25 Rules that make a man — from “Men’s Health” magazine

BY HUGH O’NEILL, OCTOBER 31, 2013

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Overview

Being a man is a hell of an opportunity.

And it breaks our hearts to see it squandered.

So in honor of our 25th birthday, we’re celebrating the million different roads to a full-blooded guy life.

Clearly, any gender that includes both Netanyahu and Nathan Lane isn’t fussy about how you get there.

We’re of two minds about rules. Mind #1 says, We don't need no stinking rules. But mind #2 is a controlling type, as in, Hey, without rules it's bedlam out there! So we've walked that ridgeline and limited ourselves to 25 trail markers. If you observe these rules along your way, you'll dazzle men, delight women, inspire children, and optimize the octane of your testosterone. Ignore them and, hell, you might still succeed. But that's the thing about rules: Knowing them also implies knowing when to break them.

And that's damn manly, which is the only rule that really counts: Be a man about it.

Eat every apple you see

Forgive Eve, already! The apple is the greatest underleveraged food asset out there. It has calcium, vitamin A, iron, and a jolt of vitamin C, and the fiber helps you feel full. Chomping makes you seem vigorous and wholesome. Paring one with Grampy's buck knife can make even an editor appear intimidating.

Conflict is a forge.

Some men will do any self-effacing tap dance to avoid interpersonal fender benders. Studies should show that being Mr. Accommodating drops your testosterone off the graph. Flourishing men don't seek conflict, and they don't shrink from it either. One of the pleasures of being a man is standing up for your people or principles when the situation requires it.

Always wear shower shoes in locker rooms.

Please, don't make us describe those tile-borne pathogens! We're trying to enjoy our birthday

Never tell someone their setback is for the best.

A good man never tries to gentle another guy's loss. He simply bears witness to his wound and gives the man some privacy to swallow what's bitter in the cup. If you can't respect the other guy's grief, why don't you just find another bar stool, farther down the line?

This isn't the dress rehearsal.

This is your life. Yeah, this. Right now. There's no time for napping.
Women and children first.

We may be heaving traditional gender roles over the gunnels, but this chivalric directive still stands and will stand, as long as we're stronger than the girls. (Please, tell us you are!) One exception: If you're about to have your professional throat cut by a colleague in a wrap dress and kitten heels, show no quarter. Otherwise, you were designed to shelter the curvy and protect the small.

You don't have to like it to eat it.

Somehow we've become decadent about food. We think every bite has to be a porterhouse pleasure, and we refuse to eat foods we don't enjoy. Come on! You need high-quality fuel! Go ahead! Eat broccoli and spinach and tomatoes and squash just because they're good for you. You don't have to like them, and anyway, that's why God made hot sauce.

With enough garlic, everything is freaking delicious!
A boot heel would taste good sauteed in olive oil and slathered with garlic. Unless you're from Sicily, increase your garlic intake.

Never enter a hotel room with a woman.
...unless you're hoping it happens. Hotel rooms are what the Sisters of the Divine Compassion used to call "occasions of sin." Don't go in there with her—no, not even just to "grab the sales kits."

Never use the word "frankly."
You're always candid, aren't you?

"It's a good day to die."
Crazy Horse, a chief of the Lakota Sioux, is said to have used this exhortation to fire up his guys before they took the battlefield. Hey, it's just death! If a man lives boldly, untroubled by the prospect of failure, he can achieve things a fretful man could never dream of. This declaration is also useful before tip-off, a tough ask, a keynote, or any event that might unsettle a timid man.

Life is an ocean. Love is a boat.
Love softens a women. It hardens a man. His resolve, his fortitude, his courage. With luck, there's a partner. More luck, some kids. He loves his sister, his pals, and even, in a way, his Uncle Phil. A proper man loves things, too—his yard and the Bard. He loves his wheels and well-imagined deals. Caring is the key. A man is averse to indifference; his passions buoy him up.

Honor is the gift a man gives himself.
True nobility is exempt from fear. Anyway, so claimed William Shakespeare 400 years ago. It still sounds true.
"Pick up a weapon and stand a post."

Colonel Jessep's message is important enough to overlook his lack of manners. A man isn’t on the sidelines; he’s in the game. A weapon need not be lethal. A trowel can be a weapon. So too can a violin, a weed whacker, a whisk, and even a way with kind words or a strong silence.

If you’re not scared, you’re not going fast enough.

Though this is car-racing wisdom, we’re not talking about driving here; only teenagers and idiots drive too fast. But a man needs to push himself to be sure he’s not aiming too low. Explore some limits. There's no need to be less than you were born to be.

Be like Homer. (Simpson, not the poet guy.)

His only role-model virtue is his ability to see the doughnuts, not the holes. Any fool can find the shortcomings in... well, just about everything. But a soulful man finds the energies, the symmetries, the elations in... well, anything. It takes brains to note beauty.

Setbacks are just part of the trip.
They're curves, and they slow you down. Okay. Where's the next straightaway?

Finished beats perfect.

Who doesn't have a thousand ideas that will make us rich, enhance the world, or just be fun? Fail as quickly as you can so you can get opinions that help. A rough prototype is better than the one you'll get around to any decade now.

Never look at a menu for longer than 90 seconds.

Check the steak, the fish, and the pasta, and just pick one, pal. You've been to a restaurant before, haven't you? You're picking dinner, not a business partner. Order, and then on with it. And spare us the fulminations about the apricot glaze!

If you can't enjoy the contradictions, you'll miss out on all the fun.

Don't insist that everything make sense. If you attempt to understand human beings, if you expect them to always behave rationally, then you'll end up going through life crabby and vexed. But if instead you can savor their odd, confounding humanness, then you might just enjoy the spectacle that we are.

Be like water.

If water runs into an obstacle, it finds its fluid way around or under or whatever it takes—it's clever. And if a man adapts, adjusts, and calls audibles, he too can carve the Snake River Canyon.

Be like stone.

Yes, this is the exact opposite advice. (See #21.) But from time to glorious time, a man is unyielding.
Be wary of toughness.

The real-men-are-made-of-steel propaganda is bad enough for us. But it’s even more toxic when our
disdain for weakness translates into callousness. If you feel yourself being stony about others’ woes,
challenge that sentiment and deliberately invite soft-heartedness forward. "Be kind," advised a writer you
never heard of named Ian McLaren back before everything went digital, "because everyone you meet is
fighting a great battle." The truest men are tenderhearted, even if they don’t talk that way.

Aspire to will and to grace.

You need willfulness to carve your life. A man lives intentionally; a man’s got plans. What do you want to
accomplish? Your goals don’t have to be high-minded or expensive; they just have to be yours. A family? A
skill? An offshore secret? A single-digit handicap? A man has to chase. And the grace? Well, you’ll need that
when you’re thwarted by your limitations or by the great cantankerousness of the world. Grace allows a
man to be humble when he ought to be, and to remember how it felt to be small.

Thou Shalt Be Grateful.

Yes, it’s a commandment, hard and fast. We put it in biblical format to scare you into listening. In fact, you
can’t be a topnotch man unless you’re deeply grateful. For what? Glad you asked. For the gift of your
gender. For those muscles in your back. For those neurons in your brain. For your mirth. Your lust. Your
courage. For your possibilities. A man in full appreciates the twist of fate that made him so strong, so
cunning, so stalwart, so alert, so sexually skilled, so fully equipped, so good to go. Live the appreciation, by
using it all.