

# DOC FUN'S RULES OF LIFE

## RULE #1

### MAKE YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

Whatever you dream, whether at night or during the day, you can make happen if you want it bad enough. There's nothing wrong with dreaming; just don't get dreams confused with reality.

The 'conventional wisdom' would have you believe that dreaming is a waste of time. Of course these 'conventionalists' are the same people who tell you that you must wait an hour before swimming after eating lunch or you will drown. These are the people who work in large office buildings without air or sunlight. These are the people who have been sucked in by the system, so they want to be sure that you are sucked in right along with them. These are the lemmings and sheep of society. Don't believe them! They are lying (even though they might not even know it themselves)!

Dare to dream big! Dreaming leads to scheming and that leads to success! Scheme and plan and ponder and imagine and conceive and don't ever feel guilty. Which brings me to my next rule:

## RULE #2

### WRITE IT DOWN

The human brain can only absorb and remember so much. Indeed mine has proven itself far too small for all the dreams and ideas and music and people and details of life that I want to cram into it each day. My hard drive is full. Stuffed to the brim. Maxed out.

While yours may not be as full (or small) as mine, there undoubtedly has been a time or two when you have had the most brilliant idea only to find that a day (or an hour) later you can scarcely recall what it was about. Believe me, I have lost many a great concept or solution in my time.

So now I write everything down. Usually just a scribble somewhere—on a sticky note, in my computer, on a big yellow pad, in a little notebook. I can always organize and embellish later; at least I have the basics down.

Of course I still miss some important things; at times I can't find my precious note anywhere. But I try, and that's what counts most. My most used pad of paper is the one I keep by my bed for jotting down thoughts and ideas the moment I wake up in the morning. Like vivid dreams, if I don't write them down they are gone just minutes later.

More organized people keep detailed notebooks or journals and I admire their discipline. If you can find it in yourself to establish this habit you will never regret it. Find a small spiral notebook or something similar that you like and always keep it handy.. Then as your days, weeks, and years progress, write down the things you want to do, say or remember. Phone numbers. Sketches for a new rocket design. Directions to that great restaurant. Your best friend's kids birthdays. The exact color and brand of the paint you used in your bathroom. Write it down.

Of course this only works if you adhere to rule #3.

## **RULE #3**

### **DO IT NOW**

This was actually a rule my father scolded into my recalcitrant disposition when I was young. I didn't really understand it until I was well out of the house and fully on my own.

Perhaps it first really hit home when I made myself a fine dinner one night and then just piled the dishes in the sink. As I stood there looking at them this sinking feeling came over me: NO ONE ELSE IS GOING TO WASH THESE FOR ME!!! Damned! Now I can let them sit here over night but you know what? They'll still be right here—still nice and dirty—in the morning. No, the dish fairy won't be coming to my house any time soon.

So I rolled up my sleeves and washed them. And I realized that when something has to be done, you might as well do it now because unless the earth blows up or you die in your sleep, you'll end up doing it sooner or later.

This applies to everything in life. In my experience, the people who procrastinate over the mundane, everyday chores also procrastinate over the important things in life. Don't put off washing the dishes, don't put off getting a job, don't put off getting on with your life. Do it NOW!

## **RULE #4**

### **THE GOLDEN RULE**

Perhaps you expected me to say, "He who has the gold makes the rules."? But this is not always true so I won't say it.

Instead I will repeat, and hopefully reinforce, the older version: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This is very simple, very concise, very easy to remember, and VERY important. Again, there's no magic involved.

The only helpful thing I might add is that it is easier to practice this rule if you develop and use your peripheral vision, both physically and metaphorically. Look around

you. Be aware of your surroundings; the people, the places, the events. See the big picture but don't forget the details.

## **RULE #5**

### **LIVE IN THE PRESENT**

There are three types of people in the world: those who live in the past (such as old sports jocks who try to relive their glory days and one-time accomplishments and simply cannot move on from them); those who live in the present, making the best of every minute; and those who live in the future: tomorrow I'm *definitely* going to do this and that and every other thing too.

People who live in the past are somewhere between pitiful and tragic. The past is over—you can't change it. Learn from it, relish the memories, accept the lessons, and don't make the same mistakes again in the future. If your past involves family problems you shouldn't feel guilty: you had absolutely no control over where you came from. Don't wallow in guilt: trust me, whatever happened, it wasn't your fault.

Many people plan on living in the future (see Rule #3). They are constantly putting off things in their life, constantly assuring themselves that they'll really get their lives together tomorrow. For them, unfortunately, tomorrow never comes—tomorrow is always a day away.

