

# WHAT RULES?

Think Differently About Success  
and Cultivate a Happy Life



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## CHAPTER ELEVEN



# TOUCHSTONE

**G**iven the challenges of my childhood, my parents' sole aspiration for me was that I grow up and be happy in whatever I found to do. For them, my happiness equated success. This perspective profoundly shaped my mindset about my life and freed me from the conventional pressures and expectations of a traditional path to success. It empowered me to explore the opportunities that truly resonated with my desires.

As an adult, the pursuit of happiness remains a central pillar in my personal definition of success. This is not a self-indulgent or self-centered pursuit but a guiding principle for my journey. That doesn't mean every day has been easy; there have been times of deep distress and frustration. However, during challenging times, I've been

able to innovate and persevere because my life is anchored to my own values and goals, not someone else's.

With happiness as my compass to guide me, I've taken risks and had adventures. I haven't been forced to make a binary choice between my career or my family, and I've been able to choose pleasure over profit.

Unfortunately, not many people have experienced this same freedom. Because it brings me great happiness to help others find this freedom and unlock unanticipated success, the remaining pages of this book are designed to help you do just that.

## **REDEFINING SUCCESS**

In the professional realm, many people—intentionally or unintentionally guided by the implicit rules—focus their careers and lives toward amassing wealth and status. They chase after the unspoken promises that this pursuit eventually will lead to a life of ease, comfort, and security. However, true happiness is never found when you're living your life by someone else's rules or working toward their definition of success.

Happiness is a deeply personal journey arising from self-awareness, intentional choices, decisions, priorities, and circumstances. It's not found on the other side of a lifetime of accomplished transactional goals. It's not tied to family or children or bank account balances. It cannot be measured by external benchmarks at all. Happiness, fundamentally, begins with you. The pivotal starting point on this journey is to unravel the rules that have shaped your choices. Peel back the layers of external and internal expectations, and begin to create a path toward your own definition of what success means to you.

## WHAT SUCCESS MEANS TO *YOU*

When you define what success means to you, you are freed from the implicit forces guiding you toward an unfulfilling destination. You take control of your own future and your own happiness. But perhaps you're in a stage of your career where you feel like you're just surviving. Perhaps you're still learning the ropes of your job or trying to get a better sense of your interests and strengths. Defining success, even as you're just beginning your journey, will help you chart a course that you can be proud of and happy with. It will offer you a touchstone to orient your choices along the way.

Perhaps you know you have been working hard toward a goal that no longer fits you. You're aware that implicit expectations have, up to this point, guided your choices. You may feel stuck and unsure of how (and when) to make a change. When you get clarity on your own definition of success, you gain authenticity, empowerment, and joy in the journey.

Maybe circumstances in your life are causing you to make a pivot you didn't anticipate, and the idea of success feels even farther from your reach. Remember the bamboo: you are always growing, even if the growth is imperceptible. Defining what success means to you signifies that your growth will be in the right direction when it does finally come.

Stalls and setbacks are similar to what happens to the bamboo when a stalk gets cut. Instead of spending energy trying to grow more roots to regain the lost height, the bamboo simply unfurls new leaves. Those new leaves send energy down to the existing roots so the plant can grow new shoots. In fact, cutting the bamboo stimulates its growth. Setbacks, mistakes, delays, and detours can do the same for you!

Growth and resilience are within you. Making the commitment of bringing clarity to your definition of success is the first step to new growth.

## **CULTIVATING CLARITY**

China is famous for its elaborate gardens. These gardens are living artworks, masterpieces of design and symbolism. Rooted in principles of yin and yang, balance, order, beauty, and exploration, these spaces host symbolic plantings of bamboo, plum blossoms, and pine trees that represent resilience, endurance, and longevity. Architectural elements like pavilions, teahouses, and bridges make inviting spaces for people to rest and reflect in the beauty. Yet the true essence lies in the paths that meander through the scenery, beckoning visitors to not only observe but to experience the garden.

Like these Chinese gardens, the lessons of this book are to be experienced, not simply observed. What follows is an invitation to embark on your own journey to find clarity, direction, and success for yourself. It is a pathway of contemplation and self-discovery to identify more of who you are and uncover the meaning of success for you.

As you proceed through the rest of this chapter, you will encounter a series of questions designed to unveil the implicit rules shaping your life and bring you to a new sense of clarity and direction. Through these exercises, you'll pinpoint your goals, recognize your strengths, spot opportunities, and identify the limitations that either guide you or obstruct your progress.



This isn't simple work. It requires introspection and time, a commitment I encourage you to make. Like strolling through a Chinese garden, there will be moments that cause you to pause and reflect. There is no need to rush. There is no looming deadline. There's no assignment due at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow.

Take all the time you need. Let this experience unfold on its own time—over days, weeks, or even months—so you can emerge with a comprehensive understanding of your aspirations and strengths, and be prepared and oriented for the growth that awaits.

The following section is intended for you to spend time in reflection and record your thoughts in a journal or notebook. Then, when it's time to create your Touchstone, you can use the designed spaces in the book to fill in your thoughts.

## **Creating Your Garden**

The rest of this chapter will guide you on your own journey to create your own beautiful garden: a visual, personal representation of what a successful life means for you.

Just as every life is distinct, so too will be the garden you cultivate. Engage with the prompts, questions, and reflection exercises that follow thoughtfully, and you will begin to clarify what success—and, ultimately, happiness—looks like for you.

## WHAT RULES?

At the center of the garden will be a Touchstone. This will serve as your grounding point, a place to come back to in moments of challenge and opportunity, to gain clarity, reorientation, and confirmation. Let the garden and your Touchstone guide you to tranquility amid life's storms. Let it be a compass, leading you forward as you pursue your vision and your version of a fulfilling and successful life.

The illustrations that follow offer a visual recap of the rules we explored in this book. They will move you toward transforming the seeds of your greatness into a flourishing garden—rooted, authentic, and irresistibly satisfying.

## THE GOAL RULE

*Start with you.*



**You can't build a successful life until you invest in yourself. The Goal Rule says to plant the seeds that will bear fruit in your life and nurture them so they start to grow.**

## THE STRENGTH RULE

*Lean into your strengths.*



You have strengths, and you have struggles. This is normal. The Strength Rule says to lean into your strengths and help them grow. Some of the seeds you plant will begin to take root; others won't. Nurture those that do.

## THE OPPORTUNITY RULE

*Focus on possibilities.*



It's human nature to look for threats and obstacles. You must train yourself to look for opportunities. The Opportunity Rule says to focus on possibilities. This doesn't mean you ignore the obstacles; it simply means you push forward where it makes sense. It's here that your seeds break through the soil and push toward the light.

## THE LIMITS RULE

*Thrive in challenges.*



Anything worth doing requires hard work, grit, and determination. The Limits Rule says that challenges make you stronger. Learn to lean into the wind, embrace the criticism, and thrive in challenging times. This is how the smallest plants begin to grow into resilient stalks.

