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THE
RULES
OF
PEOPLE

RICHARD TEMPLAR

THE
RULES
OF
PEOPLE



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THE
RULES
OF
PEOPLE

A personal code for getting
the best from everyone

RICHARD TEMPLAR



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Introduction

Over the years I've written down many Rules based on my observations of what behaviour is most likely to lead to a happy and successful life. Several hundred Rules, in fact, across this whole series of books. Each one of them outlines some way you can behave, something you can do, a way you can look at things, which will go some way to improving your life. Roll them all up together and the potential for getting the best out of life is huge.

However, I'll be the first to admit that there is one tiny flaw in this: other people. It doesn't matter how effectively you assert control over your own actions and reactions, how minutely you plan your own life – other people can always come along and chuck a spanner in your freshly oiled and smooth-running works. And there's nothing you can do about other people's behaviour. Or is there?

Well, that's where this book comes in. Because actually, you'd be surprised just how much you can do to encourage other people to behave in ways which will benefit both you and them. I'm sure you've realised through your life that the best times are the ones when everyone is pulling together, working in harmony, feeling a spirit of co-operation. Unless you're a sociopath – which I doubt if you've picked up this book – you're happier when the people around you are happy. Not rocket science, is it?

So it follows that the more you can do to make everyone else's life better, not just your own, the easier and more enjoyable your own life becomes. The skill is in creating happy people around you. Yes, even that grumpy colleague, or your stressy sister, or your critical college tutor could be a bit less grumpy or stressy or picky if you knew how to handle them. Of course you can't wave a magic wand and make all their troubles vanish, but you can at least make the time they spend around you more pleasant for everyone.

Many years ago I worked with a guy who was really difficult. I hated going into the office in the mornings. He didn't like me any more than I liked him, and while we both remained civil and well-behaved, the animosity was obvious. Eventually someone sensible banged our heads together, and I resolved to give him a second chance. Fortunately he did the same thing with me.

Now, the only thing that changed at this point was our behaviour. I was still the same person and so was he. However, those little changes in behaviour made so much difference that we saw a completely new side to each other. And – almost as if

we'd been acting out some corny movie – we became firm friends, keeping closely in touch even after we'd both moved on to other jobs and other parts of the country.

It taught me just how much difference my own behaviour makes to the way other people act around me. And in the decades since, I've observed countless times – in others as well as myself – how one person modifying their behaviour can influence the people they interact with.

We all deal with lots of very different people in a normal day – different in terms of their own personality and in terms of their relationship with us. There are people you encounter at work or college, who you want straightforward dealings with that don't cause hassle or unpleasantness. Then there's your family, who you care deeply about and can't really feel good unless they're all broadly OK. And then there are your friends, who you hang out with because you like being together, but sometimes you worry about them, and some of them can be tricky at times. And there are all the people you encounter in between – the shopkeeper you always stop for a natter with, the neighbour who is mostly friendly but doesn't like your cat, the client you're trying to close a deal with, the chap who organises your running club, your dentist, the customers who come into your shop, your child's teacher . . . these diverse people will all make your life easier if you can do the same for them.

All those different people having different lives – how are you supposed to know how to get the best out of them all? The answer is that they're not as different as you might think. Not in the ways that matter. The guidelines, principles, strategies – the Rules – that you need to know will help your relationships with everyone.

The first section of this book is all about understanding people: what makes us all tick. We're all pretty similar underneath, and if you understand people in general you're a long way to understanding the specific people you come across every day. I've also included a section on how to help people, because we all want the people around us to feel good. Sometimes we love them so much it hurts if they're in any trouble, sometimes we want to get the best out of them, and most times we'd rather other people were happier than not. It makes it easier to sleep at night if we've done our best for the people we've met that day.

Of course, a lot of your dealings will be with people who you'd rather were for you than against you. You want to get them on your side because they can give you support, or make your life easier, or improve your sales, or go along with your decisions. There are lots of ways to encourage people to throw in their lot on your side, and to feel good about it. And that's what you want. We Rules players aren't interested in manipulating or coercing people. We want them on our side willingly. In fact we don't want sides at all. Just everyone in agreement.

Having said all that, there's no denying that some people can be just plain tricky. Maybe they've had a tough day, maybe they've had a tough life, maybe they have no excuse. Whatever the reason, it helps to know the best way to handle them, so I've concluded the book with some useful Rules for getting the best out of some of your more challenging colleagues, family and friends.

All the central Rules are here, but of course there will always be other useful guidelines for dealing with people. If you have any favourites of your own, you can contact me via my Facebook page (below). I can't promise always to find time to respond, but I can promise you that I'll read your post with interest.