The old adage of 'take care of the present and the future will take care of itself' is true. Make every second of your life count. Accept that you can't do it all, but make sure that you do SOMETHING! Never be in a position where you look back and say 'If only I had done things differently back then...?'

## **RULE #6**

### **SPEND SOME TIME ALONE**

You are your own best friend and worst enemy. No one knows you better so if you're not happy with some aspect of your life then the only one that can change it is you.

Don't use a crowd of friends as a crutch; use them as an enhancement. Aspire to be a better person and associate yourself with people you admire rather than people you can dominate. Then spend some time alone to digest what you have learned.

My dad once said that having a good companion is like looking in the mirror—they reflect back what they see and hear. Try being your own companion, put yourself in someone else's shoes and see how you would view yourself. Be honest.

If you're not comfortable hanging around with yourself then maybe other people aren't comfortable hanging around you either. Step back and just listen occasionally; keep your thoughts to yourself and think about why you feel that way. Take some time and recharge your batteries; you'll last longer and feel better.

## **RULE #7**

### **IT'S ALL JUST STUFF**

Yes, even that 10,000' mansion or 2,000-piece BeanieBaby collection. Sure there are things in your life which are more valuable than others, but in the end you really can get along without any of it.

Don't become so attached to material things that they overly affect your life. Your stuff should make your life more enjoyable, not more burdensome. Do a cost/benefit analysis for the things you own or are considering purchasing; it's amazing what you can do without. Some things can even make your life more stressful.

At the same time, take care of the stuff you have. If you've spent the time and energy and money to acquire things then one would hope that you've spent sufficient thought about their value and importance to you. If they're worth enough for you to keep, then take care of them so that they will not become worthless (or worse yet, a burden).

Remember: a rich person is not the one who has the most, but the one who needs the least.

## **RULE #8**

### **SMILE**

Life is just one big adventure. No one understands it (although many proclaim that they do, especially those consumed with considerable religious fervor) so why not enjoy the ride?

If you smile you naturally become happy. Happy people are healthier, more productive and more accepting of everything around them (see Rule #9). Certainly there are many difficulties in life but nothing that can't be overcome. When you smile you can release the frustrations of life and get on with things from a new perspective.

Don't try to figure life out or you will drive yourself crazy. There is no answer. You don't get it? Well there you go: you got it. Now smile!

## **RULE #9**

### **HAVE SERENITY, STRENGTH AND WISDOM**

There is a proverb that bears repeating and should form the basis of your life:

In life, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the strength to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference between the two.

If you can remember this proverb, and live by it, you will be a happy person.

## **RULE #10**

### **KEEP IT SIMPLE**

This, of course, is much easier said than done, especially if you are a smart and industrious person. I constantly see opportunities all around me and I must constantly temper my enthusiasm to get involved in yet one more intriguing scheme or activity.

To simplify your life you must rid yourself of unnecessary, unwanted, unused and troublesome things, be they physical possessions or mental stress. Consider throwing away something you never use anymore: it's hard to do because it may have been valuable to you at one time, but its memory fades quickly once it is gone. It is important to purge your life of things—be they possessions or tasks or worries—periodically.

When I set about to simplify my life some years ago I made a list (ah yes, that list thing again...) of everything which took up my time and I gradually rid myself of everything on the list which caused me stress. It's like a risk vs. reward assessment: is this activity really worth the possible consequences? Is this project really worth the time and energy it will take to complete? Is this item really worth the expense?

Remember the object here is to simplify things, not just solve problems. If you have a problem, make sure you have thought it out thoroughly so that the solution is as simple and elegant as possible

## **RULE #11**

### **PRIORITIZE**

Life consists of many distractions, some of which are important and some of which aren't. Only you can decide what is important in your life, whether it is money or love or freedom or time or... whatever.

Putting your priorities in order is one of the most important things you can do in life, but only if you get them right. Sit down and make a list (still with that list thing...) of everything which affects your life: family, friends, job, possessions, money... everything. Then put them in order. This will undoubtedly be hard, but do the best you can.

Then make another list of the other factors which affect your life on a daily basis: your car, sports or other activities which take up your time, etc., and put them in order.

Take the two lists and read them over several times, thinking about the priorities you have set and how they play into your life. When you are satisfied with your lists you should have a clearer idea of what is important to you and where you should put your time and efforts in life.

Of course the list may change, both in size and in priorities over time, but without a starting point you might find that you take on too many things in your life that take away from the things that really matter to you.

One more thing to remember: you can't do it all, so decide that is most important to you and be happy just doing that.

