



Chapter Five: Fuck the Rules

At this point you'll have realized there are some technical difficulties in the Explore phase for creating and maintaining authenticity. First, you can't really predict what you'll need to do in the future to be authentic because you'll have changed significantly by then, as will your circumstances. Second, if there's no identity structure to inform your decision making, how the hell are you supposed to know what it means to be authentic at any given time?

This is where the wonderful concept of Values makes an appearance. Discovering your core values and learning what it means to live by them will build you into a person who is simultaneously changing while remaining consistent to a foundation. Like a kite with a long string that is tied to a pole; free to maneuver without getting lost. It seems to be a paradox at first, but bear with me as we explore values and how they are implemented in a practical, behavioral way.

As far as I can tell from the endless case studies I have experimented with, values do not change for an individual. They remain consistent throughout a person's life. However, the actions taken to live by these values, and the importance and relevance of any one particular value at any given time, are subject to *constant* change.

An analogy for this is building a house. At any given time, you are focused on a different part of the house, using different methods to build and do a different job every day. But no matter what, you are always *building*. Therefore, the value for putting together a house is *building* while the methods and areas of focus fluctuate according to what is *most helpful right now*. See how something like building can be consistent yet simultaneously changing all the same time? This is how a value works.

The Explore phase is where you answer two important questions. First, which value is the most appropriate to guide the actions you're about to take, given the circumstances and context, i.e., which value is most suited to this situation right now? And second, what behavior would be an *honest* best attempt to live by that chosen value? Answering these questions is the essence of having nothing to lose.

Values are easily confused with many other concepts, which is why people struggle to find authenticity. We are misled by societal influences to believe we are living by our values when we are actually doing the complete opposite. We are deceived into thinking our decisions are aligned with what is "right," through misunderstanding concepts such as *virtues*, *goals* and *outcomes*.

For that reason, and because of my overarching theory that you already know deep down what it means for you to be authentic, the

best way to learn your values is to first *unlearn* what you have been manipulated into believing about values. What remains after that will be a stronger understanding of how to live by *your* values, how to be authentic, and therefore how to be *yourself*. It's time to explore your actual values.

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VALUES AND VIRTUES

Virtues are like legal laws; they are created when an authority of some kind decides to prioritize certain values over others and dictates guidelines as to how these values should be expressed. Religion, law and company policy are all examples of systems based on *virtues*.

For example, the Christian, Judaic and Islamic churches tell you the rules you must live by and how to live by them through what are called the Ten Commandments. In these systems, we see an authority figure proclaim that there is unified agreement on which values are the most important (commandments), and how each value should manifest through behavior (how to live virtuously).

The first most significant distinction between values and virtues is that a virtue requires the agreement of others, while living by your values does not. Virtues also differentiate from values in two other important ways.

1) No one value is the most important

No one value is consistently more important than any other; importance is only relevant to specific real-time context. For example, the value of courage may be more important than the value of caring during a situation that requires you to stand up for yourself, but overall caring is just as important for a balanced and meaningful life. Perhaps after you've stood up for yourself you can help the other person come to terms with the new boundaries. You go from courageous to caring in a single interaction. Values require you to explore the current context and figure out the best value fit.

One client I was working with would often have to balance values on a minute-to-minute basis with his partner, at least at first, while he established boundaries for the first time. He had set a precedent of having tantrums when he didn't get his way rather than calmly and truthfully explaining his boundaries. Over time he learned to say things like, "When you behave this way, it goes against my value of honesty." As he learned to replace insecure aggression with rational assertiveness, his partner positively, if somewhat reluctantly, reacted to the change. He would then practice compassionately accepting her reaction and helping her with it as a show of respect for her sticking with him through his changes.

2) Living by values is adaptable to context

How you live by the chosen value is also an in-the-moment decision, not requiring a pre-planned and pre-agreed action (though this can be helpful too, particularly when you are just starting to learn valued living). Sometimes courage means standing up for yourself, other times it means walking away, and there are an infinite number of other possible ways to engage in the value of courage. There are no rules as to how you can live by courage. As long as the actions you take include you choosing to feel afraid and sacrificing comfort for integrity, you are living courageously.

Later, when we discuss Confidence in greater detail, the unhelpful limitation of *caring what other people think* will be explored deeply, and we will look at why allowing other people to have complete

power over what you believe in will reduce your confidence rather than build it. Following virtues is an example of allowing others' opinions to make your decisions for you.

