

# The Rules Have Changed!

*"Today I begin a new life. Today I shed my old skin which hath, too long, suffered the bruises of failure and the wounds of mediocrity. Today I am born anew and my birthplace is a vineyard where there is fruit for all." – Og Mandino*

The rules have changed. Can we feel it? Can we see it in the faces of our friends and family members? Can we hear it in the growing pleas for help? Can we see it when we look in the mirror? We didn't get to vote, the rules just changed and far too many were wholly unprepared.

In the darkest of our family's dark nights, I remember struggling to come to grips with our new reality. The material rewards from years of hard work seemed to drain through our fingers like water. We were confused. We wanted to cling to the past - past income, past efforts, past successes, but that was all gone. The rules had changed and we did not know the new rules. Things that worked yesterday, no longer produced results today. We couldn't find traction. It was hard to understand. It was even harder to accept.

Back then we were able to move to a relatively safe place and begin the journey of learning the new rules while cleaning up the financial devastation and rebuilding our lives and our estate. Today there is no geographical safe place. The current challenges faced by so many are both real and pandemic. So what do we do now?

We will want to learn the new rules and master them. We will want to stand firm where we are, dig in and courageously fight the good fight. We will want to rise above the firestorms of life and see opportunities more clearly, even when opportunity is limited. We will want to discover how to become abundant in spite of the challenges.

If we have a job we will want to fall back in love with our work and excel at everything we do regardless of pay or personal recognition. If we do not have a job, we will want to become increasingly provident, creative and independent. If we own a business we will want to better serve our partners, those with whom we labor and our customers and all without holding them or our business hostage to our former lifestyle. If we are in a relationship or want to be in one, we will want to apply the rules to lift and build and bless our companions, children and friends. We will want to embrace principles, re-engage in life, connect with and serve people, create value everywhere we go and enrich the world. In short, we will want to become an Intentional Creator.

As we get ready to begin this journey and learn, apply and master the new rules, the single greatest challenge for most will be overcoming and curing the beguiling yet deadly *ease dis-ease*. This pandemic virus creates a fevered pitch promising a magical utopia free from stress, debt, pain and frustration. It can be

accompanied by vivid illusions of time and financial freedom where in we can do and buy whatever we want whenever we want it. For the past couple of decades this very contagious disease has infected many. Few have been immune.

Pundits, peddling what we now call *The Millionaire Magic Doctrine*, have served only as incubators for the ease disease. Some instruct that to find this glorious place all we need do is raise our hands to an *abundant universe* and proclaim our worthiness. Their instructions come with the absolute promise that the universe is *stupid* and will deliver whatever we ask.

Others have suggested that there is a power in the universe much like a genie and when we rub *their* lantern the genie will appear and inanely respond, "Your wish is my command." Others want us to believe there is something tantamount to a *fantasy fairy* that will magically manifest our wishes in tangible reality if we will but only visualize our dreams with enough intention.

Infected, contagious and at times religious in our pursuit, many have traveled deep into the recesses of their minds and the far reaches of this planet in search of an elixir that actually delivers ease. It is not to be found. It does not exist on this planet.

Should we succumb to this dis-ease, we surrender our free will and soon find ourselves chained in dark emotional dungeons of ease addiction. It all starts innocently enough with an invitation to use our gift of vivid visualization to engage in a seemingly harmless escape and avoid fantasy. While in fantasy, we are transported to a mystical time in the future *when* we are magically rich. Once there, we are able to live vivid visions of what it will be like *then* - no more stress, no more pain, no more debt, no more time or financial constraints. These vivid experiences are euphoric and intoxicating, but we soon become addicted to these norepinephrine- driven emotional highs and our trips become mandatory daily destinations.

While basking in the afterglow of fantasy, many make rash and destructive life decisions. Some impulsively invest borrowed money in unstable markets or *for sure* get rich quick schemes, wanting to create the instant and effortless wealth needed to support ease. When success eludes them, some even double or triple their bets.