## **RULE #12**

### **COMPLIMENT PEOPLE**

Some years ago I was taking some windsurfing photos of a friend of mine for a magazine story I was working on. Later, when we were sitting around looking at the photos, she asked if I thought they would work for the story. I proceeded to point out the flaws in her technique and body position.

At first she was silent. Then she began to respond, negatively of course, and I immediately regretted my insensitive, stupid remarks. But did I stop? Noooo... by this time I was in too deep and I felt the need to defend and reinforce my comments. More stupidity.

What did I accomplish by all this? Nothing. No wait, I accomplished several things: I made her feel bad, inadequate, angry and combative. The result: we both felt bad.

Fortunately for me that small event was a turning point in how I treat people. Now, no matter how much it may pain me, I will always offer a compliment rather than a criticism. While this may seem simple and obvious, the benefits sometimes escaped me in the past.

"Thanks for driving; I really appreciate it." rather than, "Geesh, you almost killed us back there. Where'd you learn to drive?"

"You did a great job in the goal. Those guys were just on fire tonight; I don't think anyone could have stopped those shots." rather than, "Man, you couldn't stop a marshmallow thrown by a 5-year-old; do you need glasses?"

Of course you don't want to go too far and patronize someone, but a simple compliment, thoughtfully worded, can go many miles in making both you and the other person feel good. Remember: complimenting someone rather than criticizing is just as easy, and a compliment goes a LOT further!

## **RULE #13**

### **DON'T WHINE**

What is whining? Whining is complaining about things you can't change nor do anything about, and it is totally unacceptable. You can't change the weather, traffic, phone busy signals, stop lights, or a million other things in life. So deal with it. When you whine about such things you make yourself and those around you unhappy. (Remember Rule #9?)

I good friend of mine lost one of his legs in a motorcycle accident when he was twenty-two. Not only was he twenty-two, with his whole life in front of him, he was also a professional hockey player—a super macho athlete—who depended on his body for his livelihood (as well as his passion). Needless to say, he was suicidal for quite a while.

Then one day a friend of his suggested he try water-skiing. Naturally he scowled at the idea, but gradually decided, “Why not,? What do I have to lose?”. Being a natural athlete, he worked out how to get attached to a single slalom ski, and before long he was ripping across the water. Soon he was playing tennis, snowboarding, bowling, playing golf, dancing, even windsurfing. He even built himself several special ‘legs’ for all his different activities.

What changed, I asked him. Pain, he said, is inevitable; suffering is not.

Worry about things you *can* change and leave the whining to the people you leave behind in life.

## **RULE #14**

### **LIFE IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION**

If my life was a destination I would never reach it; I’m too busy getting there.

Many people design their lives around a goal; perhaps getting a raise at work, buying that new house, or going to heaven when they die. Goals are good, but the process of getting to your goal is equally, or perhaps more important.

For instance, let’s say your goal is save money to go on your dream vacation. You work and slave and sacrifice (all good things) and after some time (years?) you are ready to go. But you have stressed and sacrificed so much that now you are burned out. You really *need* that vacation, rather than going to enjoy it. And if things don’t go just right (delayed flights, bad hotels, you get sick, etc.) then you are doubly upset: you didn’t enjoy *either* the journey or the destination!

If you can’t enjoy the journey, chances are you won’t enjoy the destination. Make every minute of your life count. This doesn’t mean that sacrifice and hard work aren’t worth it, but keep things in perspective. Speaking of which.....

## **RULE#15**

### **KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE**

What is *really* important in your life?

After you have prioritized all the details and trivia in your life (Rule #11), it is time to really put things in perspective. For instance, if you rated your car more important than your wife, there’s a problem. Obviously you need to solve it. You may suddenly realize, “What am I thinking??!?” Or you may suddenly realize that your marriage is really not that important to you.

Of course a decision like this bears much thought, and that is the key point here: stop and think. Where are you in your life now? Where do you want to be in a year? Five years? Ten years? If you have no idea, that's okay, but at least take the time to consider your options and your concerns.

Live each day as if it's your last one on earth. Me? I intend to live forever: so far, so good!

## **RULE #16 MOVE ON**

As teenagers say, 'get over it'. Don't dwell on the past. You are bound to make many mistakes in your life. Learn from them. To make a mistake is natural. If you make one mistake, you're being dumb; dumb is not knowing any better. But if you make the same mistake again, you are being stupid: stupid is knowing better and doing it anyway.

If you can correct a previous mistake, do it. If you can't, learn from it so you don't do it again. And move on.

## **RULE#17 MAKE YOUR NEGOTIATIONS A WIN/WIN SITUATION**

This is perhaps one of the hardest rules in life, simply because it necessitates someone else with the same mindset as you.

