibility?” Soren Kierkegaard quote (page 113)

2 Steps to Giving Way to Passion:

- a. Notice where you are holding back, and let go. Release those barriers of self that keep you separate and in control, and let the vital energy of passion surge through you connecting you to all beyond.
- b. Participate wholly. Allow yourself to be a channel to shape the stream of passion into a new expression for the world. (page 114)

Zander encourages us to live long lines. Do not be distracted by the cares of the world that lure us from the overall purpose and passion of our lives. As a musician misses the beauty of the long lines of music by trying to perfect every note and harmony, so we miss the purpose of our lives by begin distracted by the little things that nag at us day to day.

9.) Lighting a Spark

Communicating creatively and going out of our way to get our message across is the key to the full involvement of others in our vision.

“Enrollment is the practice of this chapter. Enrolling is not about cajoling, tricking, bargaining, pressuring, or guilt-tripping someone into doing something your way. Enrollment is the art and practice of generating a spark of possibility for others to share.” (page 125)

10.) Being the Board

Emotional involvement blinds. Objectivity illuminates.

Zander encourages us to “rename yourself as the board on which the whole game is being played.” (page 141)

In other words, you are where you are and experiencing what you experience because of what you’ve done. When we use the tactic of blame we close the door to possibility. When I proclaim that situations are the way they are because someone else reacted, responded, or acted the way they did, I lose my power to “steer the situation in another direction, to learn from it, or to put us in good relationship with each other.” Do not close the door by proclaiming blame, but live in the world of possibility by taking responsibility to find a way in which things change for the good.

Develop the habit of emotionally stepping back and evaluating the game that is being played on the game board of your life... be the board.

11.) Frameworks for Possibility

Paint pictures of hope when you are casting vision. Reflect on Martin Luther King, Jr’s speech on the Mall in Washington. King had a dream and he created the framework for the possibility of a better nation. Within the boundaries of that frame he and others gave their life to create the broad strokes of a vision. Later the details were added and a beautiful painting of a nation offering dignity and hope to all men and women emerged from the canvas.

Build the frame and paint the broad strokes and allow others to be enrolled in the vision, so that together a beautiful work of art is created.

12.) Telling the WE Story

“More often than not history is a record of conflict between an US and a THEM. We see this pattern expressed across a broad spectrum: nation to nation, among political parties, between labor and management, and in the most intimate realms of our lives... We have distinguished a new entity that personifies the “togetherness” of you and me and others. This entity, the WE, can be found among any two people, in any community or organization, and it can be thought of, in poetic terms, as a melody running through the people of the earth... The WE appears when, for the moment, we set aside the story of fear, competition, and struggle, and tell its story.”

In what areas of your life... in what social or organizational context... in which relationships are you telling the WE story?

I hope I’ve given you enough to chew on, but not too much to satisfy your appetite. Read the book! Maybe

your paradigm, like mine, will be challenged and tweaked to produce a better you and a better them (or should I say a better us) for those people with which you do life together!

Lynette Hague says

My mom recommended this book to me and come to find out that we have a copy on our bookshelf as my husband has read it. I'm going to put it in my "to reread once a year" folder as it is that inspiring. One reviewer recommended the audio version, so I'd like to try that next.

This book is about rethinking the way you see relationships with others and situations. There are 12 practices that are discussed. Each practice has numerous examples which help clarify the new thought patterns. The concepts fit in with the premise of "The Happiness Project" by Gretchen Rubin. I'm going to revisit my own happiness project to try to incorporate some of the practices so I can open up to possibility.

Kristi says

I had a difficult time with this book for a few reasons. 1) many of the lessons were common sense...aka don't take yourself so seriously. 2) I felt like the authors bragged about themselves a bit much. I enjoyed the stories they told of other people, but not of themselves. 3) I saw hypocrisy in the book when Roz talks about moving on in one lesson & then brings up an instance where one of her teachers was always against her....isn't that playing the victim? Holding a grudge from when you were in school to call out the person in a book?

In addition this book revolves around music. When I read it was for professional & personal life, I expected more well rounded examples. I do not know anything about music or instruments & each chapter had some symphony example...I would have like to have seen more examples across a broader reach of professions.

Kate says

A standard self-help book. No new territory. I kept thinking, this sounds like Landmark psycho babble. Sure enough...at the end they acknowledge Landmark. For a really excellent book that does offer something, read "Strangers to Ourselves" by Timothy Wilson.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

The Art of Possibility takes a psychologist and a musician and smooshes their ideologies together to create a self help program.

"Our premise is that many of the circumstances that seem to block us in our daily lives may only appear to do so based on a framework of assumptions we carry with us. Draw a different frame around the same set of circumstances and new pathways come into view." pg 1.

