



Living a Better, Happier, More Successful Kind of Life

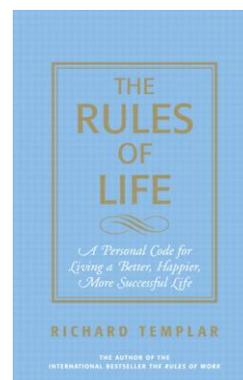
The Rules of Life, A personal code for living a better, happier, more successful kind of life.

Richard Templar

Pearson Education Limited, (2006), UK.

It has been suggested to me that SoFers may not be that familiar with the self-help shelf at your favourite bookstore.

This genre has certainly exploded in the last 20-30 years with names like Stephen Covey, Anthony Robbins, Louise Hay, Wayne Dyer and Robert Kiyosaki enjoying considerable profile in our culture. Some may not have bought or read a self-help book since Spock or Carnegie (who according to Amazon has now sold 15 million copies of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*) and may be missing out on some of the most original thinkers and teachers of our age. SoFers are already well aware of the declining influence of established religion in the west and combined with increased societal pressure to succeed, get rich, seek alternative health remedies, lose weight, get fit etc. The self-help authors have a huge market of people looking for answers and guidance on life's road.



I was unable to find out what the actual size of the market was relative to the total market of book sales. I will admit that I read more books in this genre than conventional novels and I doubt that I am alone in this. Most authors claim to have triumphed over some adversity or have a more conventional qualification, and others simply start with their own celebrity. At their worst their books can be expressions of the author's ego and offer little substance and at their best self-help books can change your thinking for the better. They can motivate you towards health, inspire you towards wealth, or provide new and original insights into the human condition, and even touch your soul on the way.

The Rules of Life has a pastel and plain cover with no toothy portrait and a claim of being the bestselling author of *The Rules of Work* (2002). Further research reveals *The Rules of Management* (2005). In the introduction, Templar offers little of his background or history except to say that he had an unconventional and dysfunctional upbringing and he had to decide to get past it to survive and succeed and further that he was expert at people watching and believed he could notice what works. His self-effacing style and English turn of phrase are quickly engaging and easy to read. He does not preach or lecture, rely on evidence from scientists or use some theological authority to express any of his views, just the weight of his own conviction, hurrah! **Templar claims that the happiest and most contented people are so because of the choices they make every day.**

The format of the book is simple. Templar sets out 100 Rules for life each with no more than two pages of explanation. He successfully develops genuine distinctions in these 100 Rules without repeating the same message. For those of us more used to self-help books, you may be pleased to learn the *Rules Of Life* does not require you to stop reading to create lists, plans and strategies, answer quizzes or other distractions common to the genre.

The theme underpinning each is to go through life with your eyes open, conscious and aware of what we are doing and the effect we have on the environment and others. Templar encourages the reader towards being a better person and citizen, and does not judge those who might fall short of the Rules.

My favourite Rules would have to be **“...aim to be the very best at everything you do, failing is fine, aiming for second isn’t,”** (17) and a memorable quote for when the situation becomes tough and unpleasant: **“This, my dear, is what we call an adventure”** (50).

Templar remains very secular in his advice, Rule 1 is called **“Keep it under your hat”** amounts to the separation of self and ego as the Buddhists might teach and Rule 81 **“Doesn’t hurt to forgive”** comes with no reference to ‘turning the other cheek’.

Templar’s Rules are always upbeat and positive, Rule 7 (entitled: **“Be flexible in your thinking”**) he suggests:

“...see life not as the enemy but as a friendly sparring partner. If you are flexible you’ll have fun. If you stand your ground you’re likely to get knocked about.”

I enjoyed the *Rules of Life*. It would make a safe gift for nearly everyone. Who wouldn’t like to be happier or operate in the world with more ease? Templar’s style is probably more palatable to many without the loud Americanisms you get from the biggest selling and celebrity authors from the U.S. I believe Templar delivers some great advice, more grandparenty (it’s a word if I want it) wisdom than profound wisdom. Templar proves that you don’t have to present new information to be valuable, but his angles and distinctions will help me remember them and to put them into action.

I recommend reading the Rules one at a time, open the book at random and let fate determine what you read.

You may be surprised how quickly a situation arises to test your new rule! Score=3.5/5

Brendan Clegg, May 2006