

7

# RULES

## *Achievement*

From Vision to Action:  
The Complete Guide to Programming Your  
Internal Success Mechanism

Tom Terwilliger

# 7 RULES *of Achievement*

## From Vision to Action: The Complete Guide to Programming Your Internal Success Mechanism

by Thomas V. Terwilliger

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Illustrations by Rosemarie Gillen

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ISBN 978-160037- (paperback)

**Published by:**

Morgan James Publishing  
1225 Franklin Ave. Ste 325  
Garden City, NY 11530-1693  
Toll Free 800-485-4943  
[www.MorganJamesPublishing.com](http://www.MorganJamesPublishing.com)

In an effort to support local communities, raise awareness and funds,  
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## Introduction

### *Break the Rules and Pay the Price*

**T**he award-winning actress Helen Hayes once said her mother drew an important distinction between achievement and success: “She said that achievement is the knowledge that you have studied and worked hard and done the best that is in you. Success is being praised by others. That is nice but not as important or satisfying. Always aim for achievement and forget about success.”

Whether in the pursuit of higher achievement, the accolades of success, or both there is one thing I have found to be a constant:  
*Without a crystal clear and concise objective, nothing great can be achieved; if by chance it is, it is unlikely to be repeated.*

### *Breaking the Rules*

Some would call that an achievement tenet, or principle; others would say it is a universal law. I call it a RULE. But terminology aside, I have never been one to follow the rules. From the time I was a kid growing up in Long Island, New York, I've always done things my way — and not necessarily the right way. Perhaps what started that early trend was hearing the phrase, “rules were made to be broken” a few moments after being severely scolded and told for the first time that I had to “follow the rules or pay the price.” As a mischievous, high-strung kid, identical twin, and the youngest of six kids, that first phrase resonated in my young mind. I liked breaking the rules... and as a result I learned many lessons the hard way: I often did pay the price for my rule-breaking behavior.

I broke the rules and paid the price when, as a ‘D level’ sophomore in high school, I struck a deal that involved trading three cases of beer and \$50 for my first Harley-Davidson motorcycle. After a few coats of flat black paint, some Loctite®, and a spit shine, that 1957 ridged-frame Panhead chopper became an outward symbol of my rebellious attitude: my rule-breaker calling card.

I broke the rules again and paid the price when I dropped out of high school my senior year after slugging it out with a gym teacher. And I completely shattered the rules that same year when I started riding my chopper with a group of notorious outlaw bikers and leading a renegade lifestyle that would

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continue for the next 5 years.

The truth is, with the exception of a few brief extraordinary moments, for the first 23 years of my life I was the definition of an underachiever and even what many would call a loser. I was succeeding at everything that would define me as a failure and failing at anything that represented achievement — and telling myself that I was really cool the whole time.

There comes a turning point in everyone's life when a person has to make a decision or decisions that will shape his or her destiny. For some, it might be a single agonizing decision or a soul-freeing moment of clarity when faced with that proverbial fork in the road. Others choose a path through a series of small decisions. Obesity, for example, doesn't simply develop overnight but is rather the result of an accumulation of bad and unhealthy decisions over the course of years.

I was faced with that moment of clarity and decision in 1983, after five years of abusive living and bad decisions. It was all in or all out – commit fully to my chosen outlaw biker lifestyle or accept the consequences of my 5 years of bad decisions and reckless behavior and then turn my back on it and walk away.

It happened as I stood leaning against the rickety homemade bar inside the biker club house, looking around with a sense of disdain at what I was becoming or had become. As I downed my fourth or fifth beer, a soft voice interrupted my conscious thoughts. After looking sharply to my right and left and even behind me, I was convinced that the voice wasn't coming from anyone around me. Could it have come from inside my own head? No, I was more than familiar with that little voice and this was not it. I had never heard this voice before. This gentle yet commanding voice was coming from somewhere else — maybe it was my heart, or perhaps it was God. I tend to believe the latter. It whispered, "YOU'RE DONE. WALK AWAY." I must have looked like a dazed and confused boxer, looking up from the canvas to hear "... 9, 10, you're out," as the voice repeated for the second time "... YOU'RE DONE. WALK AWAY." in a tone that could not be ignored.

I took a leap of faith at that moment. I put down my beer, and made the conscious decision that I was done — a decision I had been unconsciously wrestling with long before that gentle commanding voice interrupted what might have been my last beer. I turned and walked away from the bar, from

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my friends, and from what had become my life.

Have you ever made a decision and then immediately doubted that it was the right decision? Perhaps that little voice in *your* head asked, “Are you sure about this? This could be a huge mistake.” And then something happened to confirm that your choice was indeed the right one?

