

# The Rules of Life

[ How to be successful, realise your dreams, establish balance in your Life and be happy. ]

Life has never been more challenging: the pressures never tougher, the demands never greater, whilst our aspirations shift ever higher. How do we make sense of it all? How do we get to where we want to get, without losing it all along the way?

Is there a simple idea we can use to help us re-focus, re-invent and make it all *enjoyable* again?

Yes: the Rules of Life. You know there are rules; you always have done, ever since you were a child. In science there are rules e.g. Newton's Laws of Motion, thus: 'to every action there is an equal and opposite reaction' or *step out of the rowing boat at the edge of the pond and the boat will 'fly' the other way*. In relationships there are rules e.g. The Golden Rule, thus: 'do unto others as you would prefer them to do unto you' or *keep being mean to your assistant and they will leave to work for someone else*. In work there are rules, thus: 'meet your objectives to get a good review grade' or *mess up this quarter and you'll not get a bonus*. And in Life there are Rules. What is a Rule? It's a guideline: it tells you the consequences of your action. It helps you get to where you want to go as efficiently and effectively as you can. In what way? The trick is to know the rules and then you can use them because you can't fight them: they are

independent of you. When you are driving a car, for example, it's best to work within the local laws. If you don't, you have problems, and those problems might be a fine for speeding or even losing a limb in an accident. But within those rules there is still plenty of scope for a great journey: you might wish to slow down and enjoy the scenery. You might care to journey a little faster on one stretch of motorway and eat up some miles. It's exactly the same with the Rules of Life: they don't limit; they empower.

**Read these rules on a regular basis until you are able to 'live & breathe' them.**

- » Give them plenty of attention.
- » Notice how they help.
- » Follow up with more detailed reading.

...the trick is to know the rules and then you can use them..they empower.



Rule 1:

You can do anything; but you can't do everything



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There is a myriad of opportunities out there and you can do anything. Don't be thwarted by the poor judgement of others (...it's very difficult to get into medical school... you'll never be rich if you become an actor... there are simply too many coffee shops...), by your own baggage (...I didn't have a very supportive up-bringing... I really need an MBA to progress my career... of course as a woman I've hit a glass ceiling...), by your fear (...I might fail... the neighbours will notice I no longer drive a BMW... what about... what about... well: what about?). Start exploring your Life and possibilities fully.

*Lucy knew she was cool at marketing. Although she was only an assistant in the department, it was interesting how many of her ideas got absorbed and adopted by the other consultants for their campaigns. However there was no way they would give her a more senior job. She had been by-passed twice now. And why? Because she had no formal marketing qualifications and she really couldn't see the point of doing that now. The lecturers on the courses were totally out of date,*

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*anyway. And to attend those lectures would just distract from what she really wanted to do and also to be honest would be just putting off the decision. And the decision was to negotiate a 4-day a week contract and start her business with 1 day per week. You can do anything, but you can't do everything.*

**Each day, read and consider these statements until they become part of your new wiring:**

- » My potential is undoubtedly greater than my current practice.
- » My potential is limited only by my imagination. This I have hardly started to use fully.
- » My potential is limited only by my degree of focus. I have hardly started to apply real focus yet.
- » My practice, my imagination and my focus can only improve. I am determined that they will do so.

## Rule 2:

You need to be before you can do before you have

You can't consistently perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way that you fundamentally 'are'.

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Who you are and who you become will have more long-term impact on your life than what you are doing and planning to do.

Your thinking - defines you. It defines your behaviour which in turn of course defines the results which you get. All results which we seek must come from changes in behaviour. But those behaviours and those results will not be sustainable without fundamental 'who we are' changes.

You can't consistently perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way that you fundamentally 'are'. If you don't really believe in being healthy, you won't be healthy. If you don't take on the complete thinking of a good leader, you won't be a good leader. No amount of 'I must' will do it unless your heart and gut are aligned with your thinking. It is who you are and who you want to be. Make a decision today to develop an empowering mindset. Your past mindset has dictated who you are now. Your new mindset will dictate who you will become.

