



January 2009

Your 8 Rules of Engagement for 2009

1. Integrity. If you say you're going to do something, DO IT!
2. Don't lie to yourself. You're bigger than you think. You're capable of far more than you believe. Don't make excuses. Excuses are well planned lies.
3. Go all out. Most won't. Give Supreme Effort. Most don't.
4. When in doubt, ACT. Don't over analyze. Just get on with it! People think themselves out of opportunity all the time.
5. Stay focused on what you want, not what you don't want. When challenges arise, don't waste time whining and complaining, get into solution mode and keep it moving!
6. Persist! Most quit. Persevere. Most give up. Endure. Most wimp out. You will win if you don't quit.
7. Partner strategically. You cannot do it alone. Partner with high energy, high quality, make it happen people. AVOID the couch potatoes, poverty thinkers, negative energy drainers, gossipers, the ones with low to no ambition, the fearful, the timid, the skeptical, the logical, the reasonable, the critics, the know it all's... the ones that will NEVER DO ANYTHING!
8. Play. Use your imagination! Be Creative. Have fun. Wherever you're at, the sooner you learn how to enjoy each moment, the sooner you can start to appreciate that in order for things to change in your life YOU must change!



February 2009

Have you ever found yourself saying something like "there's no way I can do this" or "this won't work for me" or "how in the world am I going to get out of this?" I know I have.

The way we use our words has a tremendous impact on the way we live our life. Language is the software of the mind. What you program in will always come out. You see, there are going to be times when your situation is going to demand a higher grade of language software.

When Walt Disney had the idea to build a children's theme park he was turned down by more than 400 banks! You better believe that his language software was full of words like belief, vision and dogged determination.

It was Thomas Edison's language software that enabled him to persist through 9,999 attempts into the discovery of the incandescent light bulb, for he said "I have learned 9,999 ways that don't work!"

Mary Baker Eddy in the face of tremendous physical ailments and lifelong ill health had language software that said "I know that I'm meant for more than suffering. I believe my life was intended to be lived in perfect health." This software enabled her to not only heal herself, but to create what many consider to be one of the most prolific works on physical and spiritual health, 'Science and Health.'

When you are faced with major challenges, watch your words. Martin Seligman, author of 'Learned Optimism' calls it your self explanatory style. Talk Up, not down. When you're in a down circumstance AND you talk down- you've now experienced it TWICE. Diagnose the challenge, tune into your Talk Up language software and get busy living!

Watch Your Words for the next 28 days. How many empowering words can you add to your language software this month?



March 2009

This is one of my greatest nightmares. That I tell someone I'm going to do something and I don't do it and that person thinks, "Ed lied to me." That would be a blot on my name and I can't get that back. I get the quivers right now just thinking about it. That said, on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, how would you rate yourself on your integrity?

If you scored yourself a 9.5 or below, doing this one small thing will impact every area of your life in the most profound and positive ways, and you will be a 10 for the duration!

All you have to do, is what you SAY you're going to do. Now I will be the first to tell you that integrity is one of the most difficult tenets to practice, but it is also one of the most rewarding! The thing about integrity is that it's always going to be tested. As soon as you state it, life begins to test your resolve. Life immediately wants to find out if you really mean what you say. I remember when I was 20, I signed up for a martial arts class and the commitment was for a year.

Well after two months, the initial excitement wore off and life began to test my integrity. I had the nerve to go to my instructor and ask if I could get out of my agreement and he looked at me with smiling eyes and said, "Well you're a big boy and you gave your word; now what are you going to do?" It was a tremendous lesson for me in integrity. I DID commit to a year. I DID give my word. I needed to OWN that, MAN up and take RESPONSIBILITY.

Well after that conversation, I decided that I was not only going to keep my word, I was going to be his best student. I trained 7 days a week and got in the best fighting shape of my life! I am forever grateful to my Sensei for holding me accountable.

Have you ever told yourself you were going to do something and then you didn't do it? Most of us have been guilty of making self-proclamations, not telling anyone else and then not doing anything. "I'm going to the gym." "I'm going to write my book." "I'm going to tell them how I really feel." Whatever it is we say to ourselves, when we cultivate the habit of NOT keeping our word, we cultivate the habit of quitting with excuses, especially when we don't include an accountability partner.

Understand that maintaining integrity is supposed to be hard because it can produce the greatest rewards! If it were easy, everyone would have it.

When you tell someone you're going to call them back, write it down so you won't forget. When you tell someone you're going to be there, **BE THERE**. When you say to yourself you're going to do something, **DO IT** and enlist someone else to hold you accountable.

When you cultivate a habit of integrity, you begin to pay much more attention to your words and they carry greater weight because whatever you say comes to pass. When what's going on in the inside of you begins to match up with what's happening on the outside of you, you begin to experience alignment, congruency and greater possibilities.