Some delude themselves wanting to believe success is just around the next corner and prematurely quit good paying jobs. Others use credit cards or other lines of credit to fund the illusion of wealth. Like chickens with our heads cut off, we can borrow and spend, borrow and spend, going deeper and deeper into consumer debt in an attempt to artificially create the illusion of wealth believing this supports ease. Sadly, when reality strikes, and it always does, all who are infected fall victim to cortisol driven withdrawals. The only hope of escape from this dark dungeon of ease addiction has been another dose of fantasy.

Tragically, some have engaged friends, family, committed companions or business partners in this frenetic process and in too many cases, undermined trust and ultimately relationships. Even more tragic, a few have justified treating people like disposable assets or resources while sucking the humanity out of their bones. Driven by greed, they have created false profits and then with impunity, plundered corporate treasure chests requiring massive public and government bailouts all the while leaving burdensome debts for future generations.

How did all of this get so out of control? How has this disease spread so quickly and this illusion of wealth been perpetuated for so long without detection?

First, the lie that ease exists somewhere on this planet has been a carefully guarded secret, both overtly and covertly. Everyone thought that everyone else was experiencing ease and that they were the only ones failing to find it. In a strange way, we have all been complicit in keeping up appearances.

Two, feeling very alone, it is human nature to focus blame for our failures inward and in the form of destructive internal dialogue. We can question our worth and worthiness, our ability to create and even our deeply held belief systems. We can privately suffer in silence while screaming in our souls, "Why not me?" "What is wrong with me?" "Why does it work for everyone else but not me?" "I can almost taste it! I can almost touch it! Why can't I have it?" "Maybe God doesn't love me!" "I must not be worthy!" "It must be my fault." "If only I were \_\_\_\_!"

Three, until recently we have been able to fund the illusion of wealth and the perpetuation of this lie with loose credit supported by unprecedented increases in real estate values. However, the vast majority of adherents to the Millionaire Magic Doctrine have been growing increasingly broke, broken and angry - financially devastated, emotionally depleted and bitter. Over the years it has become increasingly difficult to keep up appearances and the evidence is becoming visible.

The economy did not cause this damage. It only helped reveal the *ease disease* and the pain that so many have been suffering in private. The hard truth is this, the path promising ease is not only mystical and magical it is mythical. The existence of this place called "ease" is one of the most deceptive, diabolical, and devastating lies to come out of the last decadent decade and the disease has robbed too many of finding real joy in this journey called life.

During one of *those* dark nights while sitting in a peach colored chair in our master bedroom, I vividly remember these words flowing from that deep and sacred space in my soul, "I long to cry to the God of my youth, but the God of my youth will not hear my cry. I must change my God or change my cry!" Perhaps you, too, have been screaming something similar in your soul while waiting for an answer that has not been forthcoming.

Og provided timely counsel. He wrote, *"Never will I pray for the material things of the world. I am not calling to a servant to bring me food. I am not ordering an innkeeper to provide me with room. Never will I seek delivery of gold, love, good health, petty victories, fame, success, or happiness...I ask not for gold or garments or even opportunities equal to my ability; instead, guide me so that I may acquire ability equal to my opportunities."*

We could also add to this, I will never again engage in the prayer of fantasy expecting some mystical power to deliver material wealth simply because I can vividly visualize it with enough intention. The idea of magical abundance and a life of *ease* does tickle our ears, but this cry for the delivery of instant wealth cannot be answered.

The million-dollar question is this: Is all that visualization stuff just nonsense? Are we simply kidding ourselves? Is everything lost?

It is far from nonsense. What makes the fantasy-fairy idea so dangerously seductive is this, like all lethal fictions there is a kernel of truth. We *do* have an awesome ability to visualize and it is an essential ingredient of Intentional Creation. However, the most common application of vivid visualization, the current cry of so many, is critically flawed.