Richard Templar

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How to use the Rules

It can be a bit daunting to read a book with 100 Rules for a happier more successful life. I mean, where do you start? You'll probably find you follow a few of them already, but how can you be expected to learn dozens of new Rules all at once and start putting them all into practice? Don't panic, you don't have to. Remember, you don't *have* to do anything – you're doing this because you want to. Let's keep it at a manageable level so you go on wanting to.

You can go about this any way you like but, if you want advice, here's what I recommend. Go through the book and pick out three or four Rules that you feel would make a big difference to you, or that jumped out at you when you first read them, or that seem like a good starting point for you. Write them down here:

Just work on these for a couple of weeks until they've become ingrained and you don't have to try so hard with them. They've become a habit. Great stuff, well done. Now you can repeat the exercise with a few more Rules you'd like to tackle next. Write them here:

Excellent. Now you're really making progress. Keep working through the Rules at your own pace – there's no rush. Before long you'll find you're really getting on top of all the Rules that will help you, and more and more of them are becoming ingrained. And voilà, congratulations – you're a proper Rules player.

UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE

When everyone is happy and pulling together, we all benefit. You want to get the best out of people, for their benefit and yours, and you also want to be able to help and support them as well as possible. The two go hand in hand really. So to get the best, you have to know what makes them tick.

You wouldn't expect to be able to fix your car when it breaks down without knowing what goes on under the bonnet. It might have been something really simple, but without a grasp of basic mechanics you can't fix it, can't expect it to get you home. A simple understanding about how the internal combustion engine works, though, and you've a decent chance of making it to your destination.

Just so, even a rudimentary knowledge of what makes people work will mean you can get what you need from them, and help them along the way too. This first group of Rules sets out principles of human behaviour which will be useful in dealing with other people. These are the underlying factors which cause people to behave as they do, and which can give you clues to persuading them to behave differently where their current style works against either you or them, or both.

I've included a few Rules at the end of this section about helping your own child once they become a teenager, because I've found a lot of parents feel they flounder at this stage. They can see their almost-adult offspring need support but don't feel confident about how to give it. Mind you, all the Rules apply to teenagers you know who aren't your own child, and a lot of them are echoed in other relationships too.

There's nothing tricky or scientific here – I'm not clever enough for that. These are just basic observations, many of which you will recognise once you think about them.

RULE 1

Understanding helps

We all have a backstory. It explains why we behave as we do. OK, it doesn't always justify it, but at least it's a reason for our behaviour. Of course, no one else ever knows all the details and complexities of your backstory like you do, but lots of people get the gist.

There'll be a reason why certain things make you feel more anxious, stressed, excited, cynical, depressed, relaxed, angry or confident than other people do. It might be genetic, it might be because of bad past experiences, or according to Freud it might all be down to your parents. Friends might say that you shouldn't stress so much about this, or be so suspicious about that, or be too laid back, or shout so much. But they don't understand – if they'd been to the same school as you, or lived through the poverty you have, or had siblings like yours, or worked for your last boss, they'd realise why you behave that way.

Listen, this is true of everyone. There's no one on the planet who isn't shaped by their personal experiences. So when your colleague snaps at you, or your friend lets you down, or your partner forgets your birthday, just remember there's always a reason. It might be a rubbish reason, but there's a reason.

And I'm telling you this because if you can understand the reason, it makes it easier to deal with other people's negative behaviour. Even if you can't change the way they act, you'll find it slightly easier to take if you get the reasons behind it. And often simply because you're prepared to understand, they can let go of being defensive and decide to change their behaviour.

Suppose your boss is always stressy whenever there's a risk of getting behind schedule, whether it's a prestige project or just an internal lunch meeting. It's not your fault, and you don't appreciate them taking out their stress on you. But what if you knew – or even just suspected – that their father was a strict disciplinarian who hated lateness? Or in their last job they missed out on promotion because they missed a crucial deadline? Doesn't that make you feel a weensy bit more sympathetic? Wouldn't you like to help a bit? Good. Then make sure that you're

always in good time, and if anything has to run up to the wire, keep your boss fully in the picture well in advance about when everything will happen, and spell out why it means you won't overrun. There now. Your boss will be less stressed and less stressy with you. Isn't that better?

Let's be clear – I'm not excusing bad behaviour.¹ Of course no one should take their stress out on someone who doesn't deserve it. Or their anger, their anxiety, their insecurity or anything else. But it happens. This is about helping you to cope when you're on the receiving end of it. I'm not asking you to understand the other person's motivations for their sake, but for yours.

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EXPERIENCES AND MAKE-UP
DON'T SHAPE THEIR BEHAVIOUR

¹ Theirs or yours