

TEN BASIC RULES FOR BETTER LIVING



Manly P. Hall

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by Manly P. Hall

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TEN BASIC RULES FOR BETTER LIVING

Since our civilization has moved on to an intensive industrial level, our psychology of living has been subjected to a variety of pressures unknown to our ancestors. As a result, we need a basic statement of principles suitable to present-day conditions. May we take this opportunity, therefore, to recommend *Ten Basic Rules for Better Living*.

If you will inscribe these suggestions deeply and firmly upon the tablets of your memory, life will be easier and more purposeful.

1. STOP WORRYING.

The popular idea that a worrier is a thoughtful and conscientious citizen is false. The Egyptians realized this when they included worry among the cardinal sins. Do not confuse thoughtfulness and worry. The thoughtful person plans solutions, but the worrier merely dissolves in his own doubt. If you think straight, you will have less cause for worrying. The worrier not only suffers the same disaster many times, but undermines his health and annoys all others with whom he comes into contact. There are many things in this world that require thoughtful consideration, but there is really nothing to fear but fear.

2. STOP TRYING TO DOMINATE AND POSSESS YOUR FRIENDS AND RELATIVES.

Each of us likes to feel that he is running his own life. The moment we recognize the rights of others to seek life, liberty,

and happiness according to their own dreams, hopes, and aspirations, we begin to conserve our own resources. It is very debilitating to give advice which is ignored or rejected, and equally disappointing to attempt to possess and dominate persons who immediately resent and combat our dictatorial tendencies. We are hurt when they do not see things our way. If we save advice for ourselves and those who seek it from us, and who are therefore grateful, all concerned will be the better.

3. MODERATE AMBITION.

There is a tendency to overlook natural and simple blessings while we plunge on toward distant goals. Each individual has certain capacities. If he can recognize his own abilities and work with them, he can attain personal security. If, however, he is constantly seeking that which is not reasonably attainable, he can never know happiness or contentment. The wise man observes the disastrous results of uncontrollable ambitions, and chooses moderation. It is not necessary to be famous in order to be happy, nor must one be the leading citizen in the community in order to gratify one's social instinct. The ambitious usually pay too much for what they get, and are the more miserable after they get it.

4. DO NOT ACCUMULATE MORE THAN YOU NEED.

There is no real distinction in being the richest man in the graveyard. Many earnest citizens act as though there were pockets in shrouds. We are supposed to have outgrown the primitive belief that we should bury a man's goods with him so that his spirit might enjoy them in the afterworld. Here, again, the middle course is the wisest. Let us reserve some of our energy for enjoyment, and not give all of ourselves to the task of accumulation. Many a man who has made a million has not lived to spend it. A rich life can be more practical than a monumental bank account.

5. LEARN TO RELAX.

Great tension is an abomination. The more tense we become, the more stupidly we are likely to act, and, according to the old Buddhists, stupidity is a cardinal sin. Today many so-called efficient people are perpetually on the verge of a nervous breakdown. This is not so likely to be due to overwork as to unreasonable driving impulses from within themselves. Some say that they are overtaxing their resources to keep their jobs or to maintain extravagant families. Whether you believe it or not, you are a better producer and a better provider if you do not collapse from psychic exhaustion at some critical moment when you are most in need of good health. If your associates do not realize this, they may be in need of practical counsel.

6. CULTIVATE A SENSE OF HUMOR.

As never before, we must brighten and lighten the corners where we are. The more seriously we take ourselves and our responsibilities, the duller we become. It is a saving grace to realize that, although living is a serious matter, we can take it too seriously. Also bear in mind that genuine humor is not bitter, cynical, or critical. It is the ability to laugh with the world and not at the world. If we must laugh at someone, let it be ourselves. Humor is a spice to living. It adds flavor to work, zest to play, charm to self-improvement, and proves to others that we have a security within ourselves. A sincere, happy laugh, like the joyous rippling of children's laughter, relieves tension and restores good nature. Incidentally, it makes friends and inspires confidence.

7. FIND A REASON FOR YOUR OWN EXISTENCE.

Unless you believe in something bigger than yourself, have some purpose more vital than accumulation or advancement in business or society, you are only existing, not living. A simple pattern is to realize that the laws of Nature that put you here

seem to be primarily concerned with growth. You are a success to the degree that you grow, and you grow to the degree that you become a wiser, more useful, and more secure person. In other words, we live to learn, and by this very process, we learn to live. Broaden your horizon, develop an interest in all that is fine, beautiful, and purposeful. Great internal good comes from the love for music, art, great literature, broad philosophy, and simple faith. Strengthen the inside of your nature, and the outside will be better.

8. NEVER INTENTIONALLY HARM ANY OTHER PERSON.

Never by word or deed return evil for good, or evil for evil. Weed negative and destructive thoughts and emotions out of your personality, or they will ultimately contribute to your misery. As we look around us, we see the tragic results of individuals and nations that harbor grudges or nurse the instincts for revenge. The harmless life saves those who live it from many of the mortal shocks that flesh is heir to. Our critical attitudes and our long memories of evils that others have caused only reduce our present efficiency and endanger health and vitality. Even the selfish man realizes that he cannot afford to keep a grudge, and the unselfish simply will not permit grudges to accumulate because they know better and they believe better.

