

THE BIG IDEAS

The 17 Rules

To live by.

Air-Castles

Need foundations.

Count Your Blessings

Is rule #1.

Going the Extra Mile

Is rule #2.

Dead at Midnight

How would you live?

Lady Liberty's Hair-Do

And doing your best.

2:1

= Hank's strikeout to home run ratio.

A Better Way to Live

Og Mandino's Own Personal Story of Success *Featuring 17 Rules to Live By*

BY OG MANDINO · BANTAM BOOKS © 1990 · 129 PAGES

"How do you get the most benefit from all seventeen Rules to Live By? Easy. Just remember that all of us have a pretty large collection of bad habits that weaken our chance to succeed in life. Each of the rules you will learn will help you to get rid of a bad habit by replacing it with a good one. *That's your key to a better life...*

The plan is simple, but it's all up to you. Persist, give it a fair chance, and soon you will discover that many of your old bad habits that have been holding you back are gradually being replaced by good habits, life-changing habits. What to do then? *Share* what you have learned, just as I have shared myself, and my life, with you.

Only then will you realize what success and a better way to live truly means."

~ Og Mandino from *A Better Way to Live*

Og Mandino was the most popular inspirational writer of his era (essentially the 70s and 80s). At the time he published this book, his 14 books had sold 25 million copies in 18 languages.

But Og wasn't always Mr. Inspiring.

In fact, at one point he was a 35 year-old drunk derelict contemplating using his last 20 bucks to buy a gun to kill himself.

In this book, he shares his personal story of redemption and the 17 rules he followed to create a better way to live.

He's an AMAZING writer—kinda reminds me of Paulo Coelho in his simple, unpretentious yet captivating style—and this little book brought me to inspired tears several times. It's packed with wisdom.

I'm excited to share some of my favorite Big Ideas so let's jump straight in.

We'll start with a quick look at those 17 Rules to Live By!

THE 17 RULES TO LIVE BY

"Rule 1. Count your blessings.

Rule 2. Today, and every day, deliver more than you are getting paid to do.

Rule 3. Whenever you make a mistake or get knocked down by life, don't look back at it too long.

Rule 4. Always reward your long hours of labor and toil in the very best way, surrounded by your family.

Rule 5. Build this day on a foundation of pleasant thoughts.

Rule 6. Let your actions always speak for you, but be forever on guard against the terrible traps of false pride and conceit that can halt your progress.

Rule 7. Each day is a special gift from God, and while life may not always be fair, you must never

"Choice! The key is choice. You have options. You need not spend your life wallowing in failure, ignorance, grief, poverty, shame and self-pity! There is a better way to live!"

~ Og Mandino

"I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with success unexpected in common hours."

~ Henry David Thoreau

allow the pains, hurdles, and handicaps of the moment to poison your attitude and plans for yourself and your future.

Rule 8. Never again clutter your days or nights with so many menial and unimportant things that you have no time to accept a real challenge when it comes along.

Rule 9. Live this day as if it will be your last.

Rule 10. Beginning today, treat everyone you meet, friend or foe, loved one or stranger, as if they were going to be dead at midnight.

Rule 11. Laugh at yourself and at life.

Rule 12. Never neglect the little things.

Rule 13. Welcome every morning with a smile.

Rule 14. You will achieve your grand dream a day at a time, so set goals for each day—not long and difficult projects, but chores that will take you, step by step, toward your rainbow.

Rule 15. Never allow anyone to rain on your parade and thus cast a pall of gloom and defeat on your entire day.

Rule 16. Search for the seed of good in every adversity.

Rule 17. Realize that true happiness lies within you."

There you go.

17 Rules to Live By.

Og walks us through each of those Rules in super short, inspiring little chapters. Solid stuff.

Now, let's take a quick peek at a few of my favorites!

PUTTING FOUNDATIONS UNDER OUR AIR-CASTLES

"Remember Henry David Thoreau's admonition in his great classic *Walden*? He told us that if we have built castles in the air, our work need not be lost, for that is where they should be. Then he urged us to put foundations under them.

I am going to share with you some powerful tools you can use, not only to construct your castles, but also to erect their permanent substructure. You're about to learn how to turn many of your dreams into reality. But . . . you must listen with an open heart and then be prepared to *act*. All the noble thoughts, magnificent plans, and "Secrets" of achievement in the world are of little value unless and until they are put into action. Our worth is always determined by our deeds, not by our good intentions, however noble."

Ideals. Vision. Aspirations.

They are essential and they are awesome.

And...

At the end of the day, as Og tells us, our worth (to ourselves and others) is always (but only always!) determined by our *deeds*—by what we DO—not by our good intentions.

This is very exciting news.