## THE EITHER-OR RULE

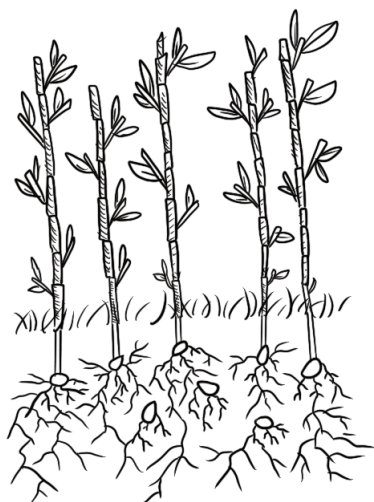
*Integrate the essentials.*



Life is more than just you, your work, or your family. It's a blend of all that makes you happy. The Either-Or Rule says to integrate the essentials. You must stop worrying about everyone else and focus on your essentials. Invest in those things, and they'll begin to thrive.

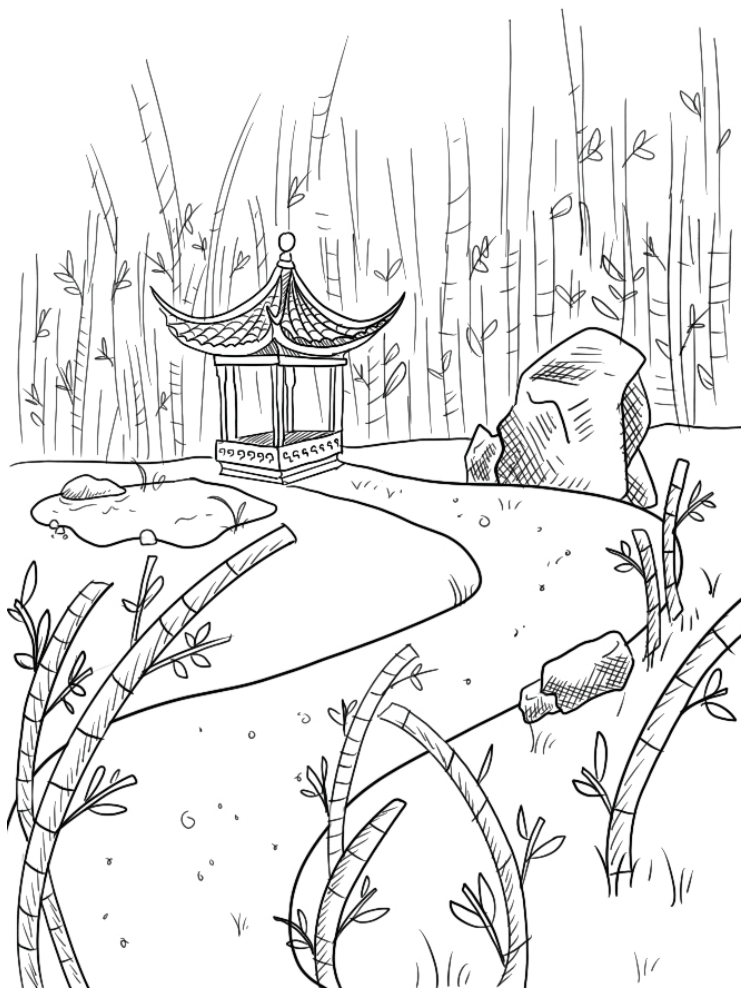
## THE HAPPINESS RULE

*Enjoy the journey.*



**You don't enter a garden to quickly get to the exit. You meander, stroll, and linger at the places that make you happy. The Happiness Rule says to enjoy the journey. Life isn't a race. It isn't a destination. Put down deep roots into the things that matter. Surround yourself with the essentials. Enjoy the journey.**





## HOW TO BUILD YOUR GARDEN

*A garden is a peaceful place, but when you look closely, it's fully alive. There is a time for movement, a time to be still, and a time to reflect. That blend of movement and stillness will guide your journey.*

## **OBSERVE**

When you encounter the word *observe* and this icon, it signals a moment to step back in time. Reflect on the paths you've taken, the lessons you've learned, and the growth you've gained. This isn't meant to be a linear process; you have liberty to choose the prompts that resonate with you most at this moment. Let the ebb and flow of observation guide you along this reflective journey.

## **EXPLORE**

When you encounter the term *explore* and this icon, engage with the focused and purposeful prompts tailored to guide you in unraveling the layers of self-discovery and onward toward true happiness.

## **ANTICIPATE**

Whenever you see the word *anticipate* and this icon appear, begin crafting the statements that form the shape of your garden. These statements will compose the Touchstone you create at the end of this chapter.

I will be your guide as you navigate the intricacies of each rule for yourself, and based on people I've spoken with, I've written a variety of different examples to show you how your responses might look. Let's begin the journey. So grab your journal or notebook, and let's begin the journey.

# THE GOAL RULE

*Start with you.*



To begin to grow, you must go back to the beginning. Just as a bamboo springs from a seed to a sprout, your journey begins with you. Growing your self-awareness through self-discovery is essential. It is only when you know who you are that you can set goals for yourself that align with your values, not external standards.

## **OBSERVE**

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- ▶ What gifts and talents did you have as a child that you have left unexplored?
- ▶ What activities, hobbies, or projects absorbed your time, attention, and creativity? How did those activities make you feel? Why do you think they brought you such joy?
- ▶ What activities or hobbies do you engage in today that bring you to that same state of absorbed joy?
- ▶ Revisit the role models or heroes of your youth. What qualities did they possess that you admired?

- ▶ Recall a challenge or fear you overcame as a child. What did that experience teach you about yourself? How has it empowered you today?
- ▶ What principles, philosophies, religions, or ideologies are most important to you? How do these shape your perspective on life, success, and happiness today?



## EXPLORE

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- ▶ **Discover your joy.** Write as many statements or short paragraphs as you'd like about the kinds of things that fill you with joy. Make these present tense.

### Some prompts to guide you:

- » *I am filled with joy when I cook a good meal for my family and we sit around the table talking and laughing together.*
- » *I am filled with joy when I help a client achieve their objectives and they let me know how much my expertise means to them.*
- » *I am filled with joy when I sit in my comfortable chair, with a cup of steaming green tea in hand, and read a good book that takes me to another world.*

- **Write a description of your *true* self.** Picture yourself at your absolute best without the constraints of who you think you *should* be or what other people think. Lean into your innate understanding of yourself.

**Example:**

» *The true me loves the outdoors. I find strength and peace when I am with nature. Hiking by a stream in the mountains lets me clear my head and get in touch with my thoughts. Standing with my feet in the ocean reminds me of how small I am and how big the world is. The true me is highly independent and values autonomy. I love working with people, but I also like to chart my own course and pursue things that interest me. At my best, I have plenty of time for input in the form of reading, podcasts, and captivating conversations. I also have flexibility to work on things that matter to me and tie back to the things I loved to do as a child.*

- **Jettison others' goals.** Reflect on goals others set for you, whether implicitly or explicitly. What were they? How did you receive those messages? What would happen if you were liberated from those messages, reclaimed your autonomy, and defined your own aspirations?



## ANTICIPATE

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Review your responses and distill the top three “seeds” you wish to nurture. Turn the most important ones into “I will” statements.