Therefore, if you agree with the notion that confidence must be self-contained and self-regulated, you will need to let go of the concept of living in a *virtuous* way. This does not mean you have to abandon your society or Church, it's just about coming to your own understanding as to how you should be living. Gaining society's approval does not align with authenticity or confidence and is not a requirement for enjoyment of life.

You do not need to agree with this yet. Just allow me to plant that seed between your ears and let it grow.

I did an experiment once where I stopped being nice to people. I had just finished reading *No More Mr. Nice Guy* by Dr. Robert Glover and had decided to see what would happen if I simply stopped trying to help other people for a while. It was unbelievable. Of all the terrible consequences I imagined in preparation for this experiment, none were even close to the shock of the actual result — nobody even noticed! Turns out my help wasn't really being asked for in a majority of cases; I was actually imposing help on others without their permission. I actually felt guilty for imposing on these people, yet "being helpful" was a virtue I had lived by unquestioningly my entire life. Nowadays, I only help people who ask for it.

COMMON VIRTUES TO BE AWARE OF

For each of the pseudo-values we'll be discussing, I'll point out from a personal perspective what I believe are some of the most debilitating virtue-myths promoted within mainstream culture. This is based largely on the suffering I help my clients with. Here are some *virtues* I see as being widespread and unhelpful.

- You must have a limited number of sexual partners and stick with one of them for your entire life, even if you stop loving them (a mistaken understanding of the value of *loyalty*).

- ❑ You must sacrifice your own enjoyment of life if doing so makes it easier for someone else to enjoy theirs because their quality of life is your responsibility (a mistaken understanding of the value of *caring*).
- ❑ You must have a stable job with a predictable income (a mistaken understanding of the value of *security*).
- ❑ You must be deferential to people with perceived higher social status, such as people older, richer or more popular than you (a mistaken understanding of the value of *respect*).

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VALUES AND GOALS

Living by your values is not something where you can actually achieve a final result. You will not be able to one day wake up and say, “I’ve been courageous enough now. I never have to live by the value of courage again.” Values require you to live by them until you die, if you want to be authentic, which means they will never be finished.

Values create an endless series of binary decisions; you’re either living by them or you’re not. At any given time, you can make the switch. Goals, however, are defined by their very ability to be completed. You can finish a goal, but you can never finish a value.

I think of goals as a compass, guiding you toward an authentic lifestyle and making it easier to live by your values. Yet most people I meet set goals based on *virtues*, thinking they must achieve certain things to be approved of by their community. Goals are helpful, but only until they no longer support living by values. Quite often you are led astray by goals that are set too far in the future. Even if they were originally based on an understanding of your values, *you* have changed in the interim and what it means to be authentic has changed with you.

A very common example of this misunderstanding is *the pursuit of money*. By calling money a career, people chase the Almighty Buck

from one source of stress to another, reassuring themselves along the way that they are doing what is “right.” Bear in mind the odd concept that money does not actually exist. It is simply an agreement of value between different parties.

Pursuing money as if it was a value is like pursuing large biceps as if they represented good balanced health. Big biceps *seem* healthy and are considered by society to be a *virtue* of health, but in reality they are not a reliable measure of health. Just like money is not a reliable measure of determination, courage, respect, or any other value. You can be a cruel, unethical, valueless, soulless bastard and achieve great financial wealth.

Any one of us can be lured into this outcome-dependent trap. There’s a man I know who has achieved enormous financial success and has the boat, the flash cars, the mansion, and the respect. Yet every night he drinks himself to sleep, and at every party he brags about his wealth. Why? Because he’s still not satisfied and he still has unstable self-worth. He doesn’t yet realize that self-worth built on numbers in a bank account or possessions is terribly inconsistent and unreliable.

If you can establish an understanding of your values *before* you set goals, your goals will support your authenticity. Instead of chasing money to feel confident, you can cut out the middleman and pursue confidence directly, by setting goals that focus on living by your deep core values. Money may simply become one of the many tools that assist your journey. You can reframe money from being a precious possession into a helpful yet dispensable resource to support value-based living.