*Jack's leadership skills left a lot to be desired. Command and control seemed to be his main approach. Not surprisingly it was not*

*motivating, nor empowering and he got lots of feed-back about his poor style. The challenge for Jack was that he was 'doing' leadership, he wasn't 'being' a leader. He was 'doing' what was in the leadership book. He was holding the team meetings, he was giving objectives. But he was not being a leader. The transformation came when he finally got that point and he decided to be a leader. That impacted in a multitude of subtle ways everything he did: the new sensitivity of his conversations, his values, his investment for the long-term. You need to be before you can do before you can have.*

### Each day, read and consider these statements until they become part of your new wiring:

- » I have decided to manage my life.
- » I have decided to manage my own destiny.
- » I shall do that by adopting a series of empowering mindsets, for example:
  - » I can create the life I truly want
  - » I can overcome the current apparent obstacles
  - » I have decided to do this by managing my brain, for example:
    - » By reading more: widely and deeply
    - » By attending more personal development programmes
    - » By regularly asking: how am I doing?
- » And above all, by deciding to be who I wish to become.



## Rule 3:

For things to be better, you need to be better





If you want things to be better you can: (1) wait for them to change; this is a bad strategy as they may never do so. You can (2) move somewhere else; this also is a bad strategy as they may just be as bad elsewhere or (3) you can change you; this is a great strategy as this one is totally under your control and it is a fantastic example of portable equity i.e. a skill you can take with you.

You see, you get what you put in. Put more in and you will get more out. Agreed, maybe not immediately. But you will eventually. Raise your standards and the returns will increase and interestingly, disproportionately so i.e. there are amazingly good returns for just small increases in standards. Consider the scale of standards:

Dire   Poor   OK   Good   Very Good   Excellent  
Outstanding   Awesome

The standard you choose to offer dictates the return you will get. If the service you offer as a restaurant is regularly dire, your return will be dire i.e. your restaurant will fail. If you offer very good, you should be OK, but rarely will you be packed out. If your service is awesome, then you will always be full, tips will be good and your business has a guaranteed future. It's your choice.

*Vipul-age 9-was a difficult child no doubt. His elder sister had been more straightforward and his younger brother was still a toddler. But Vipul! Exasperation was the word. And his father had pretty well given up. And his mother really didn't know what to do. Until one day Vipul's dad went on a course at work where they were looking at the whole business of emotional intelligence in the work-place and one point struck him about relationships: sometimes you simply have to put more in before you get the return. It really struck him. He decided to try it. Nothing happened immediately, but within a month Vipul's behaviour was transformed. Vipul's father had raised his standards. He decided to be at the very least an excellent dad. For things to be better, you need to be better.*

You see, you get what you put in. Put more in and you will get more out.

**Each day, read and consider these statements until they become part of your new wiring:**

- » Excellence will be my minimum standard.
- » I realise my standards are my choice, even in the face of adversity from friends or colleagues.
- » I will consistently raise my standards in all I do.



Rule 4:

Do less to achieve more



To do less and yet at the same time, achieve more, decide to get a much deeper understanding of time. Simply 'doing' does not necessarily equate to productivity: you know that. Accept that you never will have enough time and that you will never break out of the time trap until you stop using urgency as your sole measure of activity.

Firstly make your primary scale of achieving, important. Something is important if it is meeting a goal. A goal might be business e.g. 'increase business revenue by 12%' or personal e.g. 'help our young daughter with swimming confidence'. Do your utmost to only do things which are important. Remember that urgent is not always important and that not addressing what is truly important often causes things to become urgent. It will require you to clarify what is important at work and what is important in your Life. No bad thing of course.

Once you are working on issues and topics which are important, address those important tasks which are also investing for the future: many of these will seem to be not that urgent. However that is the whole point. Although non urgent, they are investing. To take a walk at lunch-time is not urgent but it is investing in

your energy for the afternoon. To sort out your pensions funds is not urgent, but it is investing in enabling you to retire at the age you wish to retire. This combination of important and investing is what we call the state of focus: it is highly productive.

