**ESPRESSO LESSONS**
From the Rock Warrior’s Way

By Arno Ilgner

Reviewed by Sefton Priestley

**ARNO IS a Rock Warrior**, and the way of Arno is the Rock Warrior®’s Way. Block-jawed and with the confident glint of a motivational speaker in his eye, Arno peers at you from the cover offering a cup of espresso from his thermos. ‘Drink’, he seems to say, ‘and be assured in the knowledge that I can help you unleash your inner climbing ninja.’

*Espresso Lessons* purports to be a concentration of Ilgner’s philosophies on mental training. I’m partial to a decent short black but what was served up was more akin to a half-strength-decaf-Grande-Frappucino from Starbucks.

The irksome thing is not what he says, and there is little I disagree with (okay, the assertion that trad climbers need a piece of gear every metre to stay safe raised my eyebrows). It’s how he goes about saying it. He pours you a watered-down sentimental catchphrase (i.e. ‘When you rest, rest. When you climb, climb’), tops it up with a dozen pages of froth and sprinkles aggravating TLA’s (Three Letter Acronyms) lovingly on top.

Halfway through the first chapter I began to wonder if I could make it through the book. Luckily page nine held the solution for me: I needed TAP (The Awakening Process).

**TAP Five Point Plan:**
1) Set Intention: I need to finish this book so I can review it.
2) Witness My Doubts (WMD, my acronym this time): I must become aware of my mind’s Internal Dialogue telling me to put the book down quickly and go climbing instead.
3) Delay Reaction: imagine Arno’s soothing voice, ‘Wait, don’t let go, you can do it.’
4) Redirect Attention: I must recognise my mind’s destructive tendency to ‘think’ and refocus on the gaps between thoughts.
5) Find Ways to Engage: thoroughly Reawakened, I must dog my way through, learning the secrets of ENDs, TAPs, DAOs and POLRs, without letting my WMDs destroy them all.

In all fairness there are moments of insight. His discussion of Analytical vs. Intuitive mindsets was interesting, and the chapter on falling practice had good suggestions. If you can get past the catechism and the catchphrases you might well take some valuable lessons from this book. I’ll bet it sells out in the USA.

If you are of a more cynical persuasion you might end up having nightmares about being belayed by Tony Robbins. Purchase at your own risk.


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