

THE INTERNATIONAL  
BESTSELLING SERIES

# THE RULES OF LIFE

RICHARD TEMPLAR

THE  
RULES  
OF  
LIFE

Having a plan gives you a fall-back position. When life gets hectic – and boy does it do that sometimes – it is easy to forget what we are here for. Having a plan means that when the dust settles you can remember, ‘Now what was I doing? Oh yes, I remember, my plan was to . . .’. And off you go again, back on course.

**IF YOU DON'T PLAN YOUR  
PLAN, IT WILL REMAIN A DREAM**

# Have a sense of humour

How important this is. As we struggle through this life – and it can be a struggle – we need to keep a sense of proportion about it. What we do and what we take seriously can often be so far removed from what it is actually all about that it is laughable. We get bogged down in trivia, lost in irrelevant detail to such an extent that our life can whizz past and we don't even notice. By letting go of things that really aren't important we can put ourselves back on the right track. And the best way to do that is through humour – laughing at ourselves, laughing at our situation, but never laughing at others; they're just as lost as us and don't need to be laughed at.

We get bogged down with things like worrying what the neighbours will think, concerns over stuff we don't have, or things we haven't done: 'Oh no, I haven't washed the car for two weeks and it's filthy and next door did theirs yesterday so it looks like we are really slovenly'. If we ever think we're getting like that then we do need to have a laugh about it. Life is for living, enjoying the sunshine, big things – not getting in a terrible state because you dropped some eggs on the supermarket floor.

Laughing at yourself and situations you find yourself in has a double positive effect. Firstly, it diffuses tension and helps regain a sense of proportion; and secondly, it has real physical as well as mental benefits. Laughter causes the release of endorphins, which make you feel better as well as giving you a better perspective on life.

This isn't about telling jokes all the time, or cracking witty puns. It's more about being able to see something funny in whatever life throws at us along the way – and there is always some humour in everything. I once came round after being unconscious from a serious car crash. I was in a cubicle in a hospital and in great pain. As I regained consciousness I let out a couple of choice words to describe my condition and, as I did so, the nurse arrived and

opened the curtains, only for me to find a nun sat outside.\* I was mortified and immediately apologised. She looked at me most gravely, winked, and quietly said, 'It's OK, I've said worse myself'.

If you observe any aspect of human behaviour, you can see the ridiculousness in all of it. Learn to find the funny side of everything. It's the best technique for instant stress relief and dissolves anxiety and doubt. Try it.

**SEE SOMETHING FUNNY IN  
WHATEVER LIFE THROWS AT  
US ALONG THE WAY**

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\* Nothing to do with me; she was quietly waiting for another nun who was being checked out for a splinter in her finger, I later discovered

# Choose how you make your bed

Every action you take, every decision you make, everything you do causes an immediate effect on those around you – and on you. And this is the important bit. There is such a thing as instant karma. It is your bed and you are going to have to lie in it. Your actions will dictate whether in general your life is going to run happily or badly, smoothly or as if the wheels have fallen off. If you are selfish and manipulative it will rebound on you. If you are generally loving and thoughtful you will get your just rewards – and not in heaven (or the next life or whatever you believe) but right here, right now.

Trust me. Whatever you do and how you do it will come back to you in spades. This isn't a threat, merely an observation. Those who do good, get good. Those who do bad, get bad. I know we can all point to people who seem to have it made and are still pretty vile. But they don't sleep at night. They have no one to really love them. Inside they are sad and lonely and frightened. Those who go around sharing a bit of love and kindness get rewarded with the same coming back.

It's a bit like the old adage that 'You are what you eat'. You are what you do. Look at the faces of those who spread joy and you will see laughter lines and smiles. Look at those who like to bully and get their own way and are arrogant or demanding or vicious and you will see etched lines of misery and fear, and frowns where there ought to be lightness. These lines won't ever be taken away by face creams or suntans or plastic surgery. They are what they do and you can see it in their eyes. And in the state of their bed, of course.

So be careful how you make your bed. What goes around, comes around. There is instant karma. What you sow you reap. Better to stand up and be counted right from the start. Do the right thing, every time. You know what it is. Then when you get in the bed you've made, not only will you be able to sleep at night, but you'll sleep the sleep of the just.

**DO THE RIGHT THING, EVERY  
TIME. YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS**

# Life can be a bit like advertising

Someone once said that half of the money he spent on advertising was wasted but he didn't know which half.\* His point was of course that if you can't tell which half, then you have to keep on doing the whole lot, fully aware that not all of it will produce rewards. Life is a bit like that. Sometimes it seems so unfair. You put in loads of effort and get nothing back. You're polite to people and everyone seems rude back. You work up a sweat and others cruise it. Well, you have to keep on doing the 100 per cent because you don't know which bits will pay off. I know it isn't fair but then life isn't. Your efforts will be rewarded eventually but you'll probably never know which efforts are being rewarded – or for what – and which aren't.

We tend to think we are being lucky sometimes when actually we are just being rewarded for some bit of effort long ago that we have forgotten about. We have to keep going. You can't give up on the grounds that you've had a setback or two because you don't know which setbacks are the ones which count and which ones aren't. I suppose it's like the number of frogs you have to get acquainted with before you find your prince (or princess). Or the pile of oysters you'd have to open to find a pearl.

But whatever you do, don't lose heart because things don't seem to be panning out. Only by keeping up the effort will rewards come in eventually – and you'll never know from which bits comes the best reward.

Most well-balanced and happy people will tell you that sometimes you have to work at something without looking for a pay-off – apart from the immediate pay-off that we are being kept busy and

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\* Lord Leverhulme I believe