Once you are happy with the state of focus i.e. that which is both important and investing, decide to augment your decision criteria, wherever possible with what is interesting. This gives the powerful combination of what is important, investing and interesting. For many this creates the state often know as 'flow' or 'being in the zone'. A very productive, satisfying and yet oddly timeless state. This will boost your happiness and contentment which will in itself boost your productivity.

### Example

#### Read this statement each day:

- » I will be clear on what I want; what is important for me.
- » I recognize that busyness does not necessarily equate to productivity.
- » I will remind myself that when I say yes to the urgent, I may well be saying no to the important.
- » I will insist on focusing on tasks which meet the three I's: important, investing and interesting.

Only do things which are important. Remember that urgent is not always important...



## Rule 5:

WYSIWYG: what you see is what you get



You have the ability to choose your response, to choose what you see. It's raining and awful weather, or it's good for the garden. You've been made redundant and it's the end of your career, or it's a really good time to re-invent. Your book has been turned down 10 times or you're now learning rapidly what a publisher really wants in a great book.

What you see. Is what you get. That's perception: you are unique in being equipped as a human being to change your perception. You are not hard-wired. If someone is irritating you do not have to be irritated. If you *had* to be, you would be hard-wired, much as is a reptile. But you have 100s if not 1000s of choices. Decide to exercise more of them: to decide which would be best for the particular situation.

To avoid hard-wired or reptilian responses: take breaks. Regularly. And make sure they are both physical (go for a walk) and mental (take a data break: no e-mail, no reading... just let the brain rest for a while). Combining the two is of course, perfect.

Watch your language. Your language is an 'easy' indicator of your thinking and how 'conditioned' or 'hard-wired' you have become. Watch out for labels ('I'm not the sort of person to speak out in a meeting'), generalisations ('I'm never given an opportunity') or even false logic ('I didn't complete my degree so I'll not be eligible for the graduate training scheme').

*Tim realised that he was now on his fourth sales job in five years and no change of company ever got him what he wanted. It dawned that maybe the common factor was him: maybe he needed to change. He was seeing problems and getting problems. Maybe he needed to see something different and he would get something different. WYSIWYG.*

**Read these statements each day;**

- » I can choose.
- » The choice I make will affect what I get.
- » When a situation does not proceed as I would wish, I can ask what does this say about me?
- » I make the 'real world'.

...you are unique in being equipped as a human being to change your perception.

## Rule 6:

For true, sustainable happiness: (1) Grow  
(2) Nurture your nature (3) Act with passion  
(4) Balance your compass

We have been seduced. Even though folk tales, our parents and pop song lyrics have warned us, we love to be seduced. But money, fast cars, sex, drugs and rock and roll do not make us happy-or certainly not beyond the instant application. But research does consistently show that the following will:

**Growth and challenge.** We human beings love a challenge. Because it gets us to grow. And we are meant to grow. We are not meant to stagnate: we get dulled, jaded, and unhappy. Of course what that challenge is for you, only you can find out. It might be teaching disadvantaged children, it might be pottering in the garden, travelling on a modest budget or writing a blog. Or building a multi-national organisation.

**Nurturing our Nature.** But what 'growth' is doing, of course, is allowing us to nurture our nature. To take the genetic gifts we have and use them, to enjoy them. Again, no one can tell you what those are. No-don't try and be Richard Branson-simply be the best version of you that you can be; that's what nurturing your nature really means. And as you challenge yourself you'll find out more about what your true nature is.

**Do it with passion (or pack it in).** And once you are nurturing your nature you will want to do it with passion. You'll love it. You won't be able to help it. And if you don't: it's telling you something. Pack it in as soon as you conceivably can.

