CAMPFIRE

Fire Starters: A Reading List

I've had my own guides on my journey, and they continue to point the way when I get stuck. The list below represents a collection of works by people that have deeply influenced how I see my life, my work, and the world. Without these teachers, I might very well have continued pushing harder and harder in ways that moved me further from my ember.

It's worth pointing out the obvious: there are a lot of pages contained in this list. It's not practical or even possible to absorb it all at once. I encourage you to pick up the books that speak to you. Read them. Take what sticks. And then continue to revisit them. I do, and they're still working on me. Finally, every writer on this list writes from lived experience. They have done their own work and put out there, sometimes very vulnerably, to show the rest of us that we're not alone.

If you'd like essays alongside the reading, subscribe to In Progress on Substack.

Your Ember

Let Your Life Speak
PARKER PALMER

A book on reframing vocation as listening for who you already are instead of deciding who to become.

Handling Your Fire
ROB BELL

An audio series on separating the "thread" of who you've always been from the "setup" that temporarily gives your thread form.

Big Magic
ELIZABETH GILBERT

A book on creative living driven by curiosity rather than mastery, fear, or the need for it to pay off.

The Creative Act
RICK RUBIN

A book on creativity as a way of being rather than a system to optimize, more spiritual practice than productivity guide.

The Two Halves of Life

Falling Upward
RICHARD ROHR

A book on why the struggles and failures of midlife aren't a detour but the doorway into a deeper, truer self.

Finding Your Way in a Wild New World
MARTHA BECK

A book on navigating uncertainty by following your body and your gut rather than what sounds right in the mind.

From Strength to Strength
ARTHUR BROOKS

A book on the midlife transition from intelligence to wisdom and why clinging to striving past its natural season is what makes the shift painful.

Reboot
JERRY COLONNA

A book on the practice of radical self-inquiry as a tool for doing the hard, honest work of separating who you are from who you've had to become to succeed.

CAMPFIRE

Fire Starters: A Reading List

Time and Rest

How to Be Here
ROB BELL

A book on building rhythms of rest and presence that make life sustainable rather than depleting, while treating an ordinary day as worth showing up for fully.

Tao Te Ching
LAO TZU (STEPHEN MITCHELL TRANS.)

An ancient text on flowing with natural rhythm rather than forcing or striving and the power of yielding, stillness, and non-action as a way of moving through the world.

Silence in an Age of Noise
ERLING KAGGE

A book on rediscovering silence as a source of clarity once outside noise is finally turned down.

Stillness is the Key
RYAN HOLIDAY

A book on stillness as a discipline practiced by mind, spirit, and body together, not a passive state.

Defining Enough

Essentialism
GREG MCKEOWN

A book on the disciplined pursuit of less: doing fewer things, but doing them well while trading away the nonessential.

The Art of Living
EPICTETUS (SHARON LEBELL TRANS.)

A classic book on the wisdom of separating what's up to you from what isn't, and living accordingly.

Four Thousand Weeks
OLIVER BURKEMAN

A book on reckoning with finitude in a way that treats limited time as the source of meaning, not a problem to solve.

A Feisty and Sobering Guide to Doing What You Love and Still Somehow Paying the Bills
ROB BELL

A candid and funny audio book on doing what you love without pretending money and survival don't matter.

OTHER HELPFUL READING, LISTENING, AND WATCHING

Creativity, Spirituality, and Making a Buck
DAVID NICHTERN

Hell Yeah or No
DEREK SIVERS

The Power of Now
ECKHART TOLLE

Comedian
A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT JERRY SEINFELD

Perfect Days
A FILM BY WIM WENDERS

Grabbing the Bag
ROB BELL

The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible
CHARLES EISENSTEIN

The World Ending Fire
WENDELL BERRY

The Wisdom of Insecurity
ALAN WATTS

Wherever You Go, There You Are
JON KABAT-ZINN

Millones Cajones
ROB BELL

Time Surfing
PAUL LOOMANS