When we use this powerful gift to escape and avoid the rigors of life and in the pursuit of *ease*, we spend valuable time living in a mythical world of imaginary personal reward. The only thing we are programming is the impossibility of ever arriving at that destination for which we so earnestly yearn. The process is antithetical to creation itself.

Until we change our cry, our pleas will continue to be in vain. We will experience only the bruises of failure and the wounds of mediocrity. Dreams will remain unrealistic and wholly unachievable. We will experience broken and frustrated hearts. Love will evade us. Families and friendships will be damaged or even torn apart. Far too many will be left to wallow in self-pity and despair.

When we change our cry and use our gift of vivid visualization constructively and focus on connection, creation and contribution, we are led to a genuine engagement with the force of creation itself. Inspired ideas, impressions and solutions to challenges are manifest. Passion is ignited and the oxygen of focus, discipline and action are added to the mix. Tangible creation is sped up. Ultimately we become abundant.

The majority of the population does not need to be taught how to vividly visualize. We are already masters of the vivid. We need only be taught how to discipline and refocus this gift - change their cry. When we do, we let go of the desire for *ease* and gladly use our gift of vivid visualization constructively. We willingly go

down a very different path, one that qualifies for Robert Frost's invitation to take "a road less traveled" and the one that "made all the difference."

Prior to reading this book were our secret dreams and desires, our cry, more closely associated with escaping and avoiding the rigors of life - having enough money to be above it all - no more debt, bills, pain, or frustration and with the financial and time freedom described? If that is the case, we now know why abundance has eluded us.

In the midst of all of the current firestorms of life there could be a silver lining. Perhaps we have all been hit up the side of the head with gigantic cosmic two-by-four. Collectively, more so than ever before, we have had a Societal Pivotal Moment of Surrender and of such magnitude that it is sufficient to drive this much-needed change in direction.

I have such faith in the human spirit and its resilience. As Kevin Hall, my mentor, personal coach, faithful friend and author of *Aspire, Discovering your path through the power of words* and *Healing through the power of words*, wrote, "The 're' in resilient means to step back. 'Silient' means leap up." If we have been knocked down, it is time to leap up. Perhaps we were not dying emotionally or financially after all, but are instead on the operating table of a celestial surgeon. Whether our hearts needed to be healed or as with me, replaced, is it possible that we are getting closer to a joyful moment than we realized?

I was recently introduced to this inspiring quote from Dean Alfange, "*I do not choose to be a common man. It is my right to be uncommon. I seek opportunity to develop whatever talents God gave me- not security. I do not wish to be a kept citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me. I want to take a calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed. I refuse to barter incentive for a dole. I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence; the thrill of fulfillment to this stale calm of utopia. I will not trade freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. I will never cower before any earthly master nor bend to any threat. It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid; to think and act myself, enjoy the benefit of my creations and to face the world boldly and say, this, with God's help, I have done.*"

Are we ready and willing to rise above difficulty, mediocrity or simply our comfort zone and become abundant in the very fibers of our being? Are we ready to become an intentional creator? If so, here is a brief overview of the rules - the time-tested principles, we will want to learn, apply and master. In the chapters to follow, we will dig deep and provide the practices and processes for mastery so that you can become abundant.

### **Rule #1: Focus on others.**

Becoming abundant requires that we change our focus from self to others. Og called this, "*The greatest secret of success in all ventures.*"

Our character has been forged in the furnace of adversity. We have been uniquely prepared for this journey. We know what pain feels like. We cannot change the past, but we can choose to use our life experience as a rich resource to better understand, connect with and serve others.

When we consciously choose to shift our focus to others and use our life experience in their service, we become the beneficiary of a huge latent reserve of cooperation and productivity saved only for those who learn and apply this greatest of all secrets. In the process, we not only lift and build others, we finally find purpose in *our* suffering, joy in *our* journey and much needed healing for *our* souls.