**Example:**

- » *I will invest in my gift of warmth and sense of humor to encourage others. Every time they engage with me, I will have made their lives better.*
- » *I will use my ability to connect unconnected things and bring unique and innovative solutions to life for the people I serve.*
- » *I will continue to be a learner, surrounding myself with positive voices and great books, so I can feed my sense of wonder and ideation.*

► Your Seeds:

# THE STRENGTH RULE

*Lean into your strengths.*



Directing your energy toward your strengths will amplify your capabilities and unique assets, setting you apart and adding value to others while enhancing your enjoyment of your life. While acknowledging your weaknesses is essential, dwelling on them is counterproductive. Instead, focus on recognizing, understanding, and leveraging your strengths to cultivate a more joyful and fulfilling life.

## OBSERVE

- Are you prone to dwelling on your weaknesses or focusing on your strengths? What factors contribute to this tendency? Has this tendency served you well in your life?
- How comfortable are you discussing your strengths and sharing them openly?

- ▶ Identify activities (personal and professional) that come naturally to you but others often struggle with. Delve into the answer thoroughly as most people overlook these things about themselves and assume everyone can do them.
- ▶ Analyze a recent success and pinpoint what abilities, gifts, or advantages helped you achieve it.
- ▶ Reflect on what activities make you feel most energized or fulfilled? How do those align with your strengths?
- ▶ Recall instances when you felt most proud of your work or efforts. Describe these times in detail. Detail the skills these instances required and why you think using them brings you joy.
- ▶ Consider one area of struggle in which you've spent significant time trying to correct. What would it do to your focus, time, and energy if you no longer focused on that area and worked on developing a strength instead?



## EXPLORE

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- ▶ **Brag on yourself.** Write a paragraph celebrating all the ways you are amazing. This is a personal reflection to be honest about you being exceptional.



- **Get an outside opinion.** Seek feedback from trusted colleagues, friends, or family about what they perceive as your exceptional strengths. Let these people know why you are looking for this feedback: you want to use it to get even better in those areas.
- **Develop a particular strength.** Select a particular strength that makes you exceptional, and outline ways you can enhance and develop it further. Consider seeking a coach or mentor, invest in training, read books, or listen to podcasts. Push yourself to grow even more in this area.



## ANTICIPATE

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Use one of these templates to write three declarative statements about your strengths.

- [Name of a strength] is an area of strength for me. I commit to developing it by \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- My top strength is \_\_\_\_\_. I grow that strength by [adding a specific action].
- I commit to \_\_\_\_\_ so that I can enhance that strength and leverage it to [add a specific action.]

**Example:**

- » *Wonder and imagination are areas of strength for me. I feed my mind with good inputs, scheduling regular time for thinking and imagination, and look for ways to solve high-level problems.*
- » *I look for ways to teach this to others so I can better understand my strength.*
- » *I commit to reading three books per month so my mind is full of good thoughts and helpful information.*

**► Your Strengths:**

# THE OPPORTUNITY RULE

*Focus on possibilities.*



Opportunities are more than a matter of luck or “right place, right time” circumstances. They are about being able to identify the right opportunities, actively shaping and influencing the conditions you find yourself in to create the right opportunities, and taking action when action is warranted. The wrong opportunities have a real opportunity cost to them, so getting clarity on the right opportunities is what this section is for. The right opportunities for you will align with your interests and strengths.

## 👁️ OBSERVE

- Recall a moment when a door opened or the perfect opportunity seemed to present itself. Reflect on that time, and identify the work you did that preceded it. How might you duplicate these things to create more opportunities in the future?

- ▶ Consider what opportunities you *hope* would come your way. Spend some time thinking about what you *want* to come into your life, and write them here. Naming these things makes them easier to spot when they show up in your life.
- ▶ When an opportunity presents itself, how easy or difficult is it for you to embrace it and take action to capitalize on that opportunity? Commit to acting as quickly as possible when an opportunity arises that fits your goals.
- ▶ Explore the intersections of your passions, strengths, and goals. What unique opportunities might be found there? Brainstorm various ideas without worrying about how realistic they are. The point of this exercise is to get your “possibility muscle” working.
- ▶ Think about the possibilities you have dismissed because they felt too overwhelming. Who could assist you in overcoming these mental barriers and limiting beliefs?
- ▶ Review the “opportunities” you have been pursuing. Are there any that, upon reflection, should really be ignored?



## EXPLORE

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- ▶ **Pay attention to synchronicities.** Synchronicities are things that seem to magically align with your desired path. What surprising occurrences have you noticed happening in your life lately? How might they be linked to your goals? What might happen if you followed these serendipitous signs?
- ▶ **Influence your opportunities.** Think about where you want to go and what you want to do. What are the places, activities, and people you should be surrounding yourself with? Position yourself properly, and more opportunities will unfold.
- ▶ **Conduct an opportunity audit.** Dedicate a week to record every small opportunity you encounter, no matter how insignificant it seems. This includes new connections, invitations, or any novel ideas that cross your mind. In doing so, you will likely change your thinking about the amount of opportunities that truly exist.



## ANTICIPATE

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When it comes to opportunities, you have the power to make your own luck. Use the Opportunity Rule to unleash the mindset of limitless possibilities. Complete the examples below, and use them to set the right limits that expand what's possible and protect you from chasing opportunities that don't contribute to your happiness.

- ▶ I actively pursue opportunities that [insert your specific goals related to your purpose].
- ▶ I can create opportunities to help me [insert the way an opportunity might help you reach your goal or develop a strength].

### Example:

- » *I pursue opportunities that help fulfill my purpose of helping people bring their ideas to life.*
- » *I look for ways to listen to others closely and apply my strength of strategy and clarity to their problems.*
- » *I create opportunities to help me develop my strength of leadership by sending out a weekly text or email to people I want to mentor.*

# THE LIMITS RULE

*Thrive in challenges.*



In the playbook of conventional wisdom, there's a chapter that says you must know your limits so you can stay within them. While it is valuable to understand your limits, don't allow them to confine or define you. Be aware of your *current* limits, and look for ways to surpass them. There is no assurance of success in staying safely within your limits. In fact, it might be the very thing that leads you to fail.

## **OBSERVE**

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- How do you personally define limits? Do you see them as restrictive forces or constraints that might actually offer guidance?

- ▶ Jot down a list of what you consider to be limits in your life today. What causes you to view these things as limits? Are they actually limits, or do you need to change your thinking?
- ▶ Remember a time when you pushed past your limits and achieved something you didn't think was possible. How did that make you feel? How did it alter your perception of those limits from the vantage point of success?
- ▶ Identify someone in your circle who seems to live life without much regard for its limits. In what ways do they challenge you or make you uncomfortable? What aspects of their approach would you like to incorporate to your own life?
- ▶ Seek out individuals you know (or can learn about) who faced seemingly insurmountable limits and yet thrived and accomplished something worthwhile. If possible, set up a conversation with them, and see what you can learn from their experience.
- ▶ What is one goal or hobby you have always wanted to pursue (art, musical instrument, sport) but have listened to the lie that you wouldn't succeed? What if you made a commitment to give it a try anyway?