9. BEWARE OF ANGER.

When ill-temper controls us, we are no longer able to control ourselves. In a moment of anger, we may create a situation which will require years to remedy. Why should we spend our time trying to recover from our own mistakes? If we disapprove, let us state our case simply and quietly, and remember that we should never try to correct another when we have already committed a fault as great as his. A quick temper is a serious handicap in business or in the home. It is useless to say that we cannot control anger. This is as much as to admit that we have

lost the power to control ourselves. If we resent the unkindness of others and the collective irritability of this generation, let us make sure that we are not one of the irritating factors.

10. *And last in fact, and most important: NEVER BLAME OTHERS FOR OUR OWN MISTAKES.*

It is hardly necessary. Each of us seems to have an incredible capacity to do things badly and select unwisely. Actually, we are in trouble because we have not made constructive use of the power and abilities which we received as a birthright. Others can hurt us only while our own inner life is too weak to sustain us in the presence of trial or test. Instead of resenting misfortunes, and seeking to excuse our own limitations, we must face the facts. Either we are stronger than the problem and can solve it intelligently, or the problem is stronger than we are, and the only solution is to increase our own strength. Others are not to blame for our unhappiness. Each man must seek his own peace of mind, and, as the Arabian Nights so well expressed it, happiness must be earned.

RULE ONE

We will discuss briefly the first of our *Ten Rules for Better Living*. Our theme is, therefore, to stop worrying. It is evident that merely to tell a person to correct a long established habit is not likely to produce any permanent result. Actually, the worrier must enlarge his understanding of life in order to take a positive and constructive attitude while under the pressure of some unhappy circumstance. Worry is a sign that we need to make a rather careful examination of ourselves. There are many problems which require thoughtful consideration, but none that can be improved by worry.

With some people, worry is regarded as a proper attitude when in the presence of an emergency. It seems to indicate that we are deeply moved, and willing to accept the burden of living with all its most distressing implications. Not to worry when others are worrying—in fact, not to out-worry all others would imply that we are superficial and indifferent to the misfortunes of our kind. Here is an important instance where conformity with prevailing practices is destructive and purposeless.

The worrier, if he has become an expert, has the ability to experience the same unpleasant situation many times. As a result of anticipating the worst and repeating this anticipation, the mind becomes overwhelmed by the magnitude of a problem which in fact may be of no great consequence. The wear and tear upon disposition reacts on health and even extends into our social and business relationships. The worrier may be respected for his extreme anxiety, but he will not be popular in his home,

among friends, or at his place of business. Worry is contagious, and our example reminds our associates of their own troubles, and an atmosphere of gloom is quickly generated.

The best solution to a potential worrier is a frontal attack upon the cause. All resources should be conserved, and above all there should not be unnecessary delay. The longer we linger on the verge of a painful situation, the more painful it becomes. The very process of worrying works a hardship upon our mental resources. There is very little room for positive thinking in a mind that is already filled with fears, doubts, and uncertainties. If the day comes when we must meet the emergency, we are at least ready if we have not exhausted our optimism and undermined our courage.

If worrying about things in general is unwise, worrying about ourselves in particular is still more foolish. It is very easy to drift toward hypochondria, which is a morbid anxiety about ourselves, our health, and our adjustments with society. Worry always increases fear; and fear, in turn, impairs judgment and discourages prompt and practical action. It has been observed that those with few problems are often the greater worriers. When we are confronted with a major crisis, we usually instinctively rise to the occasion. We face tragedy much better than trivial inconveniences. An old Greek philosopher in a pensive mood was once asked what he had on his mind. "I am worrying," he replied. An acquaintance asked: "Why do you worry?" The old scholar soberly answered: "I am very worried by the thought that worrying does no good." This, in substance, is the vicious circle which ultimately afflicts all worriers.

The best antidotes for worry are a deep and abiding faith in the benevolence of Providence, the wisdom to solve problems in a natural and simple way, and the courage to be true to principles under adversity. It has been said that the height of wisdom for man is that he shall know what to do next, and

the height of courage is the strength to do that which should be done. If we are unable to accomplish this integrity within ourselves, we should realize that future happiness and security must be attained through the re-education of our habits and attitudes. If we want to be happy, we should take some time we are now devoting to less important projects and build within ourselves resources which can insure a fuller and better life. May we conclude that in this case a word to the wise should be sufficient. Think straight, and live straight.

RULE TWO

When it comes to number two of our *Rules for Better Living*, we may interfere with the principal activity of a number of persons. The rule reads: *Stop trying to dominate and possess your friends and relatives*. Two important points immediately present themselves. Efforts to dominate and possess not only contribute to the miseries of others, but are the immediate cause of personal unhappiness to the individual attempting such a program. Most of those who are by nature selfish are not much concerned with the difficulties they may cause, but they are immediately mindful of their own discomforts. So we will attack the question from this angle.