We will want to master the Seven Principles of Intrinsic Validation. We will want to master Quality #1 of becoming an intentional creator: The Art of Connecting with People. This alone will be worth the journey!

### **Rule #2: Use your mind constructively.**

Creation is a two-stage process that occurs in two equally important yet very different dimensions. First, we use our gift of vivid visualization to *create* in our mind. What we choose to create using this powerful gift will determine our success or failure.

The mind is a fertile and often undisciplined playground wherein we can vividly escape to our fantasy villa on the French Riviera; spend two weeks in the Caribbean sailing, sunbathing and scuba diving; decorate our luxuriant oceanfront homes on both coasts of the U. S. plus Hawaii; and all in the fifteen minutes it takes to shower.

While in escape and avoid fantasy, seeking a life free of debt, stress and pain, we experience very temporary euphoric norepinephrine-driven emotional highs. When reality strikes, and it always does, we immediately experience the dark dungeons of cortisol-driven imagined catastrophe. The reward is exhaustion, discouragement and despair. Sadly, this roller coaster ride of emotional highs and devastating lows is being experienced by 98% of those actively seeking abundance.

When we consciously use our gift constructively and focus our vivid visualization on ways to better serve others and create value everywhere we go, we facilitate connection with the force of creation itself and we receive inspired ideas, impressions and solutions to challenges. These manifestations ignite our passion and drive our focus, discipline, effort and action. As Og writes, "*Weak is he who allow his thoughts to control his actions. Strong is he who forces his action to control his thoughts.*"

We will want to learn how to consciously and deliberately engage in the five constructive ways of thinking. We will want to master Quality #2: Mental Creation.

### **Rule #3: Stay present in the Now.**

It is in the here and Now, mind and body wedded, that the second stage of creation occurs, physical creation. The action required for physical creation can be burdensome, boring, mundane and repetitious or it can be passion-driven. Again, this all depends on how we choose to employ our gift of vivid visualization while in mental creation.

When we focus this gift on serving others and creating value, we receive inspired ideas. This vision ignites our passion, a willingness to suffer for something we have created so clearly in our mind and now desire to create in tangible reality. Passion drives the required action.

With passion and as Og writes, *"I will concentrate my energy on the challenge of the moment and my actions will help me forget all else."* As we stay focused and fully maximize our talents, we are endowed with even more ability. People are put on our path whom we can serve and who can serve us. Miracles unfold and the time required to create our dreams in tangible reality is greatly reduced. This is creation of our dreams on metaphorical steroids and at the fastest possible pace!

We want to learn how to stay focused in the Now in passion-driven action so that we can work tirelessly creating each millimeter between where we are and the vision we have so clearly created in our mind. We will want to experience miracles in our lives. We will want to master Quality #3: Physical Creation.

### **Rule #4: Willingly embrace discipline and structure.**

Most of us have unhealthy habits of thinking that want us to be in resistance, resentment and even rebellion to the very discipline and structure needed to create abundance. These sabotaging thoughts do not want to be interrupted, restricted or controlled. Og writes, *"I have surrendered my free will to these years of accumulated habits and the past deeds of my life have already marked out a path which threatens to imprison my future."*

What are these accumulated habits? Here is a partial list: Constant or obsessive thought that keeps us pre-occupied, unavailable for others and unable to take action; the need to fix, justify and defend; the need to be right; being closed to other people's ideas and opinions; inability to stick to a schedule or a regimented plan of action over a sustained period of time; resistance to some else's rules; resentment when someone attempts to use their position of authority to impose rules. Ouch!

There is a *strait* and *narrow* way to create abundance. A *strait* is a circuitous route through perilous waters often filled with unseen obstacles. When we willingly

follow the wisdom from what Og's calls, "*the wisest of my profession who have come before me, generations upon generation*," we are guided "*through these perilous waters to shores which only yesterday seemed but a dream*."