## EXPLORE

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- ▶ **Push past one limit.** Consider the list above and the limits that feel like constraints upon your life. Identify one, and commit to pushing past that limit. Embrace the inevitable discomfort this commitment brings. Act before you are ready. Do something that scares you. Then reflect on what you learned and how it made you stronger.
- ▶ **Create the right kind of limits.** Understand that not every limit is a roadblock. Some can be stepping stones for your advancement. Align these constraints with your purpose and objectives. Set limits for yourself—a deadline, a routine, a target, a reward—creating a framework that propels you forward and maintains your focus.
- ▶ **Reflect on your growth.** Every difficult thing you have accomplished happened on the other side of your limits. Compile a list of ten significant achievements you have accomplished in your life. For each one, identify the limits you pushed past to reach that accomplishment and where and how you grew as a result.



## ANTICIPATE

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Write a declaration of limits that you've overcome and how they have made you a stronger person.

- » *I am stronger because I've faced my limits and surpassed them. Growing up as the child of a single mom, we didn't have a lot of opportunities. However, this made everything I worked to accomplish that much sweeter. When I was the first person from my family to walk across the stage and receive my college diploma, I thought of all the times my mom encouraged me to keep going when I wanted to quit, and I realized I will never give up on any of my dreams. My limits won't define me.*

# THE EITHER-OR RULE

*Integrate the essentials.*



You don't need to make a tough choice between a happy personal life or a successful professional life; integration is possible. By deliberately assessing and prioritizing what is essential in this particular phase of your life, purging perfectionism, canceling comparisons, and seeking support, you can make space for a well-rounded life.

## **OBSERVE**

- ▶ What would you call "essential" in your life? Why?
- ▶ Was keeping "first things first" modeled for you as a young person? What unintentional lessons (both good and bad) did you learn about how to prioritize your life?

- ▶ Scrutinize the way you spend your time, your money, and your energy. How closely do these things align with what you have identified as essential?
- ▶ Have you made a compromise and made something essential that really shouldn't be? Why?
- ▶ Identify one area of your life in which you'd like to be more intentional with your attention or energy. How might you begin to take steps in this direction?
- ▶ Think of someone in your life who has done an exceptional job at building a life around their essentials. What can you learn from their example?



## EXPLORE

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- ▶ **Identify your nonnegotiables.** Despite the widespread belief that you can, and should, juggle everything, the truth is, you can't do it all simultaneously. There will always be seasons of life where certain things must take precedence. Identify your nonnegotiables—family, career, hobbies, faith, ambition—and use them to guide the type of garden you are cultivating.
- ▶ **Establish the right boundaries.** Just as a garden has clear demarcations, so should your life. Boundaries may feel like constraints, but they are often the keys to staying on course. When contemplating what's essential in your life, boundaries safeguard the things that are important to you. Keeping them safe will allow them to thrive.

- **Consider the opportunity cost.** Every yes you commit to means a multitude of nos. Before committing to something, take a moment to reflect on the opportunity cost. If it's worth the cost and aligns with your priorities, move ahead. However, if it jeopardizes something essential to you, develop the courage to say no.



## ANTICIPATE

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To find true happiness, identify the essentials that shape your life. Write them as declarations here.

### **For me to be happy, these are my essentials:**

- » *Family. My family is the most important thing in my life. I will always prioritize my family and make sure to build strong relationships with my spouse and my children. I want them to know they can always count on me.*
- » *Health. I will always make room for exercise so I live a long and full life. For me, that means spending time jogging three to four times per week. I love to start my day with a brisk jog. It helps me clear my head and bring my best to the day ahead.*
- » *Travel. I love to see new places. To do that, I will work hard so I can take one big trip each year and several smaller trips to new places. When I'm there, I will take lots of pictures, try new restaurants, and experience new cultures.*
- » *Learning. It is essential for me to learn new things, so I will always look for new hobbies, skills, and challenges to keep me sharp and growing.*

## THE HAPPINESS RULE

*Enjoy the journey.*



Conventional wisdom says, "Grind now, be happy later." But why not infuse happiness into every step of the journey? That's what the Happiness Rule is all about. It's about building your whole life for your enjoyment, every step of the way. Adopting this mindset guides you to work that resonates with your passion and strengths and brings you deep fulfillment. It disregards others' implicit or explicit expectations of you. It transforms your life into a delightful, courageous adventure, and your work will evolve into captivating and enriching experiences to celebrate.

## **OBSERVE**

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- ▶ What is your personal definition of happiness? Take your time to delve into this, as many overlook its significance. Linger on this question for a while, and really articulate your personal definition.
- ▶ Reflect on the success of your journey so far. Think back over the diverse phases of your life, and consider which parts made you the happiest. What made these instances particularly joyful for you?
- ▶ Consider the type of work that brings you intense joy and personal satisfaction. This may be unpaid, volunteer work you do in addition to your occupation. What is it about this work that you love?
- ▶ What hobbies, activities, and experiences do you wish to incorporate more into your life? What about these things that make you happy?
- ▶ Identify which parts of your life are making you *unhappy*. Where do you have the agency to make a change? What might that change be? What might it cost you to make it? What might it cost you not to make it?
- ▶ Imagine designing a life around your happiness. What parts of your life would you keep (your essentials), and what parts of your life would you leave behind? What's stopping you from taking action?



## EXPLORE

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- ▶ **Search the seasons of your life.** Amid the hustle of daily life, we often forget the many things and people we have to be grateful for. Search the seasons of your life, and reflect on the times when you were the happiest. Seek out subtle hints within those memories for clues about what made you happy, and use those clues to create more seasons like that in the future.
- ▶ **Perform an honest assessment of your current position.** Examine your work role and your responsibilities now. Assess them to determine whether they contribute to your happiness or possibly detract from it. No situation is perfect every day, but if there are more things that drain you in your work than energize you, it might be a sign that you need a change. Reflect on your definition of happiness, and make sure your work and career are in alignment.
- ▶ **Write your obit (a memorial statement).** This exercise holds profound potential to ensure you're creating and living a life you can be proud of. Envision the end of your life's journey. Dedicate time to writing down a memorial statement that captures the essence of the life you want to be living—the relationships you developed, accomplishments you achieved, moments of pride you fostered, and things you hope people would remember about you. Then, pledge to live that life *now*.





## ANTICIPATE

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- Write a statement to describe your happiest self.
  - » *I am happiest when I am living out my purpose, investing in others, and taking time each day to appreciate the little things that make up my life journey. For me, this is building strong relationships with my spouse and my children. It's being a good friend who listens and encourages. It's recognizing that there are seasons of life where things are a grind, but those don't last forever. It's being a good leader who equips and empowers my team to become their best. It's when I finish the day knowing I made the world a slightly better place than it was before. This is when I'm thriving.*

# CREATE YOUR TOUCHSTONE

## (The Rules of Your Life)

We have spent the last chapters asking, “What rules?” Now it is time for you to write your own rules. But more than that, this final phase of the journey is not a black-and-white list of the dos and don’ts you’ve decided to follow. This is the creation of your Touchstone, the heart of your garden—and your life. It is a sanctuary to return to when you need reminding, reorienting, and reassuring that you’re moving in the right direction on your path. The Touchstone will visually encapsulate the things that are significant for you, what brings you happiness, and what success will look like in your own life. It’s a haven offering peace, comfort, and encouragement amid the implicit rules, expectations, and demands of life.