Any person who can be dominated and possessed is not likely to be worth dominating and possessing. Genuine people insist upon their rights and are willing to defend them. This means almost immediate conflict, which can extend over years or even a lifetime with no real benefit to anyone. Those inclined to dominate and possess soon learn that they face organized opposition. All they can possibly hope for is a negative victory. It may be that the victim, because he is tied into a pattern, cannot instantly rebel or escape, but the instinct to free oneself from tyranny grows constantly and rapidly, and finally ends in a critical situation.

The dominating type does not like to be considered dictatorial or tyrannical. He prefers to assume that at worst he is a benevolent dictator. All he wants to do is to help others by causing them to do exactly what he believes is best for them. This

means that when they resist he is properly hurt and indignant. Where the tendency toward domination is strong, therefore, the heartaches are many and the disillusionments almost continuous. Ultimately the dominating instinct, if allowed to go uncorrected, will cause a lonely and loveless life.

Possession is only important to the degree that the individual is self-possessed. The moment we attempt to possess others, we are engaging in a project that will certainly fail. Remember that others do not wish to be possessed any more than we wish to be possessed. Most possessive persons resent possessive attitudes in others; and as goes resentment, so goes the blood pressure. Even possession itself is not an unqualified blessing. Once having accumulated, we must then administrate our possessions. When we destroy the rights of others to live their own lives, we become responsible for those lives. If they follow our advice or accept our domination, we should certainly be exceptionally wise, prudent, discriminating, and practical. Few possessive people have any of these qualities to a marked degree. Their own lives are not well-lived, but they wish others to acknowledge an authority which has never been successfully demonstrated. This is further cause for resistance and works a severe strain on the digestive system.

When we want to help someone, we should find pleasure in helping them to do what they want to do. If their projects are incompatible with our convictions, they may decline our assistance. Even small children should not be dominated and possessed. They should be controlled when necessary and directed to the best of the parental ability. If they are dominated, they become weaker and less self-reliant. If they are victims of over-possessiveness, they are either demoralized or become rebellious. In this world we possess most completely that which we release most completely. The basis of our relationships should be voluntary. Our friends should like to be with us because we

are friendly. Our relatives should prefer us because of qualities which naturally attract them and hold their interest and attention. We cannot force the respect and admiration of others; we must earn it by our own conduct.

If we are self-possessed, we present a constructive pattern of attainment. Others will seek us because they need what we have, and they would like to know how we have acquired qualities which have contributed to better living. If by nature we are friendly, kindly, and just a little impersonal, we will seldom be alone. We will receive the honors and considerations which we can never command by domination and possessiveness.

RULE THREE

We recommend that thoughtful persons should *moderate ambition*. This is so contrary to prevailing practices that it requires explanation. We are all taught that we must succeed, and that it is our personal responsibility to improve our fortunes in every way possible, even at the expense of health and happiness. The mere fact, however, that many agree as to a policy does not prove that that policy is right. It is only necessary to study the lives of successful persons and listen to their own stories of what success has cost them to realize that it is all too possible to be an outstanding, successful failure.

A moderate amount of ambition is certainly necessary, and without the incentive to improve and advance there would be no progress—personal or collective. The difficulty is that success takes a great deal of time and attention. We must devote to this end most of our resources and most of our time. By degrees we sacrifice ourselves entirely to a program which deprives us of leisure, overtaxes our mental and physical resources, and prevents us from enjoying the really fine and beautiful things of life. A gentleman of my acquaintance, who was an insurance executive, served his company so well that after twenty-five years of faithful service they presented him with a three-months' vacation in Europe.

After he returned, a friend asked him how he enjoyed one of the great art galleries of France. He immediately replied: "It's a bad insurance risk. No hydrant within half a mile. no sprinkler system, and the building itself is a fire-trap."

Trying to get ahead in the world does things to our minds. We may become narrow to the degree that the wealth or authority which we attain can no longer bring us pleasure or contentment. Most money-makers are poor money spenders. One of the world's richest men used string for shoe laces because he could not countenance the expenditure of ten cents. This man was a success, envied by many, admired by few, and loved by no one. His name was mentioned to young aspiring economists as an example of ambition. If they worked as hard as he had worked, and sacrificed as he had sacrificed, they, too, might hope to become rich.

Here philosophy enters the picture. After all, philosophy is nothing more or less than organized common sense. It points out that in this world we must in some way pay for everything we get. To satisfy ambition, we must pay with our own lives. By moderate success, we may provide the opportunity to live better and to enjoy a measure of security and comfort. But who can be moderately successful? The moment we take on the glamour of financial expansion, we become addicted to a habit-forming mechanism. One man told me that it had been his goal to make a million dollars, then he was going to retire and enjoy life. He was one of those who attain their goal, but he did not retire. Immediately he became obsessed with the possibility of increasing his holding to five million dollars. He died of heart-failure somewhere in his fourth million.