As I was walking away, I turned back just for a moment to look at the bar with a sense of doubt, uncertainty, and overwhelming dread that this decision was going to cost me big. At that very moment someone must have accidentally shoved into the rickety old bar with the substantial force of a 250-pound drunken biker. Whatever happened, it was enough force to jar loose from its perch the cocked and loaded sawed-off double barrel shotgun that was resting on the bar’s shelf. As it hit the ground both barrels went off and blew a massive hole through the bar in the very spot where I had been standing just moments before. In a fraction of a second a mass of wood splinters, glass, and shotgun shell pellets spread like an angry swarm of killer bees.

As the rest of clubhouse and all its unruly inhabitants erupted into chaos at not knowing what had just happened, I stood frozen, unable to move. My thoughts were fixated on one thing: If I had I not stepped away from the bar at that very moment, I would now be looking up from the canvas at God and hearing “... 9, 10, you’re out.” When the smoke cleared I walked out and never looked back.

Recall a moment in your life when you had been vacillating on an important or life-changing decision. How did it feel once you finally took action? We hear that a single decision can change your life - but it is also true that the act of making the decision itself — right or wrong — can empower your life. After I made that life-changing decision, I was feeling energized and empowered. But I was also filled with uncertainty about where I would go and what I would do from there.

Having dabbled during my teen and high school years in competitive bodybuilding with some passion and modest level of achievement (those few extraordinary moments I mentioned earlier) I thought getting back into the gym would be a great place to start my new life. Sure enough, I was right. Along with the rebuilding of my alcohol- and drug-abused body I found that working out again was also rebuilding my spirit and self esteem.

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### *Re-Kindling a Dream*

As I regained my strength and my health and some sense of myself as a person with the potential for positive achievement, I began to think about a dream that I had long ago dismissed as impossible and even stupid. As a kid I dreamed of becoming a champion bodybuilder. I dreamed of becoming Mr. America. Now I know that might seem like an unusual dream by most standards, but becoming an astronaut, doctor, or baseball player simply wasn't what ignited my passion. And what I have learned since then is that it's not what you dream that matters — what matters is the passion and sense of purpose it ignites.

What dreams do you have that you've dismissed as stupid or out of reach, based on some obsolete disempowering belief or, even worse, on somebody else's standards or opinions?

Along with the rules I'll share with you in the chapters ahead, you should know that you have all the resources within you right now to rekindle those dreams. Not only are your dreams possible but they are also achievable, perhaps even in a very short period of time.

My dream of becoming Mr. America was back, along with a new career as a certified fitness professional. I was now in business as a personal fitness coach. But like thousands of other professionals and entrepreneurs who start their own business, it wasn't long before I too found myself struggling, frustrated, and broke. I simply could not seem to break through to the level of achievement I had hoped for when I first started.

I spent thousands of dollars I didn't have studying for one certification after another. With each one, I fully expected to find the answer that would help me reach my potential. What I found instead was an inability to pay the bills and the feeling of being stuck and overwhelmed.

Ever been in that place? I suspect like most of us, you have.

### *Engaging Frustration*

I was discouraged, angry and ready to quit. But before walking away from a career that I loved and was rewarding in every other way, I gave careful thought and consideration to why I had been struggling for so long. I had all



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the training, skills, and experience. I even had the business training and know how, and yet I wasn't even close to where I wanted to be.

After losing a lot of hair and countless hours of sleep I concluded that the reason I wasn't moving forward had everything to do with not having set any clear goals or objectives. I was just doing my thing under the illusion that I was moving forward when, in fact, I was slowly creeping backward.

Having studied countless high achievers and the top thought leaders of the day, I knew that without crystal clear and concise objectives, the chances of great achievement were slim. And any achievement I did manage likely would never be repeated. Yet, I wasn't acting upon that knowledge.

After smacking myself in the head a few times, I started thinking more clearly about what I really wanted. I made some decisions, set some new goals, and wrote them down.

My new written goals:

“Next year, I will place in the top 5 at the Nationals (Mr. America), make \$200,000, own a brand new BMW, and have clients beating down my door!”

I enthusiastically taped my new written goals to the mirror in the bathroom of my crappy little apartment so they would be a constant reminder of what I intended to achieve. After one year of staring at my goals every morning and every night with decreasing enthusiasm, I finally tore them from the mirror in a fit of rage. Frustrated and angry once again, I no longer wanted to see the constant reminder that I was not one step closer to making that \$200,000, I didn't yet own a new BMW, and I actually had fewer clients than I had a year earlier.