Guided by this simple mantra:

PLANT THE RIGHT SEEDS, AND THE  
STRONG ONES TAKE ROOT.

OPPORTUNITIES BREAK THROUGH THE SURFACE  
AND ARE STRENGTHENED BY CHALLENGES.

THEY KNOW WHERE TO FOCUS AND GROW  
INTO A THRIVING, HEALTHY GARDEN.

Take the reflections you've crafted in the section above, and weave them into the pages that follow. This collection of your deep, true desires will create your Touchstone—your tangible guide around, through, and over the barriers currently on your road to success.

## THE GOAL RULE

*Start with you.*

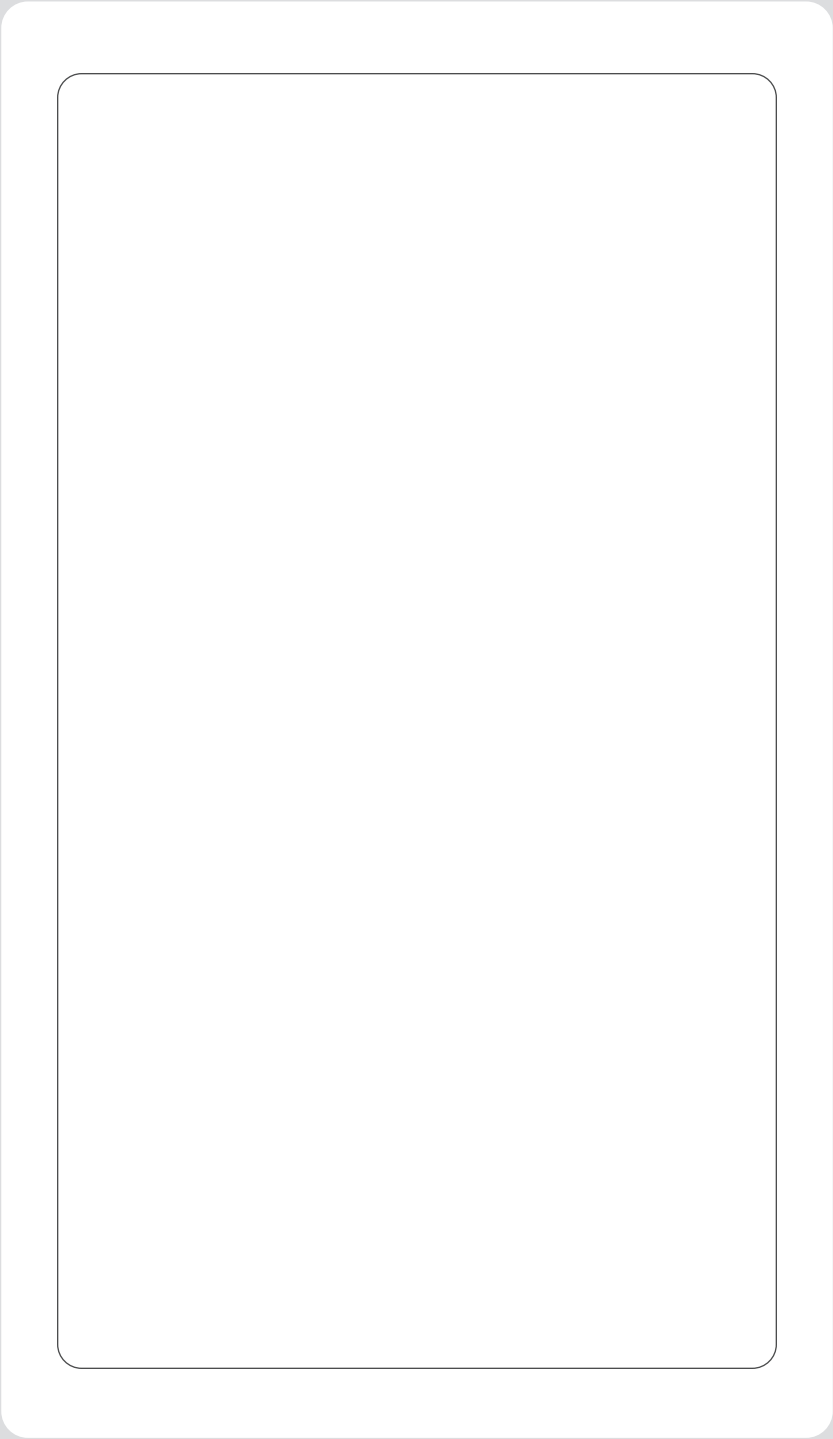


PLANT THE RIGHT SEEDS...

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### Example:

- » *I will invest in my gift of warmth and sense of humor to encourage others. Every time they engage with me, I will have made their lives better.*
- » *I will use my ability to connect unconnected things and bring unique and innovative solutions to life for the people I serve.*
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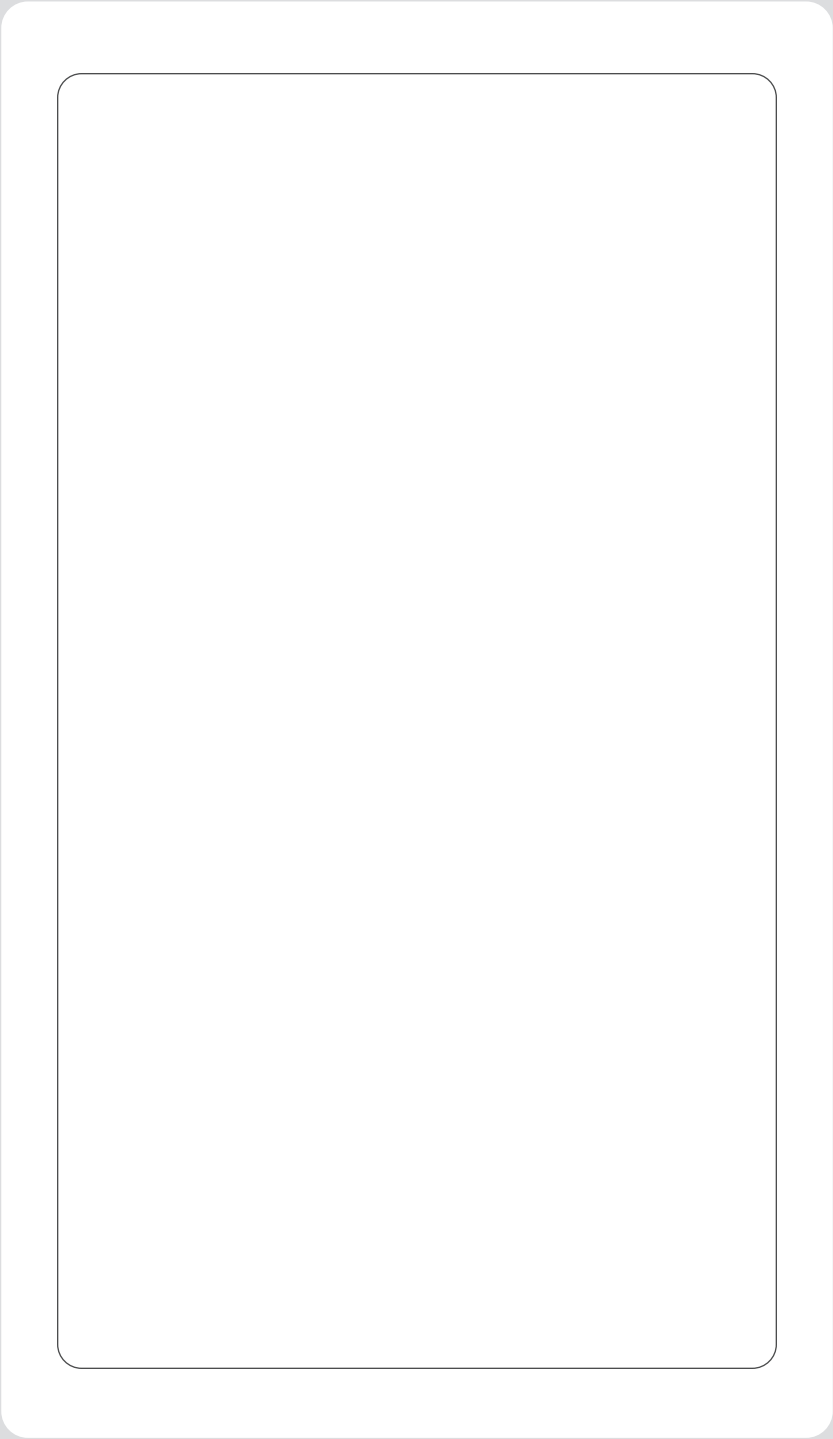