Ambition can play another unkindly trick upon those overaddicted to its ways. It causes good and kindly people to be very unhappy because, for one reason or another, they are not able to reach the level of success which they have set for themselves. Surrounded by high finance and under constant pressure to expand beyond their means and abilities, they completely neglect the good things they already have. They forget that they have happy homes, bright, growing children, good friends, and a

secure job, and dissolve in self-pity when they read of someone else's vast holdings. Not long ago a wealthy person poured his sorrows into my ear, saying: "I want to travel. I want to study. I want to improve myself, and give more personal affection and time to my family, but I cannot. Between board meetings on Monday, accountants on Tuesday, stock reports every day, and the countless burdens of possessions, it takes nearly every hour of my days and many nights merely to hold on to what I have." It seems to me that a generation dominated by such a pattern of ambition is causing itself a great deal of unnecessary misery. This world is a beautiful place, and most of us could live in it reasonably well if we would be reasonable.

This is not a plea for poverty. We must all carry our proper share of the world's burden of work and responsibility. We are better and happier persons if we keep faith with those who depend upon us, and in this way preserve also our self-dignity. But let us not believe that a so-called successful life must be a rich or important life. In order to be real persons, we must have an inner existence that is also purposeful. When we are too busy to learn, to live, and to love, we are much too busy for our own good. Sometimes we must decide between forwarding some ambitious purpose of our own and neglecting or injuring others. We will never be content if we buy success at the cost of honor, integrity, or our own natural humanity. The world is full of ambitious folks. Perhaps that is why so many of our affairs go badly. Dream for a better future, and plan a successful life, but be moderate. Remember, all that money can buy you is a certain amount of time or leisure with which to do the things you want to do. The wealthy have admitted that a little less money and a little more happiness is the wiser course.

RULE FOUR

Our fourth *Rule for Better Living* is a frontal attack upon the success psychosis. If you are wise, *do not accumulate more than you need*. Some are by nature accumulators, just as there are certain animals that store up their food supplies against a severe winter. To protect the future in every reasonable way is prudence, but to assume that the more you have the happier you will be is sheer folly. Moderation will protect the thoughtful against any extreme attitude which may have detrimental results. There are two kinds of accumulation: You can enlarge your natural store by *having more* or by *becoming more*. Let us never so completely dedicate our lives to accumulation that we forget to enrich character and gather those treasures which cannot be taken from us by the vicissitudes of the stock exchange. We should be able to answer the question: "How much are we worth if we lose everything we have?" This would embarrass a great many, but few depart from this world without being faced by such a question.

There is a saying that when we have more than we need, someone else will have less than they need. It is interesting, therefore, that we can have and keep as much as possible of the best things of life without detracting in any way from the security of others. Happiness, contentment, peace of mind, love of beauty, wisdom, and serenity can all be ours without any other person being the poorer. In fact, the more of such qualities we possess, the more secure and happier others will be, especially those within our spheres of influence. Experience shows

that the instinct to accumulate exercises a hypnotic influence upon the mind. Once we are possessed by this instinct, we lose all sense of values and find ourselves the victims of a strong and dangerous habit. This habit can have as many tragic consequences as chronic alcoholism or addiction to narcotics. By degrees our entire outlook on life is warped and distorted, and we become little better than money-making machines.

Accumulation extends also to those things which can be bought by money: the overpretentious establishment, the extravagant pattern of maintenance, and the useless display which influences no one worth influencing. I know many instances of persons of moderate attainments and capacities who are utterly uncomfortable in an extravagant and pretentious environment which they have felt necessary to social standing. Napoleon discovered that he could conquer a nation during a war, but could not administer it wisely in periods of peace. Economic Napoleons find that through shrewd business policies they can make money, but because of deficiencies of character can neither use it nor spend it intelligently. Fortunes are wasted every month in this country by persons trying to compensate for lack of internal acquirements by the lavish spending of money. If dollars are so important that we are willing to wreck our lives and destroy our health in order to get them, they should not be wasted. When we waste money, we simply prove that it has no value to us.

The things we really want in life cannot be bought by the coin of the realm. It is possible that moderate and prudent investments may bestow the leisure for self-improvement, but the investments themselves are no proof of self-improvement. A man who had recently made too much money sent his daughter to a fashionable eastern finishing-school. He received a letter stating that it would be wise for him to remove his daughter from the school because, as far as education went, she simply had no

capacity. The indignant father immediately wired back: "Buy her one. I don't care what it costs." Unfortunately, we cannot purchase peace of mind, contentment, or intelligence. But if we have too much money, we are inclined to think that we no longer need these inner graces. When we come to that conclusion, we are the victims of our possessions, and the poorest of the poor.

With work we buy opportunity. The money we make gives us the chance to improve ourselves. It is only useful to the degree that we know how to use it for the enrichment of character and living. Socrates once said that if he wished to curse a man he would say to him: "Let your sons be extravagant." Contentment comes to those who are happy to live moderately.