Most people assume that in a business transaction there is a winner and a loser; if one person gets what they want, the other person must have lost. Nothing can be further from the truth. The best deals are ALWAYS win/win deals, and most of the time they are the simplest, just requiring a different perspective to create an elegant solution.

I was once interested in buying a piece of property which wasn't for sale because the owner was embroiled in a boundary dispute with the person he had sold part of the property to. Because of a misunderstanding (and inadequate paperwork....) one person thought they owned something different than what the original seller thought he had sold. So they were locked in a long and expensive legal battle that would probably take years to settle.

The realtor who mentioned the property to me told me, "Don't even consider that piece. It will be tied up in litigation for years."

After she explained the entire situation to me I realized that to her it was an insurmountable barrier while to me it was a wonderful opportunity. So I went to both parties, explained to them that the legal costs and time involved would drain them both and that I was willing to make all their problems go away: I would buy both pieces of property, thereby making the boundary dispute a moot issue.

It took a bit of work, convincing each person that he was getting a fair deal and that the other person was not getting a better one, but in the end everyone won. Which means of course.....

## **RULE #18**

### **TURN A PROBLEM INTO AN OPORTUNITY**

Let's say there's a big snowstorm. One type of person immediately goes into stress mode: what if I can't get to work? What if I can't get to the store? What if the electricity goes out? What if the plow doesn't come by and plow the roads?

The other type of person thinks this way: where can I get a shovel so that I can go out to shovel some driveways and make some money (while helping people at the same time).

Now of course the second type of person (the entrepreneur) will undoubtedly make money on this situation, and he can do this quite fairly without 'gouging' anyone in the process. He sees opportunity where the other person sees problems.

## **RULE #19**

### **CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS WISELY**

A friend is a very valuable asset in life. True friends—those who will stick by you no matter what—are very rare.

A friend is not necessarily someone who compliments you all the time. A friend is not someone who provides you with access to status or wealth or special activities. A friend tells you the truth and expects the same from you, no matter what. A friend is not someone who simply tells you what you want to hear.

Be a giver, not a taker. A friend is someone you can depend on but more importantly, they can depend on you. If you are there for them, they will be there for you.

## **RULE #20**

### **THINK FOR YOURSELF**

There always have been, and always will be, people who will want to make your decisions for you. Most times they are only trying to help you. But not always.

I have found that the people constantly making comments starting with, "You know what YOU should do....", are almost always the ones who are doing the least in life. They always want to tell other people what THEY should do rather than doing anything themselves.

When someone tells me what I should be doing I always say, "I'll take that under advisement." Don't let anyone [not even me!] tell you what your should do. Just 'take it all

under advisement', gather all the information you can, make an educated decision, and make sure that decision is your own.

## **RULE #21**

### **CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES CAREFULLY**

There are many good causes that demand our attention, time, effort and energy. Anything from political campaigns and social issues to environmental, ethical and education problems. Unfortunately, as much as you may want to, and as much as many of these are very important, you can't do it all.

Before joining a cause and committing yourself physically, mentally or monetarily, be sure you know exactly what you are getting involved in, who else is involved, and what the real agenda of these people is. In other words, do your homework.

Then before plunging head-long into battle, make some realistic assessments of where it might lead and more important, where it might lead you. Will you become embroiled in a potentially life threatening situation? Is it worth it? Will your involvement demand increasing amounts of your time? Money? Will it affect your relationship with other people in a negative way? How much?

Don't feel guilty if you can't take on all the injustices in the world—no one can. Take on everything and you dilute your potential for success; choose wisely and you can make a difference. Then when you've chosen your battle...

## **RULE #22**

### **BE THE BULL FIGHTER, NOT THE BULL**

I once observed two very stubborn people having a heated argument over something quite ridiculous. Neither was willing to give an inch, and so there they stood, toe to toe, staring each other down and screaming at the top of their lungs. Idiots.

It would have been so easy (not to mention smart) for one of them to back down (not necessarily admitting defeat, mind you) and let the other rush on past in his anger. In fact, nothing makes an angry person look more foolish than to let them have their own (boisterous) way. Give in. In the big picture, does it *really* matter?? (see Rule #16)

In the bullring the bull never wins. He gets more and more infuriated as the delicate and agile bullfighter taunts him as he harmlessly passes by just inches away. Finally, when the bullfighter chooses, the big, strong, angry, exhausted bull is quickly dispatched.

Do you really want to be the bull? End of story.

## **RULE #23**

## AIM BEFORE YOU SHOOT

It's always good to get excited about whatever you are doing, but don't let that cloud your good judgement. Take your time; do your homework. Take as long as it takes to make a good decision, no matter what the subject.