...AND THE STRONG ONES TAKE ROOT.

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- » *I commit to reading three books per month so my mind is full of good thoughts and helpful information.*



# THE OPPORTUNITY RULE

*Focus on possibilities.*



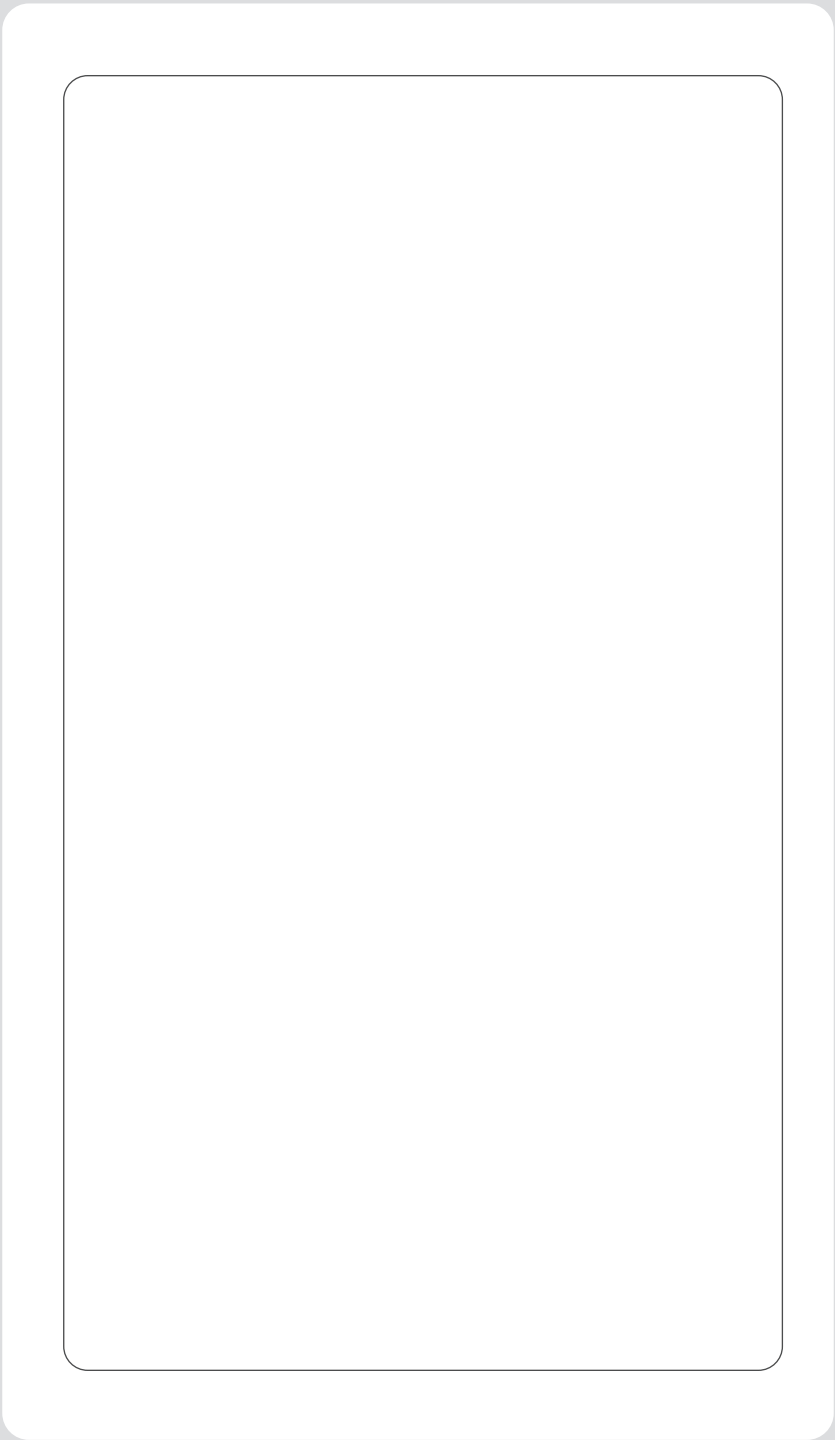
OPPORTUNITIES BREAK THROUGH THE SURFACE...

机遇助力，破土生芽

## **Example:**

- » *I pursue opportunities that help fulfill my purpose of helping people bring their ideas to life.*
- » *I look for ways to listen to others closely and apply my strength of strategy and clarity to their problems.*
- » *I create opportunities to help me develop my strength of leadership by sending out a weekly text or email to people I want to mentor.*