We have more control over our behavior than our thoughts and emotions. We just need to discipline ourselves to consistently do that which we know is best for us!

So, let's put some solid foundations under those air-castles! :)

"It's good to have money and the things that money can buy, but it's good, too, to check up once in a while and make sure you haven't lost the things that money can't buy."

~ Og Mandino

RULE ONE: COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

"Count your blessings. Once you realize how valuable you are and how much you have going for you, the smiles will return, the sun will break out, the music will play, and you will finally be able to move forward toward the life that God intended for you . . . with grace, strength and confidence."

Gratitude.

We now know the scientific reality of what all great teachers tell us: COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS!

As Robert Emmons, the world's leading researcher on the science of gratitude tells us in his great book, *Thanks!* ([see Notes](#)), keeping track of just 5 things you're grateful for once a week has been proven to boost our happiness by as much as 25%. (Wowzers. That always blows me away.)

Og has a great way to help us see just how valuable our lives are.

He asks us a series of questions like these:

"What's your freedom worth to you?

How about those you love and who love you?

Your eyes? Would you take a million dollars for your eyes?

How about your hands or your feet? Five million dollars? Ten million?

You're really quite a precious specimen, aren't you? If it came to a showdown, you probably wouldn't trade what you have, right now, for all the gold in Fort Knox, would you? And with so much going for you, tell me, please, why you're walking around looking sad, beat, defeated, and rejected? Why?

No more! There is a better way to live for you, and it begins today."

Do the math on that.

How much are your eyes worth to you? Would you trade them for a million dollars? Seriously. Would you? How about your hands and feet? 5 million? 10 million? What about that heart of yours? 50 million?

Our lives are extraordinarily precious. Let's discipline ourselves to *never* forget that.

Here's to counting our blessings every day. Beginning today!

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

"Surprise everyone. Change your work habits. Go the extra mile!"

~ Og Mandino

"There is an answer, a solution, a rule, and I'll wager that it has never failed for those who have truly applied it. When it comes to improving the career side of your life, the greatest secret of success was delivered to us from a mountaintop, nearly two thousand years ago, when Jesus told us that if we were compelled to go a mile with someone, we should always go two. The extra mile.

If you resolve, beginning tomorrow, to put out more on your job than you're getting paid to do, miracles will begin happening in your life. Whatever you are doing for a living, whether you're selling products, painting houses, manning computers, or sweeping floors—if, each day, you do more than you're getting paid for, your life's pattern will soon change for the better."

You want to see MIRACLES in your life?

Do your best. Go the extra mile. Every.single.day. That's Rule #2.

Let's be direct for a moment, shall we?

Have you ever REALLY done your best? I mean really, truly, given your absolute best to your life for more than a fleeting moment or day or even week?

*"Above all, greet the morning
with a smile."*

~ Og Mandino

Imagine your life when you LIVE from that place moment to moment to moment.

That's the heart of what we talk about in these Notes again and again and again.

Areté.

Expressing the highest version of yourself—where there's no gap between what you're *capable* of being/doing and what you're ACTUALLY being/doing.

Going the extra mile. Doing our best.

Here's another way to look at it via Matthew Kelly (see Notes on [The Rhythm of Life](#) + [Perfectly Yourself](#)). He tells us to imagine an athlete who wants to win an Olympic gold medal.

Do they ask themselves, "What's the **least** I can do to get the gold?"

OF COURSE NOT.

That's absurd.

They ask, "What's the *MOST* I can do to give myself the best shot at winning?!" And then they go do it.

What do YOU ask yourself?

Here's to going the extra mile—doing more than we're expected (and/or paid) to do. Today. Every day.

P.S. "Andrew Carnegie said that there were two types of people who never achieve very much in their lifetime. One is the person who won't do what he or she is told to do, and the other is the person who does no more than he or she is told to do. And when Walter Chrysler was asked what his plant needed most, he replied, "Ten good men who can't hear the whistle blow or read the time on the face of the clock.""

P.P.S. A prayer: "God, grant that I may be deaf to the sound of the whistle blowing and blind to the face of the clock as I CRUSH it, doing my best, going the extra mile, serving profoundly and astonishing those I am blessed to have the opportunity to serve with my commitment to awesome. Amen."

(Hah! Fun. :)

DEAD AT MIDNIGHT

*"Now, how do you suppose
you would treat everyone
you meet today, if you
knew that they would be
gone forever at day's end?
You know how. With more
consideration and care and
tenderness and love than you
ever have before."*

~ Og Mandino

"Beginning today, treat everyone you meet, friend or foe, loved one or stranger, as if they were going to be dead at midnight. Extend to each person, no matter how trivial the contact, all the care and kindness and understanding and love that you can muster, and do it with no thought of any reward. Your life will never be the same again."