It's always easy to get caught up in a frenzy. Don't make the mistake of following the crowd instead of your instincts.

## RULE #24

### LOOK AT THE BIG PICTURE

In life there are many details that demand your attention. But don't forget the big picture. What are you ultimately trying to do? Where does the road you are on ultimately lead? How will other people be affected by what you do or say?

Without the details there can be no 'big picture' but don't let them overwhelm you to the point that you lose track of what is really important in life.

## RULE #25

### LIFE IS A GAME BUT GAMES ARE NOT LIFE

I know many people who are very competitive. This is not necessarily a bad thing but it can become a bad thing if you are highly competitive in everything you do. The trick is to know when it is acceptable to be competitive in and which things are best left on easy street.

A relationship, for example, is perhaps the worst place to display competitive behavior; your mate is not your adversary. Likewise in the workplace [see rule #22].

And to a substantial degree, recreational sports are not the place to be overly competitive. In a friendly game of touch football or water polo or basketball does the score really matter so much that it's worth getting in a fight over? To some people, it would certainly seem so. These people don't end up winning; they end up making enemies. If you're playing a professional sport at a professional level then a bad call by the referee *might* be worth getting upset about but even then the outcome will not likely change.

Have fun playing games and have fun in life. Games are a means to relax and enjoy life, not a means to become serious and stressed. How many \$300 golf clubs are at the bottom of that lake on the 12<sup>th</sup> hole? Boy, you really showed THAT club who was boss! If you can't have fun playing games then you certainly can't have fun playing at life.

## RULE #26

### THE 15-MINUTE RULE

I don't enjoy waiting for things. Or people. There's not much worse than waiting a half-hour for someone and either having them rush up and say, "Oh, I'm terribly sorry but I just lost track of the time." Or... having them not show up at all ("Sorry dude, I spaced it out...")

In fact, I have found that for every minute I wait beyond fifteen minutes the chance of the person actually showing up at all, or within an hour, decreases exponentially.

For this reason I have concocted the 15-minute rule.

I will wait up to fifteen minutes for someone. This is certainly enough time to allow for traffic or other minor instances which might make someone reasonably late. After that, I leave.

Admittedly there have been times when there was a perfectly good reason why someone didn't show up and I had already left. I certainly regret those times (and I apologize profusely) but they are a very small minority. Most of the time I leave and never hear from the person I've been waiting for until days later.

There is one additional appendix to this rule: the 'No-Whining Corollary': Some people are not only always late, they whine! (see Rule #13) This is unacceptable. Therefore, every time you whine you get a minute chopped off your next wait time.

For instance, I wait fifteen minutes for you and you don't show up until after I have left. I see you the next day and you complain to me (you're whining since there's nothing you can do about it); next time I will only wait 14 minutes, and so on until... no waiting.

## **RULE #27**

### **LIFE IS A FINITE GIFT; DON'T WASTE IT**

There is only one thing in life that is finite: time. Everything else—money, fun, love, food—is infinite. You only get X amount of time here on earth and you never know when it will end. So don't waste it! Make every minute count.

Someone asked me recently what I would do if I found out tomorrow that I had only a month to live. I thought about it for a minute and quickly realized I would do exactly what I am doing now. Nothing would change. And you know what? The same would hold true if I won \$100 million in the lottery. I'm doing what I love.

So make sure you're enjoying your life and not wasting it. You only have so much time.....

## **RULE #28**

### **BELIEVE ONLY WHAT YOU SEE WITH YOUR OWN EYES OR HEAR WITH YOUR OWN EARS.**

Rumors are one of the great problem-makers in life. So-and-so said something; so-and-so saw something; so-and-so knows someone who heard something.

In life there are things you *believe* and things you *know*. There is a big difference between the two. If you actually see or hear something *yourself* then you *know* it; otherwise it is simply something you can either chose to believe or not.

When I hear a rumor (anything I don't hear or see myself) I 'take it under advisement', meaning I will consider the source and the importance and file it away in my small brain (far too small for most trivia like rumors) for possible future reference. Even if you hear a rumor twenty times, that doesn't make it true. Even if you choose to believe it, that *still* doesn't make it true.

Reacting to rumors can get you into serious trouble so always remember the difference between facts (what you *know*) and rumor (anything on the internet).

## **RULE #29**

### **YOUR OPINION IS JUST THAT**

Just as there is a big difference between what you *know* and what you *believe*, there's a big difference between opinion and fact. Form your opinion on something based on facts: things you *know* because you have seen or heard or experienced them yourself.

