

THE INTERNATIONAL
BESTSELLING SERIES

THE
RULES
OF
EVERYTHING

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Dedicate your life to something

To know what counts and what doesn't, you have to know what you are dedicating your life to. There are, of course, no right or wrong answers to this one as it's a very personal choice – but it's really useful to have an answer, rather than not really knowing.

As an example, my own life has been driven by two things: (a) someone once told me that if my soul or spirit was the only thing I was likely to be taking with me when I went, then it ought to be the best thing I had; (b) my curious upbringing.

The first one isn't, for me at least, in any way religious. It just struck a chord with me, triggered something. Whatever it was I was taking with me, then perhaps I ought to do a bit of work on it. Make sure it really is the very best thing about me. That got me thinking. How on earth do you go about that? The answer still is that I haven't got a clue. I have explored and experimented, learned and made mistakes, been a seeker and a follower, read and observed and wrestled with this great problem all my life. How do you go about improving your life on that level? I think the only conclusion I have come to is to live as decent a life as possible, to go through causing as little damage as possible, to treat everyone with whom I come into contact with respect and dignity. It's something to dedicate my life to and it works for me.

And how can my curious upbringing cause me to focus on what I am dedicating my life to? Well, having had a 'dysfunctional' upbringing and having chosen to let it motivate me rather than affect me, I am acutely aware that many people also need to throw off that feeling of being badly affected by what has gone before. This is what I dedicate my life to. Yes, it might be crazy; I might be crazy. But at least I have something I can focus on, something (for me) that counts.

Now none of this is big stuff and by that I mean I don't go around with this emblazoned on my forehead – 'Templar dedicates his life to ...' sort of thing. It's more that, quietly, in my heart, I have something that I can devote my attention to. It's a yardstick by which I can measure (a) how I'm doing, (b) what I'm doing and (c) where I'm going. You don't need to trumpet it. You don't need to tell anyone (see Rule 1). You don't even need to think it out in too much detail. A simple internal mission statement will do. Decide what it is you are dedicating your life to. It makes the rest much easier.

**A SIMPLE INTERNAL MISSION
STATEMENT WILL DO**

No fear, no surprise, no hesitation, no doubt

Where does this come from? It's from a seventeenth-century samurai warrior. This was his four-point key to successful living – and swordsmanship.

- **No fear.** There should be nothing in this life that you are afraid of. If there is, you might need to do some work on overcoming that fear. Here I have to confess to a certain fear of heights. I avoid high places if I can. Recently, owing to leaky gutters, I had to crawl out on our roof – three floors up with a very long drop on one side. I gritted my teeth and kept repeating, 'No fear, no fear, no fear', until the job was done. Oh yes, and of course I didn't look down. Whatever your fear, face it head on and defeat it.
- **No surprise.** Life seems to be full of them, doesn't it? You're going along swimmingly and suddenly something huge rears up ahead of you. But if you look carefully, there were clues all along the way that it was going to happen. No surprise there then. Whatever your situation now, it is going to change. No surprises there. So why does life seem to surprise us then? Because we are asleep half the time. Wake up and nothing can sneak up on you.
- **No hesitation.** Weigh up the odds and then just get on with it. If you hang back, the opportunity will have passed. If you spend too long thinking, you'll never make a move. Once we have looked at the options, we make a choice, a decision and then go for it. That's the secret. No hesitation means not waiting around for other people to help out or make up our minds for us. No hesitation means if there is a certain inevitability about a situation then just throw yourself in

head first and enjoy the ride. If there is nothing to be done then waiting doesn't help.

- **No doubt.** Once you have made up your mind about something, don't go over it again and again. Stop thinking and enjoy – relax and let go. Stop worrying. Tomorrow will come along as certainly as it can. There is no doubt about life. It just is. Be confident. Be committed. Be sure of yourself. Once you have committed yourself to a set course, a path, a plan, then follow it through. Have no doubt it was the right thing to do and no doubt that you will succeed. Get on with it and trust your judgement completely.

**WAKE UP AND NOTHING
CAN SNEAK UP ON YOU**

It's OK to give up

You know how you sometimes hear stories about people who have failed their driving test 35 times? Much as you admire their persistence, don't you sometimes wonder why they don't just give up? These are clearly people who just aren't cut out to drive big, heavy, dangerous lumps of machinery around streets full of children, old people, dogs and lamp posts. Even if they do finally pass, there's a feeling that it's probably a fluke, and you probably still wouldn't want to be a passenger on their next trip.

Actually, if these people held their hands up (as some do) and said, 'You know what? This isn't me. I'm going to get a bicycle and a bus season ticket', I would applaud their ability to see what was staring them in the face. I wouldn't call them quitters, or criticise their lack of determination or drive.⁴ They'd simply be getting the message loud and clear, and having the good sense not to ignore it.

Sometimes we head off down the wrong path in life, often with the best motives. Maybe there's no knowing it's the wrong path until we try it. There's no shame in admitting it once we realise it's not getting us where we want to be. When you realise this college course isn't right for you, or that you don't have what it takes to do this job well, or that your move to a new city isn't working out, or that the hours you put into being on the local council put too much strain on your family, it takes guts to say so. That's not quitting. That's courage.

Quitting is when you give up because you don't want to put in the effort, you can't be bothered, you don't like hard work, you're scared of failure. We Rules Players don't quit. We harden our resolve and we get on with the job without complaint.

⁴ Sorry, couldn't resist that one.

However, a good Rules Player knows when they're beat. If the world is telling you that you took a wrong turning, you can admit it honestly and put yourself on a different track. No one can be brilliant at everything, and sometimes you have to try things to find out whether you can do them. And maybe you can't.

A few years ago a leading UK government minister resigned from her post, famously saying that she was simply 'not up to the job'. Now, I'd never really rated her up to that point, but she rose hugely in my estimation – and that of many others – for that admission. That took guts. Maybe she wasn't great at leading a government department, but she was certainly in a different league from most politicians when it comes to honesty, courage and self-knowledge. She's an outstanding example of the fact that if you give up in the right way at the right time, you're showing strength of character, not weakness.

**A GOOD RULES PLAYER
KNOWS WHEN THEY'RE BEAT**