Imagine the next person you will meet today.

Imagine that they will be gone at midnight tonight. This is their last day on earth and you are one of the last people with whom they will interact.

How will you treat them?

As Og says, you know how. With more "consideration and care and tenderness and love than you ever have before."

That is precisely how we want to treat everyone. Today. Tomorrow. And the day after that.

P.S. Those are high ideals floating as castles in the sky aren't they? Yep. Now, it's time to build our foundations under them via disciplined action!

P.P.S. Another way to get yourself in impeccable action? Imagine this is YOUR last day, too.

"Setting goals is easy. As with New Year's resolutions, any of us can jot down long lists of things we hope to accomplish in the future . . . but then we continue to live exactly as we have in the past."

~ Og Mandino

LADY LIBERTY'S HAIR-DO

"You are a special creation of God. Never allow anything that originates with you, in deeds or materials or effort or kindness, to be less than your best. Only the failures and the mediocrities neglect the little things.

A potent example of this simple but powerful truth, this enduring rule of life, stands high above Liberty Island in New York Harbor. Should you ever be in New York City with an extra few hours to enjoy, take one of the several helicopter cruises that depart from the foot of East Thirty-fourth Street to the East River. When you finally approach the lovely Statue of Liberty, standing proudly in the harbor, pay special attention.

Lady Liberty's steel-frame-supported copper body stands 305 feet above sea level. As your helicopter circles closer, look down at the top of Liberty's head and note how every strand of hair has been painstakingly formed in careful and minute detail, just as is every other area of her gown and body. That delicate metallic coiffure on the top of her head undoubtedly required many additional weeks at Auguste Bartholdi's shop in Paris, weeks that the great sculptor could have saved, because so far as he knew, *no one* would ever see the top of Liberty's head!

The statue was dedicated on October 28, 1886, by President Grover Cleveland. There were no airplanes in 1886! The Wright Brothers would not even get their first primitive contraption off the ground at Kitty Hawk until seventeen years later! Bartholdi was well aware that only a few brave sea gulls would probably ever look down on the statue from above, and certainly no one would ever know if the strands of hair had not been meticulously shaped and polished. And yet, the master artisan took no shortcuts. Every strand of hair, every curl, is in place!"

What an awesome story.

It's 1886. Grover Cleveland is president. France gifts the U.S. the Statue of Liberty.

Planes don't exist. NO ONE will ever see the top of her head, but Auguste Bartholdi and his team of craftsmen take no shortcuts—making sure the Lady has an impeccable hairstyle. <— Amazing.

Reminds me of another craftsman—Steve Jobs—whose engineers meticulously designed (and signed!) the *inside* of their machines. Something no one would see.

How about *you*?

You attending to the little things?

What's a little thing you can do a little better today?

STRIKEOUT TO HOME RUN RATIO? 2:1!

"Remember that even the most successful lives contain chapters of failure just as any good novel does, but how the book ends depends on us. We are the authors of our years, and our failures and defeats are only steps to something better."

When's the last time you read a great book or watched a great movie without **any** challenges?

Riiiiight.

Not gonna happen.

The hero's journey requires a hero and that hero **MUST** (!) battle his or her dragons in pursuit of her ultimate potential. That *always* involves rough spots. Times of failure. The dark night when we want to give up. Period. No getting around that.

The question isn't whether or not we experience a chapter or three of the hard times (we better if we're committed to actualizing!). The question is how the story **ENDS**. And we're always the authors of that part of the story!

*"Yet I know so well from experience that in the final showdown your future is strictly up to you. No book, no lecture, or rabbi, and no motivational tape, can do anything toward altering the way you live unless *you* are determined to pay the price in time and effort and sacrifice and pain. The choice is yours . . . and yours alone."*

~ Og Mandino

Og tells us a great story to remind us that failure is required for success.

It's 1974. Hank Aaron is in pursuit of Babe Ruth's all-time home run record. (And I was just born!) Og calls the Atlanta Braves and asks a young staffer how many times Hank struck out.

"Strikeouts?" the young man asks.

"Yep," says Og. "I know Hank has 710 homers but how many strikeouts does he have?"

After a few minutes of researching, the young man comes back on the line and delivers the report: "As of last night, Hank has 1,262 strikeouts."

710 homers. 1,262 strikeouts. Our hero Hank Aaron has struck out nearly TWICE the number of times he's hit homers. And, he's the best ever.

You can't hit home runs without strikeouts. We can't have success without failure. As Alan Watts would say, one "goeswith" the other.

And as IBM founder Thomas Watson advises: *"Would you like me to give you a formula for success? It's quite simple, really. Double your rate of failure."*

Here's to embracing the exhilarating hero's journey that is our lives as we embrace a better way to live!

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

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About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.