## THE LIMITS RULE

*Thrive in challenges.*

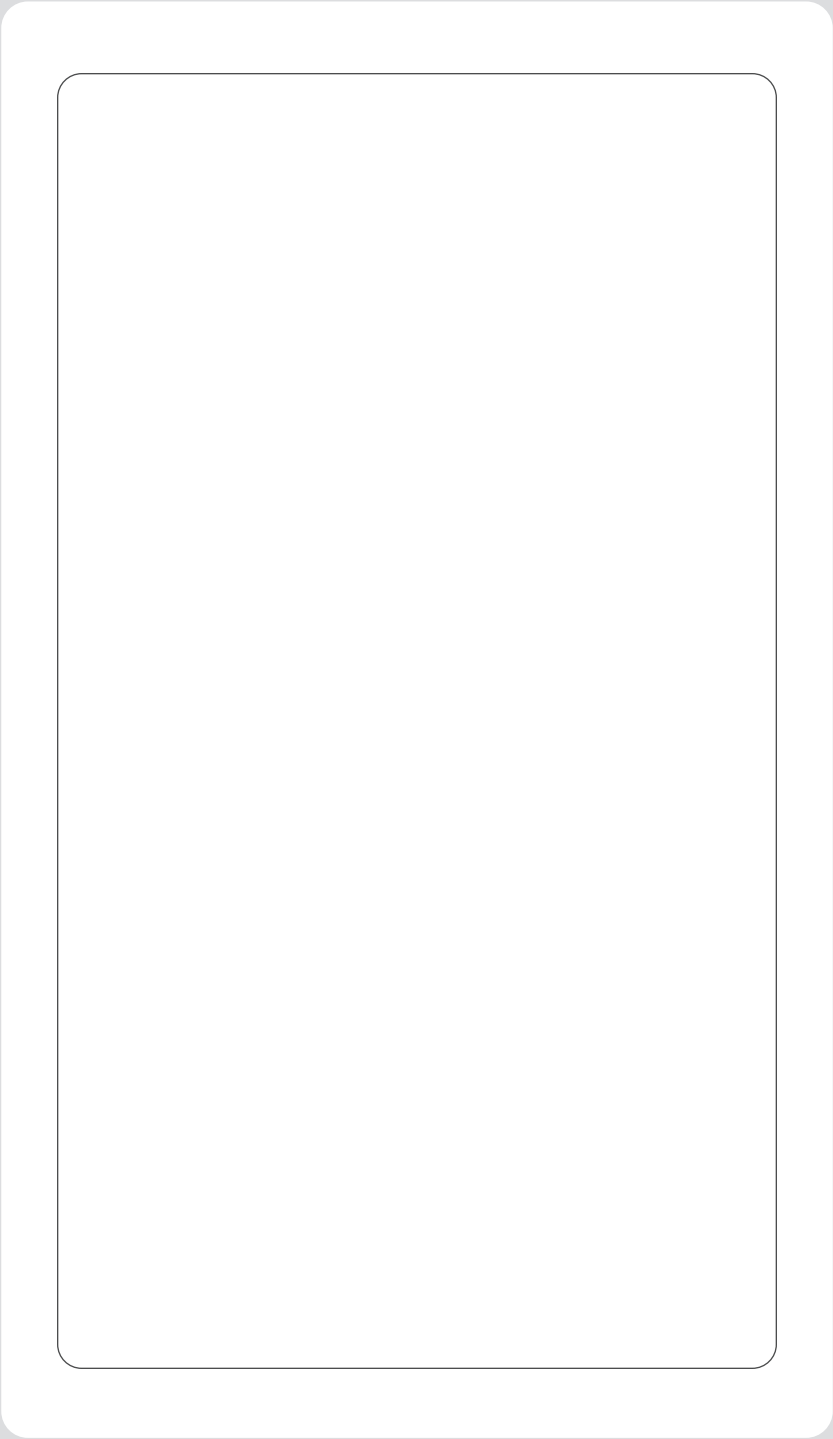


...AND ARE STRENGTHENED BY CHALLENGES.

风吹雨打，生机勃勃

### Example:

- » *I am stronger because I've faced my limits and surpassed them. Growing up as the child of a single mom, we didn't have a lot of opportunities. However, this made everything I worked to accomplish that much sweeter. When I was the first person from my family to walk across the stage and receive my college diploma, I thought of all the times my mom encouraged me to keep going when I wanted to quit, and I realized I will never give up on any of my dreams. My limits won't define me.*



## THE EITHER-OR RULE

*Integrate the essentials.*

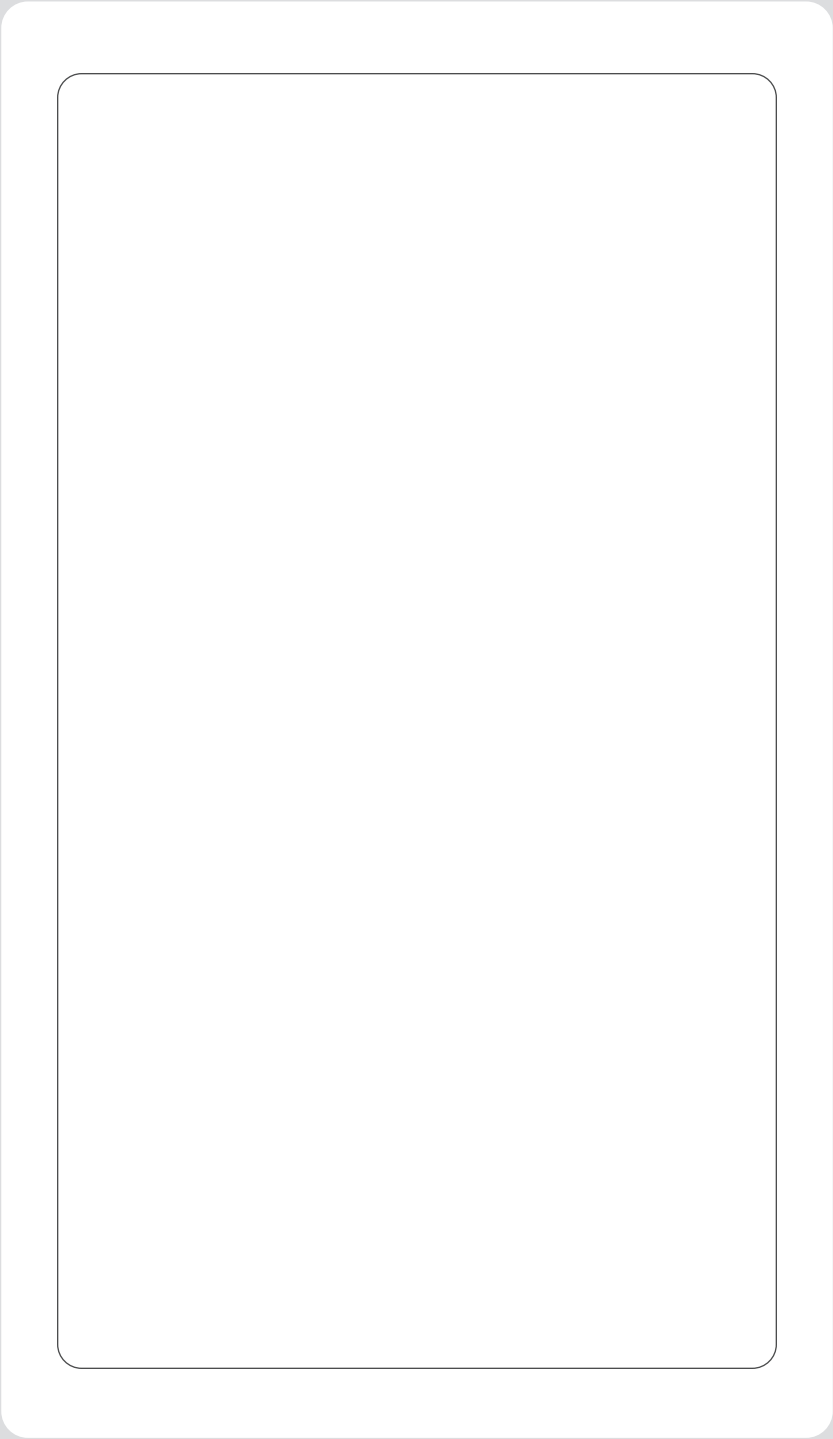


THEY KNOW WHERE TO FOCUS...