When you present your opinion on something, remember it is just that and nothing more. Someone else might (and often does) have a completely different opinion (sometimes based on totally different 'facts', or sometimes no facts at all).

Having facts are not necessarily a requirement for having an opinion. You must realize this in listening to other peoples' opinion, and also realize that they might conclude the same in listening to your opinion.

At the end of the day it is all just your view and nothing more.

## **RULE #30**

### **CONTROL YOUR OWN DESTINY**

People who try to control other people and events around them are often referred to as 'control freaks'. Obviously this is a fairly unflattering term and many times an unjust one.

I want only to control my own life as much as humanly possible. To maintain this control (in order to ensure my health, safety and happiness) many times I must also control the people and things around me. My goal to not control *them*, simply to control their effect on me.

For instance, I don't want to die from second-hand smoke. So if I'm in a room where people are smoking I will either ask them to stop or more likely I will just leave. If this makes me a 'control freak', so be it.

Don't be afraid to take charge of a situation where your life or happiness is concerned. If someone is drinking and driving a car it can affect your life: take control. If someone is lighting off fireworks next to your house, take control. If someone is planning to develop a strip mall next to your house, take control. If someone is swearing loudly and obnoxiously, take control.

Don't ever be afraid to take control of a situation that might end up affecting or controlling *your* life.

## **RULE #31**

### **CONSIDER RISK/REWARD**

In almost all your actions in life there is a risk vs. reward quotient. For instance, you jump off a bridge into river for fun. Risk? Could be large. Reward? Not too large (unless you are a teenager trying to impress your mates).

How about robbing a bank? Risk? Moderate. Reward? Could be pretty good. But wait—there's another factor to consider: the consequences. So you might get away with a chunk of cash and not get caught... but what if you do? SERIOUS consequences.

So always consider the risk/reward of your conduct. And don't forget to also evaluate the repercussions if things don't go as you hoped.

## **RULE #32**

### **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS**

Not much more needs to be said on this one. If you're wrong, admit it. If you make a mistake, try to correct it. If you hurt someone, apologize. If you break something, fix it.

Most important, don't blame anyone else and don't make the same mistake twice.

## **RULE #33**

### **DON'T ASSUME OTHERS SHARE YOUR VIEWS**

You have just waded through a pretty big pile of rules. You might even agree with some of them. Unfortunately this doesn't mean that everyone else does. Just because you 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you' doesn't mean that the next guy will honor your principles or act the same way.

So if you find that the rest of the world doesn't respect your ideals or ideas don't get bent out of shape. That's life; just smile.

## **RULE #34 ELEVATE YOUR MIND**

Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people. If you don't understand this then go back to Rule #1 and start over.

## **RULE #35 PLAN FOR THE FUTURE BUT LIVE FOR TODAY**

My dad would complain of a bad headache yet wouldn't take an aspirin because, "What would I take if I *really* had a *bad* headache???" But dad, you *do* have a bad headache! If you take an aspirin you'll feel better, relieve your stress and live longer!

No one knows what will happen tomorrow and if you live your life simply preparing for or worrying about the future you will undoubtedly be disappointed.

You can't change yesterday nor control tomorrow; if you learn from the past and be the best and happiest person you can be today then you will have done the best you can to insure a good future.

## **RULE #36 THE EGGS IN A BASKET RULE**

You know the saying: don't put all your eggs in one basket. Well it's true. If you totally rely on one thing in life—whether it's a job as your only source of income or the TV as your only source of news and entertainment—you run the real risk on having your entire life go sour. Spread the risk around a bit; one bad event can really screw you up if you don't have a backup plan.

## **RULE #37 SPEAK LESS, LISTEN MORE**

I was once on a trip to a foreign country with an exuberant yet lonely 40-year-old college student who felt it necessary to be an authority on all subjects of the universe. Trees? He had studied years of forestry in Oregon. Stars? An astronomer and apprentice with Carl Sagan. Cars? A Formula I race driver. Boats? A licensed captain. Planes? A

stunt pilot. History? An authority on all aspects and events. It became a running joke to try to find a subject on which he would not instantly proclaim himself an expert.

One day I introduced him to a yoga instructor and he immediately proceeded to tell everyone how he had been practicing yoga for many years and had visited India to study under the tutelage of all the most famous yogis in the world.

The instructor listened for a while without saying a word then calmly pronounced, “He who speaks does not know.  
He who knows, does not speak.”

## **RULE #38**

### **DON'T JUST WORK HARD, WORK SMART**

I know a woman who is one of the hardest working people I know. When she puts her mind to something she will completely immerse herself in whatever task it is she decides to tackle, and I certainly admire her for this. The problem is, however, that most of the time she could accomplish the same results, or even better and faster results, if she worked smarter.