The more integrity you cultivate within yourself the more value you bring to everything you touch! It won't be easy, but it'll be worth it and that's a **10** to strive for!



April 2009

Have you ever felt that you couldn't do something?
Have you ever had overwhelming self doubt?
Have you ever been more fearful than faithful?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, you may have been the victim of a Hater. Or worse, you may be under attack right now and not even aware of it!

BEWARE OF HATERS!

[BluntArtistry defines 'Hater' as a person or creature that attacks, tears down and destroys all good, growth, progress and possibility.]

Haters take little tiny bites out of their prey.

Sometimes the bites are so small and subtle that the targets don't notice until all of their strength has been depleted and they're rendered defenseless.

Haters are drawn to leaders, risk takers and visionaries, like flies to an outdoor picnic. Did you know that every time a fly lands it leaves something nasty behind? That's how Haters operate. They DO NOT come from a place of constructive criticism or honest feedback where love and support are the intention. The Hater interjects, interrupts and infiltrates into the spirit of your space with a negative energy that you can sense and feel.

Is there someone in your life that makes little negative comments to you in passing? Is there anyone that makes it their business to tell you what you "can't do" or why it "won't work"? Do you have any so called friends, family or relationship partners that are suffering from these symptoms?

You must understand that Haters are very strategic. They will find a way to knock whatever you're doing. They will find a way to be supportively unsupportive. They will find clever ways to keep you in the box they have designed for you. They can be so persistent and so subtle, that before long you will be hating on yourself without their help!

So take stock of your environment. If you spot any Haters, beware. How you handle it will depend on the **type** of Hater. If it's a family member or friend, let them know that you will not be tolerating any Hater language or behavior from them and if they persist, it could cost them a very good friend or create a very distant relative.

If it's a colleague or employer, you must be more strategic. You may decide to confront it or ignore it depending on your position. What is most important in this kind of situation is your awareness and not taking it personally. If it becomes a quality of work environment issue, then consider finding a new work environment.

If it's a spouse or relationship partner that's hating on you, then you must address it immediately! This person is in the best position to do the most harm or the most good to you. If you let it go, it may go on FOREVER. If you confront it, there's a chance to correct it, which will give you an opportunity to experience the healthy, loving and supportive relationship you deserve.

If the hating persists, you have a decision to make. You can stay in the situation, where a slow and painful death is almost certain. Or you can move into a new future of much greater possibility.

Understand that Haters are a natural part of the process when you are creating a better blueprint to live a greater future from. Don't take it personal, just love them from AFAR and always be aware so that you can protect yourself and live the positive, productive life you were put here to live.



May 2009

Do you have a steady paycheck?
Do you have a steady relationship?
Do you have a steady routine?

Do you think it's enough?

For many, a steady paycheck, a steady relationship & a steady routine = Success.

A steady paycheck is good, but steady paycheck\$\$\$ are better! Why would anyone be okay with their name appearing on only ONE check coming in while they are signing their names on multiple checks going out in the same time period? Most people appreciate residual bills, but not residual checks!

Most people severely underestimate their capacity and ability for increase. Let that NOT be you.

A steady relationship is good, but a growing, evolving and nurturing relationship is better! Sure, it's nice to know that that special someone is there for you and is not going anywhere- but does that mean that the relationship shouldn't go anywhere either? Commit to take a pottery class together, learn an instrument, take a language course, salsa, tennis, karate, snorkeling, investing, karma sutra, anything beyond your everyday routine, and do it TOGETHER!

Most people park in their relationships and they stop doing the things they did to form the relationship and they stop working to grow it to the next level. Let that NOT be you.

A steady routine is good, but an expansive routine is better! Routines and rituals are important because they provide the foundation from which a lot of life springs forth. When we add and expand to those routines we create space for more life! If you go to the gym 5 times a week and do the exact same routine for a year, you'll be okay.

If you go to the gym just 3 times a week, but with a focus on exercising a different body part in a different way each time, you will have stretched, exercised and discovered more muscles in one week than the average person who is steady and the same for a year!

Most people think that just having a routine and sticking to it is enough. Let that NOT be you.

I'm not saying "steady" doesn't have value. I'm saying that steady + a mind for increase + a stretch toward something new & different = a New Level of Success! Let THAT be YOU.



June 2009

When I was in 8th grade I went to my first school dance. I grew up in a house where music played a big, big part. My mother would blast the sounds of Motown and 50's soul first thing every Saturday morning! If I happened to be one of the 2% of African-Americans born without rhythm, she made sure that it was programmed in me by the time I reached adolescence.

So there I was at Regina Middle School sporting my brown slacks that were too tight with the flare bottoms and a very crisp white button down shirt with a fresh orange kool-aid stain near my collar. As I was standing there staring at the .99 cent cookie tray and pink colored punch concoction, a true classic came over the loud speakers; 'Play Another Slow Jam' by Atlantic Star!