RULE FIVE

The fifth of our *Rules for Better Living* is a simple but important recommendation is *learn to relax*. In pointing this out on one occasion, I received an interesting comment: "You do not learn to relax. If you feel right inside, you are relaxed." To extend this thought, just how can the average person learn to feel right in a world which more or less conspires against such a moderate and consoling emotion? The answer seems to be that relaxation must be the result of a degree of internal security. We cannot relax when we are worried, frightened, or irritated. One formula is to realize that changing the mind from the familiar responsibilities and burdens to new and less pressureful activities promotes relaxation. This is where hobbies and avocational interests are not only useful but necessary. In our world a person without a hobby is exposing himself to the dilemmas of the one-track mind.

The therapeutic value of hobbies is now recognized throughout the economic world, and all persons under unusual stress are advised to cultivate corrective interests. Even if a hobby is expensive, it may not cost as much as the doctor's bills which result from over-tension. There is an autocorrective instinct in man which naturally impels him to balance his activities, and in this way protect his health. Some of us, however, fight this instinct because we believe that division of activity wastes time and scatters resources. Let it be remembered that a nervous breakdown may upset the planned economy of many years, whereas proper periods of relaxation actually increase efficiency.

Avocations are further justified by the possibility that these may become real and profitable professions at some future time or under some unexpected change in our careers. The person who thinks about his problems all the time may be sincere, but he cannot be truly efficient. At the present time the instinct toward escape mechanisms is strong, and many of these escapes are neither constructive nor desirable. It is therefore necessary to plan recreation with the same thoughtfulness that we plan work.

The person who has forgotten how to enjoy a reasonable amount of rest and leisure has actually forgotten how to live. The more incessant the demands upon our physical resources, the more urgent becomes the requirement for rest. Very few can rest by being inactive. They cannot simply sit down and fold their hands and announce that they intend to relax. The wiser plan is to transfer the point of attention to that which is pleasurable and interesting, and allow natural enthusiasm to break tension. Sometimes we work harder during a vacation than when we are employed. We must remember, therefore, that doing what others want us to do is work, and doing what we want to do is play.

A good philosophy of life and the development of artistic interests help to neutralize the heavier tasks which must be performed. As we mature, therefore, it becomes easier for us to relax. Two kinds of persons relax easily: the lazy and the learned. The lazy because they are indolent, and the learned because they are wise. Leisure does not have to be wasted. It brings exercise to faculties not usually employed, and it gives expression to emotions long repressed. A man does not feel he is wasting time when he plays golf or tennis or joins a ski club. He knows that he is giving his physical body a chance to strengthen itself against the drain and exhaustion of business pressures. Relaxation is as necessary as proper nutrition, adequate sleep, and good ventilation.

Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, divided his day into three eight-hour periods. One of these he dedicated to labor, one to rest, and the third to the improvement of himself through study, recreation, and solid family-living. This is a good rule because it keeps balance. There is no reason why we should sacrifice everything else in life to the satisfaction of some uncontrollable ambition or desperate purpose. Learn to think of relaxation as a moral duty through which you protect the most important values of your life. If it happens that you cannot relax and that the moment you try to rest you begin to fidget, this message is most timely. You are already getting into trouble, and unless you recognize the symptoms, your personal normalcy is threatened.

RULE SIX

The cultivation of a sense of humor is the sixth of our *Ten Rules for Better Living*. Each individual may have his own definition of what constitutes humor, but very few have realized that it is a point of view which must develop within character if it is to be genuine and spontaneous. The lowest form of humor is enjoyment derived from the misfortunes of others, or the predicaments in which our associates may become involved. The real humorist is always kindly, gentle, observing, and stimulating. He is frequently able to preach a message or point out a lesson which would be objectionable if presented in a more sober vein. In older days, powerful princes had court jesters, and these alone could insult their masters with impunity. Many of these jesters were deeply learned and very wise, for it takes depth of human understanding, breadth of experience, and a ready comprehension to be witty without being unpleasant.

In daily living, nothing orients the person in his environment more quickly than the ability to get a separate look at himself. If we can stand aside and watch ourselves go by, we may have a new and appropriate cause for humor. The actions of others may seem ridiculous, but we feel that the most ridiculous actions of ourselves should be taken seriously by others. A real humorist is one who can enjoy being laughed at as much as he enjoys laughing at. This, however, is a real test of a philosopher. Many of the problems which seem deep and terrible are little better than ridiculous if seen in perspective. It is this lack of

perspective which causes us to be overserious, when perhaps a lightness of the mind would solve everything.

Humor, of course, is like a condiment. It gives flavor to food, but does not necessarily contribute to nutrition. Research shows, however, that the food which we enjoy is most likely to be well accepted by the body and applied to its proper purposes. We cannot live upon condiments, but as social creatures we require a certain amount of adjustment in order to live well. A sense of humor does not imply a superficial nature. We have all known those who have tried desperately to be funny and have failed miserably. When we force an unnatural wit, we destroy the very principle of humor, which cannot flourish in shallow natures.