First, really assess the job: does it *really* need doing? To what extent? What's the easiest way to get the results you want? Is this the best use of your time (see Rule #27). Then, get organized. Figure out what needs to be done when, how, in what order, and what the end result should be.

There is nothing wrong with working hard—as long as you're not wasting your energy.

## **RULE #39**

### **FALL IN LOVE**

I'm not sure that this can really be a rule, but I do know that if you've never been in love then you really haven't experienced life fully.

Of course there is a downside to being in love—the ending—and perhaps that's what this rule is really about. Don't waste this most precious emotional and intimate gift. Always look at things from your partner's perspective: how would I feel if someone said or did *that* to me? When you're in love, the other person is a mirror to your own soul. Open your mind, open your heart, hang on tight and enjoy the ride!

## **RULE #40**

### **EAT LESS, EXERCISE MORE**

This is, of course, the easiest and most basic way to not only lose weight but also to feel better (and feel better about yourself). If I would write the Ultimate Sure-Fire-Fool-Proof diet book, this is all that would be in it.

As easy as this rule sounds, this doesn't mean that it's easy—far from it, especially if you are busy or substantially overweight. But you **HAVE** to do it. It's a rule!

## **RULE #41**

### **YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL**

Since I have a severe case of FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out), this was one of the hardest rules for me to learn.

For many years I would stress when there were lots of things I *had* to do while at the same time there were lots of things I *wanted* to do. It was virtually impossible to focus and I often felt that I could or should be doing more. I would have a ski trip planned and someone would call to go climbing: I want to do both! Go on a bike ride or a hike or play tennis: I want to do everything! Do some writing or edit some photos or clean my garage: it ALL has to be done!

Once you make a decision, try hard to stick with it. And most important, be happy with your decision.

## **RULE #42**

### **THERE ARE NO OBSTACLES, ONLY CHALLENGES**

An obstacle is something that is in your way, preventing you from achieving your goal. There are two ways to look at them: as something that is bad or something that is good. While no one likes obstacles, if you view them as a challenge instead they may not seem quite a formidable.

For instance, on a very basic level (and metaphorical level) if you are driving through the city and find a road block, it becomes a challenge to find a quick and easy way around it rather than a reason to stress (that you can't control anyway).

On a higher level, let's say that you are having problems in a personal relationship: your mate is a slob and it is driving you crazy. It is an obstacle to a peaceful relationship, but not an insurmountable one. The challenge is to find a compromise between the two of you that will work for you both—find a way around the wall that threatens your dreams.

By realizing that there is always a way around obstacles (and they are a fact of life) they will not seem as serious or overwhelming.

## RULE #43

### THINGS HAPPEN FOR A REASON

There's a common expression I hear quite often: "things happen for a reason". I agree. *Bad things* happen for a reason.

Let me explain. There are two 'kinds' of things that happen: good things and bad things. Both types happen for two different reasons: either because of luck or because you make them happen.

So because of basic luck there's a 50/50 chance of either something good or something bad happening. If you don't try to control your environment or your destiny then you're pretty much relying on luck. 50/50.

But if you take charge of your life you can greatly improve your chances that whatever 'happens' will be good rather than bad. In fact, just by avoiding dumb mistakes and working to create and capitalize on the 'good things' in your life you can improve your chances of having 'good things' happen by another 50%.

That means that although things will still 'happen for a reason', you have a 75/25 chance of those things being good rather than bad—certainly a worthwhile goal.

Bad things will still happen, of course. But not nearly as many and no matter what, at least you are taking a pro-active role in your destiny.

## RULE #44

### NEVER PAY IN ADVANCE

This is a very personal rule based solely on my experiences in life. Without hesitation I can say that 100% of the time that I paid for something in advance—an item, a service, whatever—I *never* received anything in return. Never. From the kid who *promised* to return in the morning to mow my lawn but needed the \$5 today to the worker who was supposed to return the following day with a truck load of sand but needed the money in advance to actually pay for the sand that was never delivered, I never received anything when I paid in advance.

Hopefully you have had different experiences and don't need this rule. But whenever I consider once again trusting someone who *needs it in advance*, I go straight to this rule to remind myself. Sad but true.

## RULE #45

### NEVER SAY NEVER

Never is a very long time. While there may be some people on earth who can see into the future, I am not one of them. For that reason I have learned to take one day at a time. I have my successes and failures, my mistakes and lessons, my penalties and rewards.