My heart jumped and I started snapping my fingers and humming the tune. I immediately began to look for a girl to dance with. Since Regina was an all girls school, all the boys were on one side of the gym and all the girls were on the other, so in order for me to ask a girl to dance I had to walk ALL the way across the gym floor to the other side, step into a sea of young ladies and then muster up the courage to ask one of them to dance. Now my heart is REALLY pumping fast and I can begin to feel the beads of sweat rolling down my back turning my newly ironed shirt into a skin sticking sweat soaker upper, but the song was way more powerful than any feelings of inadequacy I may have been feeling.

I started the long walk across the floor. My stride was awkward because I was completely self conscious of the fact that everybody was looking at me. The boys were watching in awe as I was the first one to cross over into what could have been hostile territory and the girls were watching to see if I was decent looking enough to give the time of day to. Now the fact that I was at that stage of development where pimples and plumpness have their way, I was undeterred, because my song was playing and I HAD to dance. You see it was more important for me to dance to my music than it was to entertain any of my flaws or all that could go wrong in those next moments.

I approached the first girl within striking distance and asked with as much confidence as I could muster, "do you wanna dance?" I waited for what seemed an hour for her response, as I could feel the weight of the eyes from behind eagerly awaiting something to laugh at and the eyes in front trying to decide if I was indeed human with my clumsy gate and barely audible request. "No" she said. Not "no thank you," "I'd like to but, my legs are tired" or "I

would if I could, but I'm married." She just said "NO."

At that moment I had a choice to make. I could turn around dejected and defeated and walk ALL the way back to the other side of the dance floor or I could keep moving to the beat of my song until I found someone to dance with. You see the song was bigger than my circumstance so I took that hit and went to the next girl. "Do you wanna dance?" "No." I went to the next girl, "Do you wanna dance?" "No." And after the third "no," I'm starting to pick up my pace because the song is in me. I start moving my feet and swinging my head from side to side, I'm ALIVE, I'm enjoying my song and I'm going to dance with SOMEBODY even if that somebody is ME!

In a flash something happened. All of the sudden I didn't care about the "no's." I didn't take it personally. I had a swagger that said "if you don't dance with me you'll be missing out until you do!" I set out to dance down the entire line of girls until I got a "yes" or until my song was finished. Well by the time I reached the 5th girl I had picked up my pace even more! I was moving with energy and enthusiasm! "Do you wanna dance?" was coming out rapid fire with passion and excitement and by the time I reached the 8th girl she HAD to say "yes" just to find out where all of this great energy was going to take her!

We made it to the dance floor with just a few bars left of the song and I relished in the moment of my first slow dance.

I learned a valuable lesson that day. If I had spent more time focusing on the power of my song and less time worrying about what other people thought, I would have gotten on the dance floor a lot sooner!

The dance floor is where it happens ladies and gentlemen. Life is short and unpredictable! Get on out there and dance. Don't waste time worrying about what other people think, they already think! Move to YOUR music and share it with love and enthusiasm so that when your time comes, you will be able to say "I did not hold my gifts hostage. I did not live from fear or small thinking. And I did not live up to the low expectations of others. I lived all out, out loud and all in!"



July 2009

Here we are ladies and gentlemen. Half way through 2009! How are YOU progressing toward your goals and aspirations for this year? Are you ahead of schedule, on schedule or a little bit behind?

Take inventory today. Be honest with yourself. If you're ahead of schedule, fantastic! Keep doing what you're doing! If you're on time, why not step up the pace? You may get there faster and discover some bonuses! And if you're behind, ask yourself why? Is it because you've lost focus? Is it because you've stopped taking action? Is it because your urge to stay the same is stronger than your urge to grow?

Take inventory of your daily actions. Did you start out strong and fall back into your old ways of thinking and doing? Did you set your goals so big that you got discouraged when you didn't see immediate results? Did you say to yourself that this year was going to be THE year, but you didn't change your surroundings, upgrade your relationships or take the necessary steps to become a NEW YOU? My great friend and mentor Les Brown says, "In order to do something you've never done, you must become someone you've never been." That means we can't do what we did yesterday and expect a new tomorrow! Do something different! Turn off the television, tune out the trash and tune into the higher frequency, that's available to us all, of Success!

So often we start out with the highest of intentions. We start out on fire with big goals, big ideas and big dreams and then over time we lose it. That fire dies down for some and for others, sadly, it dies out. Ladies and gentlemen, the pursuit of your goals is not always going to be sexy. You're not always going to feel like doing what needs to be done, but that's where commitment comes in. Don't do what you FEEL, do what you KNOW. If you KNOW that keeping the television off will add an extra 30 or more minutes to your day, then even if

you FEEL like watching the game or some program, don't cave into your feeling. Stay true to your commitment.