心无杂念，形扬气佳

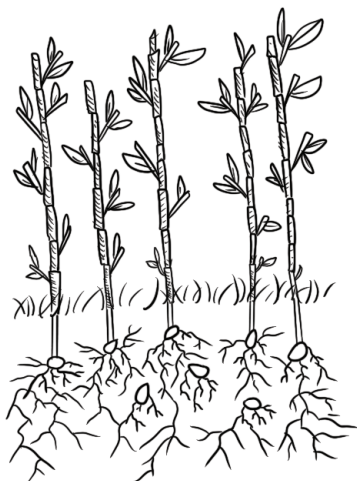
### Example:

- » *Family. My family is the most important thing in my life. I will always prioritize my family and make sure to build strong relationships with my spouse and my children. I want them to know they can always count on me.*
- » *Health. I will always make room for exercise so I live a long and full life. For me, that means spending time jogging three to four times per week. I love to start my day with a brisk jog. It helps me clear my head and bring my best to the day ahead.*
- » *Travel. I love to see new places. This means I will work hard so I can take one big trip each year and several smaller trips to new places. When I'm there, I will take lots of pictures, try new restaurants, and experience new cultures.*
- » *Learning. It is essential for me to learn new things, so I will always look for new hobbies, skills, and challenges to keep me sharp and growing.*



# THE HAPPINESS RULE

*Enjoy the journey.*

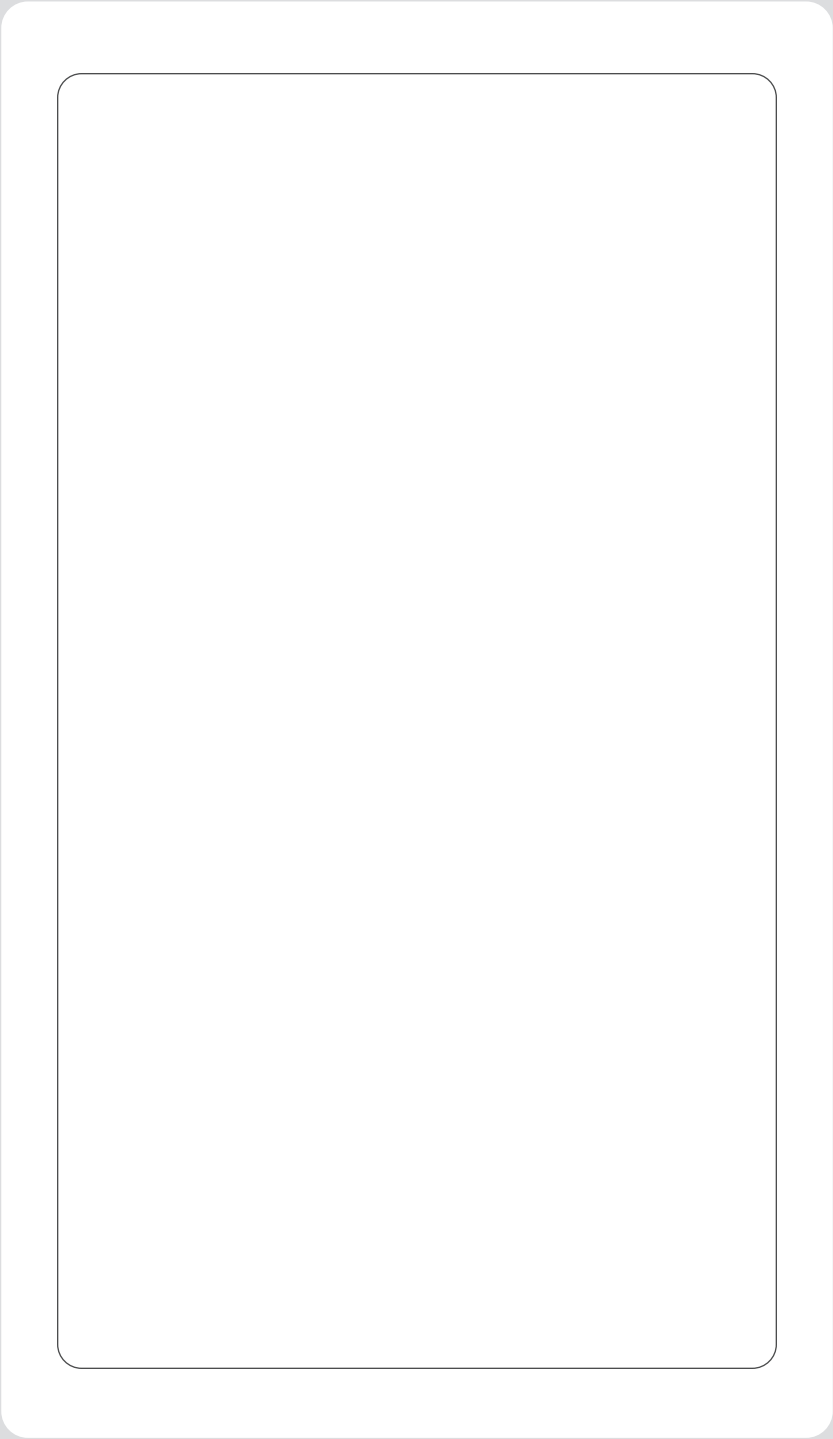


...AND GROW INTO A HAPPY, HEALTHY GARDEN.

成长为一个快乐、健康的花园

## Example:

- » *I am happiest when I am living out my purpose, investing in others, and taking time each day to appreciate the little things that make up my life journey. For me, this is building strong relationships with my spouse and my children. It's being a good friend who listens and encourages. It's recognizing that there are seasons of life where things are a grind, but those don't last forever. It's being a good leader who equips and empowers my team to become their best. It's when I finish the day knowing I made the world a slightly better place than it was before. This is when I'm thriving.*



**Y**our Touchstone is a living, breathing reflection of your authentic self and the garden you dream of cultivating with your life. Like a treasured Chinese garden, your Touchstone is meant to be revisited and reworked over time.

Don't close this book and let it gather dust on a shelf. Keep this labor of love you've done for yourself somewhere where you will see it often. Let it be a daily reminder to stay rooted in what truly matters to you. Use it as your compass when the implicit rules of life try to pull you off course.

Revisit this reflective journey again each year as you grow and evolve. Prune away the parts that no longer resonate while planting fresh seeds of new hopes and dreams. With each passing season, your garden will flourish more vibrantly, an embodiment of your ever-deepening self-awareness and happiness.

For now, let your Touchstone be a sanctuary of clarity amid life's chaos. Return to it whenever you need to feel grounded and focused on your true path. The way forward is no longer obscured by others' rules—your brilliantly personalized path stretches out before you, waiting to be nurtured and enjoyed with every step of this adventure that is called your life.

If you would like a printable copy of the last chapter of this book so you can fill in the Touchstone pieces and regularly revisit them in the years to come, simply visit [WhatRulesBook.com/eleven](http://WhatRulesBook.com/eleven).