Many times I have known people who have said, “I will never do XXXX!” only to witness them do exactly that some time down the road. While it is perfectly acceptable to change your mind, why set yourself up for failure of a personal commitment?

Instead, learn your lesson or make your decision and be aware that in life, things always have a habit of changing. Go with it.

## RULE #46

### ASK

I don't know who to credit for this expression (Albert Einstein?) but someone once said, “If you don't ask then you can't give someone the opportunity to say ‘yes’.” I couldn't agree more.

Unlike the stereotype male, I *always* ask for directions if I'm lost (see Rule #27). If you don't know something that you want to know, never be afraid to ask. Yes, there are stupid questions (so think before asking something *really* dumb) but it's always better to ask a dumb question than do something even dumber.

One time I was sailing my boat with some friends along an inland waterway in Mexico. As we passed a big, beautiful house right on the water with a large floating dock out front, it occurred to me that this dock needed a nice boat parked at it. Much to the amazement of my friends, I stopped at the dock and marched up the impeccable lawn, past the pool, and onto the patio where a woman was sitting. “Excuse me for barging in but I couldn't help but notice that you have a nice big empty dock and since I have a nice big sailboat that needs a place to live I thought that perhaps we might be able to work out a deal,” I said.

Obviously a bit taken back she said I'd have to talk with her husband and she went to get him. We talked for a few minutes and then they invited my entire crew up for a drink while we got to know each other a bit more. Within 15 minutes we were the best of friends, had struck a deal, and he said I could start any time. Since marina slips nearby were twice the price and almost impossible to find, I was obviously quite happy.

When we left my friends were still quite amazed. “How did you do that?” one asked. “I would *never* have the nerve to just walk up to a house and ask them to park my boat in front. How did you know they'd go for it?”

“I had no idea,” I replied. “But I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. Now I have a beautiful place for my boat and some new friends. If you don't ask, you never know.”

While I'm on this subject, there's an occasional corollary that I employ from time to time even though I don't consider it a rule: It's easier to beg forgiveness than ask permission. I rationalize using this one whenever I'm dealing with government bureaucrats or big-business flunkies—in short, anyone who doesn't want to make a

decision for fear they will be castigated. I don't remember ever getting into real trouble when employing this ploy but it should be used with care.

## **RULE #47**

### **QUESTION AUTHORITY**

This is a tough one. Just because someone is in a position of authority (meaning they have some modicum of control over you) doesn't mean they are correct in what they say or do. Or want you to do. Never automatically assume that you *must* do what you are told or that it is the right thing to do. Think for yourself, and if you rationally find that there is a good reason why you *shouldn't* do what you are told, don't do it.

Never assume that someone with a badge or uniform or simply someone in political power is right, or that they have your best interest in mind. They certainly *might* be, but don't automatically assume this.

## **RULE #48**

### **MANAGE YOUR RISKS**

Taking risks is a *good* thing. Risks can be physical, financial, emotional or any combination of things. Taking an occasional risk keeps you young and keeps you alive. But only if you manage them.

Taking a risk just for the sake of adventure can lead to dire consequences. Know your limits, make a plan and think through it before committing.

## **RULE #49**

### **THERE ARE NO RULES**

This is the final rule, and undoubtedly the most important one. Never let anyone else dictate what you do or think or desire or try. I have heard people say time and again that "That can't be done." or "I can't possibly do THAT!" or "You're not supposed to do that.". Rubbish!!!

If you truly want to pile your dirty dishes in the sink, GO AHEAD! If you want to spend the whole day in bed, ENJOY! Do whatever you know in your heart to be truly RIGHT and you will never go wrong in life.

The biggest NO RULE rule is that you will never know what you can do until you try. If you don't try, you fail. If you try, you cannot fail. You might discover some personal limits, but you can never fail.

## AND FINALLY,

I was sailing on some friend's boat some years ago and I was peppering them with questions, hoping to gain some insights and ideas for the day when I would buy my own boat. After several days of listening to their thoughts on everything from sail layout to dinghy storage, they asked me what kind of boat I was thinking about buying. When I explained my thoughts and reasons they looked at each other with a combination of disdain and pity. It was obvious, they told me, that I was on the wrong track. A boat was not something to enjoy, but rather it was a vessel of constant work and repairs and problems.

Since I've been told all my life that I could never do what I have eventually ended up doing, I immediately knew that I was on the right track, especially after hearing their explanations about the reasons for the way they did things (which made absolutely no sense other than that was how they had always done them).

After hearing one particularly sarcastic comment about my plans I simply smiled and said, "Well, I guess that's why we all have our own boat."

**Enjoy your boat!**