

Common Folk Rules for Living

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How to live with yourself

- Cultivate a relationship with your future self to avoid regrets.
 - At each critical juncture in life ask your future self, “Five (or ten) years from now, will I be sorry I didn’t try X? Will I be sorry I didn’t do Y?” If so, then you probably should try X, and do Y.
 - Choose the path that creates or preserves the most (or best) options for the future.
- Accept your mistakes as necessary lessons learned along the path of your life.
 - All great accomplishments have multiple failures along the way -- failure is part of the process, part of the path; embrace it.
 - Move beyond them and put them in the past.
 - After a bitter disappointment or failure, instead of berating yourself, give yourself the kind, wise counsel that you would give a dear friend.

How to live with others

- Put yourself in the other person’s shoes.
- *Especially*: Know that everybody is insecure (just like you are), and that everybody wants to be loved (just like you do).
 - Show empathy, kindness, and support.
 - Know that meanness against you is mostly caused by insecurity and fear in the other person. Give them a break, even when they don’t do the same for you.
- Remember names.

How to lead a happy, meaningful life

- The purpose of life is to help others and to make the world a better place.
- Three key requirements for a satisfying life (and career):
 - (1) Serve yourself: Find your talents. Cultivate the skills that you enjoy. Find a career that keeps you intellectually interested.
 - (2) Serve others: **Find something more important than yourself (your “Cause”) and devote your life to it. This is foundational.**
 - Family is one of these causes.
 - Choose a career that makes the world a better place.
 - (3) Make enough money to be financially stable.
 - Pay your savings first. Spend less than you earn.
 - This advice is essentially identical with the Japanese principle of “ikigai” by which you find your path in life as the intersection of (a) what you enjoy, (b) what you’re good at, (c) what the world needs, and (d) what you can get paid for.
- Other advice
 - Your dream should be a path, a lifestyle, not a destination or accomplishment.
 - Seek a path of continual improvement, of continual learning.
 - Even small amounts of learning are infinitely better than zero learning.
 - Realize that you *are* living your dream.
 - Lewis Mumford: "Adventure is as humdrum as routine, unless one assimilates it. It is not what one does, but what one realizes, that keeps existence from being vain and trivial."

- "Happiness ... is a naturally arising byproduct of a fulfilling, well-lived life." (Aaron Nichols: <https://medium.com/live-your-life-on-purpose/three-life-lessons-from-a-dying-man-d0c08c0fe030>) You just have to realize it.
 - Avoid comparison.
 - Teddy Roosevelt: "Comparison is the thief of joy."
 - (Brenne Brown: "Comparison is the thief of happiness.")
 - Max Ehrmann: "If you compare yourself with others, you may become bitter or vain, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself."
 - Time is more valuable than money. Experiences are more valuable than things.
 - Use your money to create experiences (time) with good friends that you'll never forget.
 - Focus on a few, most important topics to spend your time on.
 - Accept you can't do it all, and trying to do so is wasting your quality time.
 - It's OK to be mediocre in activities that are fun but not your primary motivator.
- **See the *LifeMapping* tools elsewhere on the Common Folk website.**

How to change the world

- Find the right small team to work together on the Cause.
 - Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

How to get things done

- View tasks as opportunities, not obligations.
- Keep running notes for each project
 - Document what you did that day
 - Plan the very next steps for the next day
- Simplify.
 - Prioritize by the Pareto principle (80:20 rule): 80% of the value is achieved by 20% of your effort.
 - Disaggregate complex tasks into simpler smaller ones.
- Action conquers fear, and all action is simply one small step followed patiently and methodically by another.
 - Finish tasks just as you start them: one small step at a time.
- If you need help, ask for advice -- not opinions.
- Start now, even if you're unsure and can only take tiny steps.
 - Do more now; worry about quality later.
 - "Curiosity and consistency will carry you through in the shadowlands of mediocrity."
 - "When doubt, do something." (Harry Chapin)
 - "Wander the mysterious path."
- Forty-percent rule (Navy Seals): When you think you're exhausted, you actually still have 60% of your energy and skills remaining and available.
- **See the *TaskPlanning* tools elsewhere on the Common Folk website.**

Foundational writings

- *Desiderata* (Latin: "desired things"). Max Ehrmann, 1927.
- *If*. Rudyard Kipling, 1895.
- *Ulysses*. Lord Tennyson, 1833.