**Balance your compass.** You know what a *geographical* compass is. If it is not set correctly, you're in a mess. You'll get lost. The same applies to your personal compass. Set it correctly and the path is yours. You'll get there and you will enjoy the journey. Ensure you know what you want for your (1) career; what are you going to do? How are you going to earn money? (2) mind/body: are you looking after them? How? (3) finances: what state are they in? I know you don't want to think about them, but the earlier you do, the better (4) relationships: which ones need some attention? (5) fun: are you having fun-if not, what's the point? (6) contribution: that's the one which make us all tick, really. Where's your contribution?

No-don't try and be Richard Branson-simply be the best version of you that you can be.

## Rule 7:

So much of what you want, including happiness, love, affluence, wisdom, authenticity, good health and longevity is available to you now. Seize it.



**So you want:**

**Happiness:** decide to be happy. Remind yourself of *Rule 6*. Remind yourself that although all stuff and acquisitions from fresh-pasta makers to cool job-titles can cause temporary blips of joy, they are not cumulative. Only your own growth and full realisation of your personal talents will make you fully happy and joyful.

**Love:** invest in relationships. No relationship will work without attention, time and energy. Give it those and it will blossom. And if despite your best intentions, it doesn't, then move on. Remember that love is a verb.

**Affluence:** Break the connections between happiness = money and your worth = money. Ask yourself, what is *really* important? And how much fun can you have without money? When you begin to shift your mindset (re-read *Rule 5*; WYSIWYG) you'll notice how much you really do have.

**Wisdom:** Start reading again and not just reading, studying. Start asking questions again. As a child we are given the dots. Life is about connecting them. *That's Wisdom.*

**Authenticity:** Stop the bullshit. Stop playing games with yourself and with others. Deep down inside if you listen to your heart, if you listen to your gut you know what is going on. You know what needs to be done. Start tuning in again to that intuition.

**Good health and longevity:** You are a simple decision away. You know exactly what to do, to boost your health, to increase your longevity. Don't fool yourself any longer. Do it. And do it now.

As a child we are given the dots. Life is about connecting them. That's wisdom.

## Nicholas Bate Profile

Nicholas Bate is passionate about supporting people to ensure they realise and release their true and full potential.

After a career in sales and marketing in the IT industry, culminating in leading sector marketing for Research Machines, Oxford, Nicholas launched Strategic Edge. A small, premium consultancy, Strategic Edge specialises in creating long-term competitive advantage for its clients through work with the individual. His clients include Avanade, Barclays, GSK, Marks & Spencer, Microsoft, MSN, Orange, PC World, Saatchi & Saatchi.

He is author, designer and facilitator for the ground-breaking 'Personal Excellence' seminar, a programme used as the basis for cultural change in many organisations, in addition to many original development concepts in leadership, team-building and sales training.

A pioneering 'thought leader', Nicholas has introduced and worked with clients on concepts such as:

- » The New World of Work and the 7 Drivers of Radical Change.
- » Work-Life balance.
- » Excellence is a Mindset.
- » This is Real Selling.
- » Boost your True Productivity.

Consistently rated as an inspirational yet highly pragmatic speaker, Nicholas teaches around the world and is particularly skilled at working with large audiences in an experiential and engaging manner.

He is a visiting lecturer on the Warwick University Business School full-time, part-time and IBM MBA programmes.

He is author of four acclaimed books:

- » **Being the Best:** how to realise and release your true potential
- » **Get A Life:** how to achieve the work-life balance you are seeking
- » **JfDI:** Just Do It: the definitive guide to enabling your vision
- » **Unplugged:** the time for personal re-invention is now (launched 2007)

As well as numerous articles and two audio programmes (available on CD).

Nicholas carried out research in the field of Molecular Biophysics at Magdalen College, Oxford University and is an NLP Master Practitioner, MBTI (Levels 1 and 2) accredited and a qualified (PGCE) teacher. As well as instigating the Strategic Edge research programme, he has spent time studying with many of the recognised practitioners in the fields of business and personal development.

Keep up-to-date with Nicholas by reading his blog: [nicholasbate.typepad.com](http://nicholasbate.typepad.com)

## The Rules of Life

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