The laws governing human conduct are forever emphasizing balance and a moderation between extremes. That which is unbalanced destroys itself. On the one extreme we may have a deep and abiding thoughtfulness, a heavy sense of responsibility, a deep dedication to duty, and a firm conviction that life is not funny. If we carry this attitude or group of attitudes to an unreasonable excess, however, we become dull and colorless. Such an excess does not make us more useful or more practical, and of itself solves few of the ills the flesh is heir to.

Conversely, to ripple continuously like a shallow stream, living forever on the surface of occurrences and accepting nothing as worthy of mature consideration, is another dangerous extreme. Somewhere there is a point of balance, but man has always found it hard to do anything moderately. This lack of what the Chinese call the "mean," or balance, causes us to tip from one extreme to another with considerable wear and tear on the whole personality. There can be no good philosophy of life without humor, and there can be no real humor without a good philosophy of life. The balancing of these two factors is, therefore, the proper symbol of maturity. The human mind,

emotions, and physical body flourish best when the person in the body is balanced and moderate and optimistic.

Honest laughter relaxes body-tension and releases many of the pressures which might otherwise accumulate and break through in less desirable ways. The habit of humor has a wonderful transmuting power. Like the wand of a fairy queen, it transforms the commonplace into something delightful. We have all enjoyed the humor of Mark Twain and Will Rogers, and we know that the world is better for their contributions to our way of life. Never be so busy, so thoughtful, so learned, so rich, or so burdened that you are no longer able to relax with a quiet smile.

RULE SEVEN

The seventh rule is concerned with *finding a reason for personal existence*. Experience shows that we are most likely to attain personality integration if we live each day to advance a main objective. In other words, we are most likely to get somewhere if we have a clear picture of that which we wish to accomplish. Brilliant leaders in the professions, arts, sciences, and trades have all agreed that we must be moved by a strong purpose to which we are willing to sacrifice matters of less importance. This is sound thinking, but it is only valuable to the degree that the purpose we visualize is itself valuable and significant.

In order to *keep* a plan, we must first *have* a plan, and we cannot strive after goals which we do not understand and for which we have no sincere appreciation. The better and wiser the person, the better the plan to which he can dedicate his life. In these uncertain times it is not entirely satisfactory to invest all of our hopes and dreams in the physical things around us. We may develop a business which will be swept away by changing times. We may build a social position which will collapse under economic reverses. In the course of years, the time will certainly come when we must ask ourselves how much we would be worth if we lost everything we had. The answer is obvious. Regardless of what we *have*, we are worth what we *are*.

Modern society offers us wonderful opportunities to become more as persons. The wisdom of fifty centuries is available to us. The noblest visions and dreams of the ages have descended to this generation as a whole inheritance. Most of all, under our

way of life we have the right and privilege to grow internally. Our minds and hearts are not censored, nor are we forbidden to think and speak according to our convictions. This privilege of growth is a fundamental of our freedom, and this freedom to grow is the answer to most of the problems that burden our daily living.

We cannot escape problems by denying them or running away from the decisions which they require. There is only one permanent remedy for any critical situation: We must outgrow it. The moment we are bigger than the problem, it ceases, and can never return. If, however, we attempt to evade a problem, it will come back time after time to plague us. Would it not, then, be wise to make growth our reason for living? Let us master whatever skill or ability is necessary, so that we can do our work well and without fear or worry. As we grow, we also find that increased knowledge and understanding bestow new dimensions upon commonplace activities. Life is more wonderful as we understand it.

We experience real joy in doing things well as we become skillful and self-confident. Most folks have many problems - some large and some small—some immediate and some remote - some reasonable and some unreasonable. Suppose you made it a career to go out and solve each of these irritating situations separately. It would be an incredible task, and you would scarcely have time left for the preservation of your standard of living. It is sensible, therefore, to seek for some solution by which many uncertainties can be clarified at the same time. This means that we must say to ourselves: “What is the common denominator of our composite unhappiness? Why does *this* make me unhappy on Wednesday and *that* on Thursday? In fact, why does nearly everything make me unhappy?

Is it not easier to bring ourselves into a constructive attitude, thus correcting many troublesome details altogether, than to

attempt to struggle through each as a separate and unrelated incident? A wise man once said: "Change yourself and you change all." Problems cannot exist in a life that has clarified its own purposes. Naturally there will be much work to do, but it will be meaningful and purposeful. It does not follow that wise persons are free from adversity or tragedy, for few can be completely wise. Even a little wisdom, however, prevents us from making new problems and gives us courage and patience to face such as cannot be prevented with a good hope.

RULE EIGHT

In this time of intense competition it is well to remember the eighth *Rule for Better Living: Never intentionally harm any other person*. Ruthlessness never bears good fruit, and those who sow thistles will reap thistles. No one in this world can have so many friends that he can afford to make one unnecessary enemy. Civilization cannot attain its natural goal if citizens continue to live by the law of the jungle. There are times when we are all tempted to return evil for evil, but if we follow this policy we can never know personal happiness and security. To live by compromise means, in the end, we live with compromise. Each of us must be able to bear our own dispositions with a degree of dignity. We cannot do this if we know in the quietude of private meditation that we are rather despicable persons.

