

# The Thinking Room

Life Coaching

## ***Bend your rules a little!***

**Imagine what it would be like to feel free?** Free from what? Free from the rules that you have devised and live by. Let me explain this.

In our society we know that we live by a number of different rules, or laws; for example we know that if we shoplift or commit a more serious crime there is a high chance that we will be caught and punished. When we play a game of football we know that there are rules to be abided by, or it's the Red Card for us! The list goes on....but have you ever wondered about the rules that we create consciously or subconsciously for our own life?

**Many of us are oblivious** to the fact that, on a minute by minute, day by day basis, we are living according to a neat set of rules that our family, our friends, society, our colleagues or ourselves have created for us. Many of these rules are unwritten and not spoken of and certainly, more often than not, we are not aware that we are following these rules that we have created for our lives; we are following them subconsciously.

What are rules? Rules can be defined as: sacred principles, definite guidelines for behaviour, the dos and don'ts of our existence.

***“I know but one freedom and that is the freedom of the mind”***

Antoine De Saint-Exupery

**What purpose do your rules serve?** I think that most of us have experienced a sense of frustration, dissatisfaction, irritation or discomfort from a feeling that our rules have been broken. We are tied up and *limited by* the rules that we have set for ourselves...and the expectation that other people will live by our rules too.

These people could be our loved ones, friends and even strangers; given that we haven't told them what these rules are, they are bound to break them! You may then experience these broken rules as anger, frustration, and resentment. It makes sense if you examine what is beneath these uncomfortable emotions. Let me give you some examples of what your rules may be:

*I must never ask for help, I must rely on myself*

*My partner should know when I am feeling stressed*

*I will only date people on a certain income level or who are my 'type'*

*I should always be cheerful and helpful*

*I expect my children to attend university because I did*

*I will only eat certain types of food; if I try something different I know I will be ill*

*I ought to have children because my parents expect me to*

*I must 'climb the ladder' at work because then people will think I am a high achiever*

*I should always keep busy*

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**Try the following activity to shake up your routine by breaking some of your rules!**

Did you notice the key words, 'should,' 'must,' 'ought to,' 'never,' 'expect', in the rules above?

Try and eliminate these words from your vocabulary as they will inhibit your choices and limit your opportunities.

*Try the following activity and, over the next week, see how you start to feel more relaxed and open to new opportunities!*

1. Take a large sheet of paper (stick it on a notice board or blank wall) and draw a line down the centre
2. Think about the times over the last few weeks when you have experienced difficult emotions. Ask yourself what triggered it off—was it due to one of your rules being broken?
3. On the left hand side, write down 10 of your rules
4. On the right hand side, write down new opportunities that will help you to break your rules and try them!

***See the examples below***

*I won't leave this job, even though it's boring, because the pension is too good.*

*I want a fulfilling job that has some good perks too; I'll start doing some research.*

*He is just not my type; we'd never get on!*

*I will have a chat with him; maybe we'll have some things in common.*

**Start pulling back the bars of your self-made prison and start seeing a clear blue horizon before you!**