When we listen to these unhealthy habits of thinking, we crash into unseen challenges that rip holes in the hull of our *life* boat. We experience heartbreak and sink into despair. Relegated to the dry docks of unrealized opportunity, "*I will perish in a life of failure, misery and sleepless nights*."

When we consciously take back control of these thoughts and let go of resistance, resentment and rebellion, we quickly discover that being disciplined and structured is not restrictive but is in fact the gateway to the very freedom we seek.

We will want to discover how to take back control of our wild and rebellious thoughts so we can overcome fear, experience peace of mind, willingly take on difficult tasks – our Big Uglies, let go of the need to be right, find good in other people's ideas and get our funny back. We *will* want to master Quality #4: Discipline and Structure.

#### **Rule #5: Experience joy in the journey.**

In our modern era of text messages, emails and ear buds, it is easy to focus on how disconnected we can be from each other. Og invites us to look at the greatest disconnect of all, those times when our body is in one place and our mind is wandering around somewhere else.

The joy we long to experience while in the creation of our dreams occurs only when our mind and body are *wedded*, working together in this space we call today, in this time we call the Now. When we make this choice, and it is ours to make, we soon discover that finding joy in the journey has more to do with *how* we live than what we *do* for a living.

Instead of searching for greener grass, we focus on turning our intimate personal relationships into vibrant, loving and committed partnerships. We show gratitude by honoring the gifts we have been given and then honor the giver of these gifts by creating the most we can with what we have been given. As we do, we experience ever-increasing levels of abundance. We embrace obstacles and turn them into opportunities for growth. We choose to be victors instead of a victims even when experiencing difficult challenges. We fall back in love with life and find meaning and purpose is all that we do.

We will want to learn *how* to live so we can unlock the door to joy. We will want to master Quality #5: Finding joy in the journey.



## **Rule #6: Be real, genuine and authentic.**

Our objective is to be real, genuine and authentic without the need to impress, pretend, feel ashamed and fear. Dr. Robert Hartman called this, *“the most difficult task in our mortal existence.”* He concluded, *“And the highest level of maturity.”* Once we find this place, we feel whole and complete, conscious and aware, awake and alert. We have peace of mind, feel happy and experience real joy. We are free, fully available and willing to serve others from an overflowing cup.

Og Mandino writes, *“I am nature’s greatest miracle. I am not on this earth by chance. I am here for a purpose and that purpose is to grow into a mountain, not to shrink to a grain of sand. Henceforth will I apply all my efforts to become the highest mountain of all and I will strain my potential until it cries for mercy.”*

It is time to leave behind vain attempts to imitate others – and be real. It is time to awaken our natural genius, embrace our uniqueness and stretch and grow. It is time to be self-directed doing the next right thing for the right reason because we want to, get to and choose to. It is time to change our focus from “What is wrong with me?” to “How can I use my life experience to better serve others?” It is time to become the person we were meant to be!

We are nature’s greatest miracle. No matter how loud, obnoxious, sabotaging or destructive our internal dialogue, no matter what our thoughts may want us to believe, no matter what we have done or what has been done to us, we are priceless and unique. What are your thoughts saying to you right now? If I said half the things to you that they say to you, could we still be friends? It is time to quiet this noise!

We will want to explore the three primary reasons for challenges in our self-esteem and discover and apply six ways of healing our self-esteem. We will want to master Quality #6: Self-Esteem.

We may be thinking, “These rules are not new.” That is true. These time-tested principles are only new because we are choosing to pull them out of the attic, dust them off and re-experience their awesome power anew.

May we be as Og writes, *“prepared for wisdom and principles that will guide me out of the shadows into the sunlight of wealth, position, and happiness far beyond my most extravagant dreams until even the golden apples in the Garden of Hesperides will seem no more than my just reward.”*

Let us commit to do as Og recommends, *“I will swallow the seed of success buried in each and new life will spout within me.”* It is time to embrace and master the Six Qualities of an Intentional Creator and become abundant. Welcome home!