

Insights from *Antifragile* by Nassim Taleb

“Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better.” – Nassim Taleb

We can all learn to be antifragile by cultivating three practices into our daily lives. Incorporating these three practices will allow us to sleep soundly at night knowing whatever happens tomorrow, we will benefit from it.



Cap your Downside

“Everything antifragile has to have more upside than downside (more to gain than to lose) and hence benefits from volatility, error, and stressors.” – Nassim Taleb

The first step to becoming antifragile is to develop a “nothing to lose” mentality. Each morning close your eyes and go through the mental exercise of losing your belongings, your savings, and your job or business.

Once you feel you could emotionally endure that loss, open your eyes, and experience the day with 100% upside. When an expected setback occurs, you know it could be worse, so you enthusiastically deal with the challenge before you.

“When I was a trader, a profession rife with a high dose of randomness, with continuous psychological harm that drills deep into one’s soul, I would go through the mental exercise of assuming every morning that the worst possible thing had actually happened—the rest of the day would be a bonus... When you emotionally position yourself to eliminate the sting of harm, the volatility of the world no longer affects you negatively.” – Nassim Taleb



Seek Eustress

Stress in the right context and for the right amount of time does not drain energy, it creates energy; it does not permanently damage, it stimulates growth. Stress that motivates, increases focus, and sparks growth is called eustress. When you go for a short workout after an exhausting flight, you stress your body but feel better than you did when you got off the flight. That’s eustress.

The more you seek eustress, the more you see the upside of stress. When an unexpected event occurs and you experience stress, you will not run from it; you will lean into it.

Tiny eustress practices with huge benefits:

1. Thirty-second cold showers.
2. Three rounds of Tummo Breathing (Wim Hof Breathing) – 30 rapid breaths followed by a max breath-hold.
3. Twelve-minute interval training workout (run, bike, or swim).
4. Sixteen-hour intermittent fasting.

A little eustress goes a long way.



Overcompensate

Overcompensation is the essence of antifragility. Your body is naturally antifragile because when you shock your body by bench pressing the maximum weight you can bench press, say 200 pounds, your biology will overcompensate by adding excess muscle to your chest and arms. When you go back to the gym a week later, you can bench press 210 pounds.

Apply the principle of ‘overcompensation’ to all areas of life by consistently overlearning. When you make a mistake or suffer an unexpected setback, respond in a way that all but guarantees you will come back smarter, faster, and better. The more you overcompensate by overlearning, the less you fear uncertainty because you know that whatever happens you will either succeed or improve.

A few months ago, I applied the principle of overcompensation to my writing. After realizing I made several spelling mistakes on a published document, I reflected on my editing process and developed a new five-step editing process for every document I publish: print and underline the document, read the document aloud, use Grammarly (an advanced editing software) to check for errors, use a separate software program to have the document read back to me, and then have at least one other person review the document.

“My characterization of a loser is someone who, after making a mistake, doesn’t introspect, doesn’t exploit it, feels embarrassed and defensive rather than enriched with a new piece of information, and tries to explain why he made the mistake rather than moving on.” – Nassim Taleb