Many prominent careers will not stand careful examination. Fortunes have been advanced at the expense of honor, and by a direct and intentional contribution to the misfortunes of others. With the passing of years, we must all look back, and there are hours which are heavy upon the heart and mind. In Nature there are laws which we cannot break with impunity. The code by which we live becomes the code which may cause our death. There is something inside of a man called conscience. Just what this is and why it is may be subject to debate, but there is no doubt that its small, still voice cannot be ignored. To go against conscience is to threaten mental balance, emotional integrity,

and physical health. No one can be well and happy who is troubled by his own conduct.

If we have no philosophy of life, we may take the attitude that we can do as we please regardless of consequence. This does not help much, however, for if there is no philosophy inside of us we are already desperately sick, whether we know it or not. Repentance is a phenomenon against which no one is impervious. There comes a time in most lives when we must face the mistakes we have made and wish that we had lived differently. I have seen repentance bring with it sorrows almost beyond description. It is wiser and better to so conduct ourselves that our mistakes will be errors of judgment rather than crimes of the heart. If, then, we must make a decision between sacrificing some ambition of our own or contributing to the sorrows of another, let us recognize the virtue of unselfishness. Constructive impulses regenerate the body of man and give him new resources with which to advance his career honorably and with kindness.

There is a streak of sadism in most human beings. If we are frustrated, weary, and problem-ridden, we feel that we are justified in being unkind. If we are hurt, we have the impulse to hurt someone else. We then excuse our own bad behavior because others have been unjust or unreasonable. Actually there is no excuse for conduct which is not worthy of our own humanity. How do cooperation and honest dealings pay dividends? Can we forget that our conduct must be an example which others will be inclined to follow? If we want a happy home, we must be respected by the members of our own family. If we want our children to be good citizens, we must set them an example. There is no use in preaching honesty, and then practicing dishonesty. Those who come after us are inclined to be like us, especially if they receive the constant preachment of our conduct. If then, we wish to look forward to the simple,

natural joys of living, and long happy years with which to close our earthly span, we must earn the respect and love of those who know us, all too well.

Happiness cannot come to those who seek it directly. No one can *make* himself happy, for even planned programs do not work out when the time comes. Happiness is a by-product of good living. If we keep the law, the law will keep us. If we live well, we will reap a good harvest. It is unfortunate to discover this only in the years of harvest. We may then find that we do not have that which we have not earned. Regrets are then unprofitable, for they cannot restore the damage which has been done. We may then say that if a man is willing to follow a careful program to maintain his physical health and efficiency, he should also follow a well-planned program to maintain the health of his mind and his emotions. He should live a life calculated to strengthen his faculties and to deepen his emotions. If early in life he resolves to keep the faith of his world and to accept only that which he has earned, he will live to know contentment.

RULE NINE

In our list of *Rules for Better Living*, number nine is *beware of anger*. In the same spirit, also beware of what we commonly call righteous indignation. Both have the same detrimental effect upon human disposition and character. Anger is loss of self-control. It is an excess of resentment expressed through ill-considered words and ill-advised conduct. It is easy for quick-tempered persons to become angry, and often the mood passes quickly, but the results can linger on. There is a school of thought that considers an occasional temper fit as a legitimate extroversion. We are not supposed to frustrate our inclinations, lest these accumulate and ultimately bring serious consequences. It is probably true that once temper has arisen in the emotions not much can be done to prevent its expression, but why do we get angry so often and over so many comparatively trivial occurrences?

Anger, like worry, can be just a habit. Like worry also, the pressures causing anger can be redirected and re-educated. The ill-tempered individual seldom realizes that his conduct is a detriment to the pattern of human society. Concerned only with the expression of his personal irritation, he weakens all of the natural bonds which should be protected and honored. He disfigures himself and diminishes the regard in which he is held by his associates. When small children are angry or have temper-fits, one remedy is to place them in front of a mirror. When the child sees his own expression, he recognizes that he

is deforming himself and destroying the beauty and charm of his appearance and manner. There is no way of misrepresenting oneself more completely than by indulging in a temper-fit.

It may be held that when an angry person reveals his irritation he is not misrepresenting himself but is actually telling the truth about himself. This is not a strictly factual observation, however. No one is angry all the time, and we bear witness to our own essential nature only when we are not trying to be good or bad. Both extremes depart from the normal, and man is best able to function efficiently when he is without intense pressures of any kind. In anger, we are likely to lose control of our words and our actions. We will resent moderating counsel, and become more intense when we are opposed. Words have power, and become deeply etched in the memories of our friends and foes. It may require years of patient mending to repair a situation caused by a few moments of emotional intemperance. Thus, valuable energy must be expended to neutralize the results of wasted energy. More and more, our human abilities are squandered on projects which should never have existed. Misunderstandings are seldom repaired through irritability. It may well be that we are appropriately indignant at the words or actions of another. If, however, we wish to have the greatest corrective influence, we must be careful not to take the very attitudes which we resent in others. There is no proof through experience that two wrongs ever made a right. The best we can say is that the wrong itself is doubled.