Have you ever had an experience like that?

Have you ever set a goal, written it down, gotten really jazzed about taking action, and felt like you were on your way, only to find yourself in exactly the same place—or perhaps even further from your goal — months or years later? You wouldn't be alone. The majority of people who set goals never achieve them — certainly not with their first attempt. Most of them give up, quit, or just forget about it long before it's close to being realized; others stop short within a few inches of achieving their objective.

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### *Undermining Your Success*

Goal setting is a powerful and positive practice that can ignite enthusiasm and provide clear direction and motivation. When practiced poorly, however, goal setting can have a serious downside which can undermine your enthusiasm, destroy motivation, and even reduce your chances of success. Let me repeat that:

**Goal setting can undermine your success.**

Poor goal setting can make you cynical, waste your time, and foster confusion about where to concentrate your efforts and energy. **Yet, goal setting remains one of the most powerful tools in existence for achieving what you want in your life.**

In my own case, the one goal that did come to fruition after a year was also the one thing that truly represented my dream and my passion. I entered the Mr. America competition and placed third my very first time out — a fairly extraordinary accomplishment by any standard.

So the big question I had to ask myself was - why was I able to achieve something so daunting, discipline demanding, and time intensive, something that I once wrote off as impossible and stupid, yet have challenges breaking into the level of achievement I sought in the other areas of my life?

With that question, I began to realize that in achieving what I once believed to be unachievable I had unconsciously followed a very specific strategy for that particular goal that I had not followed for the other three. I was also able to identify seven basic principles as the underlying components of that strategy.

### *Testing the Strategy/Measuring the Results*

To test my assumption about the strategy I decided to apply in the same sequence the *7 principles* I had used before the competition but on a smaller yet still challenging objective.

**Goal:** Double my clientele base within 90 days.

Remember, I wound up with fewer clients a year after setting my earlier goal of *“having clients beating down my door”* — whatever that means — so

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doubling my client base in 90 days was going to be no easy task. I proceeded to consciously map out and follow the exact step-by-step process I had unconsciously used to create my earlier success, and I followed it to a 'T'.

Although I did not have the same level of passion and sense of purpose I had for the competition, I was highly motivated by a strong sense of economic need. I also got clear in my own mind that many of my other values and desires were interlinked with my success as a trainer and the size and quality of my client base. I had a clear picture that being more in demand and successful as a trainer also meant reaching and helping more people as well as achieving the financial freedom I sought.

Once I linked the goal of doubling my client base to my other higher values and put the seven principles into place it worked like a charm and was almost effortless. In what seemed like no time at all I was able to surpass my goal by an additional 30 percent. As if by magic, I started attracting and working with several New York celebrities, actors, and models, all within the 90-day goal period. Even I was shocked. As a result I had to reproduce myself by hiring another trainer, a move that marked the official start of running a real business instead of being a sole service provider working his tail off.

When asked by a colleague how I did it, I found myself referring to the principles I applied as RULES... more specifically the *7 RULES*. By consciously following all the rules, perhaps for the first time in my life, I was able to reproduce the success I had experienced at the competition.

Feeling motivated and emboldened by my new-found achievement, I wanted to continue the momentum, so I applied the *7 RULES* again, and again, and again. As a result, in less than one year, I was able to open the first of my two New York athletic club training facilities in affluent areas of Long Island and purchase my first BMW convertible with cash. And I was well on my way to earning \$200,000 that first year—achieving the goals I had set for myself almost 2 years earlier!

Since that time more than 20 years ago, the *7 RULES of Achievement* have become the foundation for my success and the template for the thousands of successful professionals I have coached over the years.

I am convinced that the real difference between the goals that manifest into reality and those that evaporate into the mist has everything to do with

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*these seven powerful and universal RULES.* And all the necessary tools are right here in this book for the taking.

Applying the *7 RULES of Achievement* will not only allow you achieve your wildest dreams but also help you inspire, motivate, and coach others to do the same.

By following all of the rules, I have been able to enjoy the many rewards of a 15 year career as a Fox Sports Net TV announcer, athletic club entrepreneur, mastermind executive coach, and world class personal development trainer. And as the icing on the achievement cake in 1986, just 10 years after starting the journey as a skinny, frustrated, and self doubting 16 year old kid I was finally able to achieve my dream of becoming Mr. America.

If a high school dropout and ex-outlaw biker can achieve his wildest dreams than there is nothing stopping you from achieving yours.

What's your dream? What do you hope to achieve? It all starts with getting crystal clear on exactly what you want.

So what do you want?