The various practices that are discussed in *The Art of Possibility* seek to create those new frames.

One of my favorite chapters was: *Being a Contribution*. In it, the authors suggest playing life like a game. *"The purpose of describing, say, your professional life or your family traditions as a game is twofold. You instantly shift the context from one of survival to one of opportunity for growth. You also have the choice of imagining other games you might prefer to play in these realms."* pg 59.

As a gamer, that's an idea that I can easily assimilate into my life. :)

I also enjoyed: *The Way Things Are*. *"Being present to the way things are is not the same as accepting things as they are ... It simply means, being present without resistance: being present to what is happening and present to your reactions, no matter how intense."* pg 100.

A little bit of Buddhist philosophy can go a long way.

One of my complaints about this book is that I don't think that it fit together as seamlessly as they were hoping it would.

Also, I feel like non-musicians may not get as much out of this book as I did. It is rather heavy on the music stories and metaphors.

But, like many self-help books, it is packed with actionable suggestions and feel-good stories. Recommended for those looking to inject a little more possibility into their lives.

Jerzy says

My dad attended a business seminar by Mr Zander and loved it enough to buy the book. We still use some of the authors' catchphrases around the house ("Remember rule number 6!") The book contains a ton of good advice and inspirational stories. I particularly like how the authors admit their own shortcomings -- it's not all just Pollyanna optimism.

That said, it also **does** contain plenty of fluffy optimism and New-Agey talk of energy. "In the realm of possibility, there is no division between ideas and action, mind and body, dream and reality." I find that kind of stuff off-putting, but luckily it's interspersed with great concrete stories from the authors' experiences of inspiring musicians or of redirecting couples in therapy.

Favorite parts:

- * The idea of throwing your hands up and saying "How fascinating!" when you or someone else makes a mistake. No need to flip out, it's just a learning opportunity!
- * The idea of "measurement world" -- the point of view that everything and everyone must be compared, ranked, analyzed... This mindset is very much an inherent part of my job as a statistician, but it doesn't mean I have to act or think this way personally in my dealings with people.
- * The idea of "toes to nose" -- a phrase you've memorized so it can be a lifeline when things get tough (i.e., what you're taught on a whitewater rafting trip so you don't flail and drown) -- and the idea of an organization's vision as the org's toes-to-nose, a way of keeping everyone connected and responsible and participating. If I ever start a business, I'll want to have a toes-to-nose / vision.

Favorite quotes:

- * p.42: Once I had given my audience an A and invented them as colleagues, they were precisely the people with whom I wanted to converse, and I was exactly where I wanted to be. If we really do have the choice of saying who is in the class we are teaching, or the orchestra we are conducting, or the group we are managing,

why would we ever define them as people we cannot effectively and enjoyably work with?

* p.72: *[A great strategy for managers in trouble, and for people sitting through meetings, via a quote from second violinist Eugene Lehner:]* One day, during my very first year playing with the orchestra, I remember an occasion when Koussevitsky was conducting a Bach piece and he seemed to be having some difficulty getting the results he wanted—it simply wasn't going right. Fortunately, his friend, the great French pedagogue and conductor Nadia Boulanger, happened to be in town and sitting in on the rehearsal, so Koussevitsky took the opportunity to extricate himself from an awkward and embarrassing situation by calling out to her, "Nadia, please, will you come up here and conduct? I want to go to the back of the hall to see how it sounds." Mademoiselle Boulanger stepped up, made a few comments to the musicians, and conducted the orchestra through the passage without a hitch. Ever since that time, in every rehearsal, I have been waiting for the conductor to say, "Lehner, you come up here and conduct, I want to go to the back of the hall to hear how it sounds." It is now forty-three years since this happened, and it is less and less likely that I will be asked. However, in the meantime, I haven't had a single dull moment in rehearsal, as I sit wondering what I would say to the orchestra should I suddenly be called upon to lead.

* p.116: *[Quote from Martha Graham:]* There is a vitality, a life force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and it will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

* p.119: *[about cellist Jacqueline Du Pre:]* When she was six years old, the story goes, she went into her first competition as a cellist, and she was seen running down the corridor carrying her cello above her head, with a huge grin of excitement on her face. A custodian, noting what he took to be relief on the little girl's face, said, "I see you've just had your chance to play!" And Jackie answered, excitedly, "No, no, I'm just about to!"

* p.169-170: A vision articulates a possibility. ... It is an idea to which no one could logically respond, "What about me?" ... In the pursuit of objectives under a vision, playing is relevant to the manifestation of the possibility, winning is not. *[i.e. a vision is not about being Number One and beating out the competition.]*

* p.177: *[from a NASA employee moved by young musicians' letters to NASA:]* I will have to remember "I am here today to cross the swamp, not to fight all the alligators."