Anybody can make a New Year's Resolution, anybody can get excited for a couple of days or a couple of months, but it's those who are unwavering in their commitment to their goals and dreams that stay steadfast throughout. The committed do the daily disciplines that produce long term rewards. They do them when they don't feel like it. They do them when no one is watching. They do them for the sake of keeping their commitment to their commitment.

Take a long hard look in the mirror and ask yourself, "Am I doing all that I know I can do to achieve my goals and fulfill my dreams?" When December 31st, 2009 arrives, imagine the satisfaction you're going to feel knowing that you course corrected along the way. Imagine the pride you will feel knowing that when it was hard, you did it hard and maintained your mental toughness! Imagine the inner power that you will possess knowing that your second half of 2009 was even more productive, impactful and rewarding than the first, because you stepped up your game!

Let today be a new beginning. For some it will be an opportunity to go further than you ever thought possible. For others it will be a re-engaging process and for others it will be an opportunity to get BRAND NEW! Forgive yourself if you've fallen short. Forgive yourself if you have to start over. Everyone can benefit from a fresh start. Let this moment, right here and now, be yours.



August 2009

For some "no" acts as a starting place and for others it acts as a stopping place. What does hearing "no" do to you?

A college professor gave his students the assignment of going out into the world and bringing back ten *earned* "no" responses within a one week time span. Earned in the sense that in each instance, you would be required to ask a series of follow up questions after the initial "no" before the interaction would be officially complete. The follow up questions were for the purpose of getting the students out of the habit of *accepting* "no" so easily.

One student went into a restaurant with the task of getting a free dessert. After the meal he said, "Excuse me, Miss, I would like to order the chocolate cake and I would like to have it for free." She gave him a look as if he were speaking gibberish and said "No, I can't do that." His first follow-up question was, "Would you be kind enough to check with your manager and find out if there are any special offers that include a free dessert?" "Sure" she said, "I'll be right back." When she returned, she brought the manager with her. His second follow-up statement was "Good evening. I've had a very good experience here and I am definitely going to tell everyone I know about the food and the service. Since this is my first time at this establishment, I thought I would ask for a complimentary dessert so that when I tell all of my friends about it, I can share with them the *full* experience of dining here." The manager gladly brought him a dessert of his choice, on the house.

So often we get stopped by the first "no", whether it's coming from someone else, or we're saying "no" to ourselves. Either way, most people say "no" out of habit, out of fear and out of limited thinking, and most people accept "no" for the same reasons. Ask a few questions after that first "no" to really earn it. The point is not to get a "yes", but to garner a response other than just a simple "no". If the "no" is still there, then at least you will have earned it.

The next time you come across a "no" response, ask yourself the question, "Have I earned this?"



September 2009

What is your theme song? Your theme song is the blueprint from which you live your life. It's where your vision starts, and it's where that vision is supposed to get its nourishment so it can grow. That clear mental picture of the best person you believe yourself to be and the greater person you are to become.

For many, their theme song is dominated by who they were. They find themselves trapped in either the glory, or horror, of their past, and they spend the rest of their lives trying to relive it, or outrun it. There are others whose theme song is dominated by someone else's music. They are living out someone else's vision, or expectation, of who they thought they should be. They spend their lives in cowardly resignation because they know deep down inside that the life they're living is not their own.

And then there are those who live in the NOW with a tremendous optimism for the future! Their vision is bold and alive with bright colors! They go into the studio of life each day like a Quincy Jones or a Richard Branson, and boldly make it up as they go along! The difference is, these individuals start with the understanding that they have unlimited potential! Their theme song contains lyrics about incredible faith coupled with a harmony of tremendous possibility!

If your theme song is dominated by your past you will limit your future. If it is dominated by your future, you will miss out on NOW. The Artistry comes in having a healthy appreciation of your past and the lessons you've learned without getting trapped in the emotional quicksand that can stifle your progress. The Artistry comes in having a clear mental picture of your future without missing out on all of the good stuff that is a part of this moment right NOW. The beauty of living from your theme song is that it's YOUR theme song! If it's not helping you produce the results you desire, CHANGE IT!!!

It is important to understand, and have great respect for the fact that wherever you are in your life, and whatever you're producing, is a direct result of the theme song you live from each and everyday.

It's why Successful people continually become more successful and broken people become more broken. They simply continue to live from their theme song over and over and over, and the lyrics become more permanent and the meaning becomes more deeply ingrained as they go along. NOTHING will change until you do, until you break the cycle with a new, more powerful theme song that has lyrics of greater depth & possibility coupled with stronger chords of courage, desire and persistence!

Take some time TODAY to rework and rewrite your theme song. Compose a piece that will strengthen your resolve, invigorate your dreams and inspire you to action, again and again and again! It's in the again where dreams come true.