When righteous indignation arises within us, there is a pressing need for calmness and character-integration. If we can preserve our own balance in a difficult situation, we have mastered that situation. The fact that another has lost his temper can never justify the perpetuation of a feud. We have the right to retire with dignity from any situation that offends our sense of values, but we cannot afford to become emotionally involved.

Modern man is under terrific psychological pressure. He must, therefore, exercise ever greater watchfulness over personal conduct. We cannot afford to waste resources which are difficult, if not impossible, to replace. Why should we build ourselves up physically with vitamins, minerals, and innumerable modern remedies only to tear ourselves down by destructive outbursts of emotion? If we want to live long and remain useful, we must live well and develop a reasonable degree of patience. There are too many instances in which an outburst of temper has been followed by a serious and even fatal physical reaction. The reward of a good disposition is a good life. Perhaps the love of our families and the respect of our friends are worth self-control.

RULE TEN

The last of our *Ten Rules* and one of the most important is: *Never blame others for our own mistakes.* In the first place, we can have little respect for an individual who does not acknowledge obvious faults. We consider him self centered and egotistical. There is really no reason to blame anyone too severely for his first mistake, but we may doubt his intelligence if he repeats the same mistake several times. If things go wrong, it is nice to assume that it is due to corrupt politics, general instability in world affairs, the stupidity of our associates, and the ignorance of our friends. Such thinking leaves us completely innocent of all wrongs, a most comforting reflection. Needless to say, we will never correct our mistakes as long as we decline to acknowledge that we make them. Equally obviously, we cannot correct the mistakes of the whole world, and we can take the horrible attitude that we are predestined and foreordained to suffer.

Experience and thoughtfulness reveal that nearly every person is in the predicament which he has caused for himself. There may be times when the rationale of the situation appears dim, but it is much safer to assume that the trouble is of our own making, and therefore can be repaired by our own efforts.

To think otherwise is to assume that we live in a dishonest universe, and such an assumption is a catastrophe. If we can build a good future, we may also have the genius to accumulate a bad one. Therefore, when anything goes wrong, let us first examine ourselves. Nor should we be too partial in such

examination. Let us not excuse all our own faults because we understand them, and condemn all the faults of others because we do not understand them.

From the complaints we hear from troubled persons, it would seem that the principal occupation of mortals is to ruin each other's lives. Nearly everyone can give a long and detailed list of injustices they have suffered, the troubles they have known, and the miseries of which they are the victims. After observing and listening to these complainers, it dawns upon the impartial observer that these folks could themselves be a heavy and thankless burden on everyone they know. They have stewed so long in their own self-pity that it never occurs to them to list the mistakes they have made, the troubles they have caused, and the unpleasant situations which they have generated. It is not necessary for anyone to break down and confess his private faults, but it is good to examine debits and credits of personality in the quietude of private reflection.

One trouble with unpleasant persons is that their acquaintances have no inclination to create a situation by starting an argument. When our conduct is such that others cannot get along with us, they usually retire quietly and leave us to the ages. Having made it impossible for them to remain, we then proclaim ourselves the victims of their indifference when they depart. Perhaps it would be wiser for all concerned if departing friends would make a simple and honest statement of why they departed. If several departed for the same cause and we knew it, there might be a larger incentive toward personal reform.

We all grow by our mistakes, but they are of little value to us unless we accept and understand them. There is a popular belief that the older we get, the wiser we are. This is not always true, however; for no matter how long we live, experience means little unless we honestly search for the causes of our troubles. It is also a wise idea not to brood over misfortune. Think it

through, learn all you can, correct your faults, and then go on living a better life. Too many folks are in abject slavery to the past. They can never forget those things which should not be remembered, and they never seem to remember lessons which should never be forgotten. It is better to be strict with ourselves where principles are involved. There is no use complaining because we are not perfect, but there is much profit in self-improvement whenever and wherever this is possible. If we are aware of our own defects, we can act accordingly; but while we blame the world for our troubles, we cannot act at all. After all, the world is just a number of persons, most of whom are convinced that everyone else is wrong. Face it squarely—you cannot always be right and always in trouble.

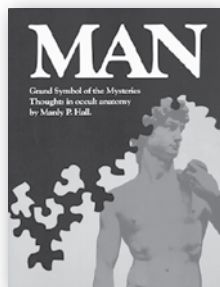
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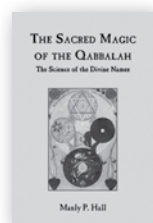
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Manly P. Hall founded the Philosophical Research Society, Inc., a non-profit organization in 1934, dedicated to the dissemination of useful knowledge in the fields of philosophy, comparative religion, and psychology. In his long career, spanning more than seventy years of dynamic public activity, Mr. Hall delivered over 8000 lectures in the United States and abroad, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote countless magazine articles.

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