One simple approach is to start with an overall goal of becoming authentic and confident without the need for external rewards or validation. All sub-goals can be aimed at supporting this. They will be flexible and change according to the most effective way to find authenticity and confidence at any given time. For example, I might have a goal for going to the gym, but it is not about looking good for others, it is about the self-respect that comes from maintaining my

health. This is a goal that supports the value of *respect*. And as soon as I identify a more respectful way to manage my health, I can ditch the gym goal and exchange it for something more up to date.

Goals that are *not* adaptable will eventually lead you away from your values and toward dissatisfaction, like the millionaire who wakes up in a panic one night when she realizes she's still unhappy or the married man who cheats because his relationship didn't remove the feeling of loneliness. I discard goals regularly the minute they steer me away from integrity, and I haven't regretted it yet. Ok that's a lie, but after the regret, things work out in the longer term.

COMMON GOALS TO BE AWARE OF

- Become financially independent (a mistaken understanding of the value of *secure*).
- Become physically attractive (a mistaken understanding of the value of *acceptance*).
- Get married (a mistaken understanding of the value of *connection*).

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VALUES AND RULES

A rule is something you use to explain your perceived limitations of the world, something that dictates options for behavior and restricts what you can do. I don't use the word "law" because it has a different connotation. Breaking the law is based on a communal agreement and usually has measurable punishments when caught. Breaking rules, which you've created for yourself alone, feels like a

punishment only if you allow yourself to be convinced you are “wrong.”

Also, the laws of physics, for example, describe something we cannot consciously gain control over, whereas rules outline a completely subjective structure that only exists inside your mind. Simply put, there’s not much you can do about gravity, but whether you walk up to a stranger and say hi cannot really be prevented by anything in the physical world. Only your internal rules can stop it from happening.

Rules are another example of how your brain likes lazily simplify a complex world by pretending there is a basic understanding of how you can and cannot interact. These rules appear to have good reasoning for their existence, yet they have a more detrimental impact on your ability to enjoy life than just about anything else.

Rules have the short-term reward effect of making life seem simple and understandable. However, like any short-term reward system, there is a long-term punishment. And that punishment is an internal slavery. For a rule to exist, freedom must be sacrificed. Rules attack an abundance of choice and reduce it to a few options. In your brain’s attempt to keep things simple, it imprisons you with rules.

Some rules are helpful. Looking both ways before you cross the road is a useful survival rule to follow and is unlikely to sacrifice your integrity. The same applies to rules like “don’t murder innocent strangers,” or “treat people with respect.” These rules aren’t the problem (though they can still get in the way during extreme situations). The kind of rules we’re talking about are things like “don’t rock the boat,” “it’s shallow to be attracted to someone before you get to know them,” and “if you don’t think you’ll be able to do it perfectly, don’t even bother starting it.”

Virtues are publicly accepted and understood rules, but I’ve separated rules as its own category because most of the rules holding you back have very little to do with publicly agreed-upon evidence. If you break a virtue in, say, a church setting, you might be immediately “punished” and shamed by the congregation. However, when you break a rule that you created all by yourself, there will

often be no evidence that anyone else even noticed. They may notice that you held back or missed an opportunity, but most of the time you'll be suffering completely at your own hands.

Perfectionists are a great example of the suffering caused through living by rules. Ironically, while some people call themselves perfectionists, their inability to let go of small imperfections leads them to mediocre completion standards and frequent procrastination. It's pretty hard to get something finished, or even started, when a voice in your head is saying, "Get this perfectly right or everyone will think you're a total loser." Even high performers who achieve impressive results are often unable to enjoy their successes, as their mind constantly punishes them with "it could have been better."

We live by our rules and think we are being authentic. We even congratulate ourselves on our ability to follow our own rules, never stopping to ask whether the rules should be tested or challenged for truthfulness.

As we'll discuss in more detail later, an effective way to build confidence is to strategically set about discovering and breaking all of your rules. Like chipping away at the walls of your prison, each day you'll slowly increase the amount of *freedom* in your mind.

Side note: in my experience, most "rules" are aimed at social harmony and are centered around how we should and should not engage with other people. This often means they only apply to social contexts. People I've spoken about this confirm that they let most of their rules go once they are alone or feel safe in another person's company.

COMMON RULES TO BE AWARE OF

- I cannot engage socially with people unless there is a relevant reason (a mistaken understanding of the value of *respect*).
- I cannot do something that might offend someone else (a mistaken understanding of the value of *caring*).

- I must try to win at all costs (a mistaken understanding of the value of *determination*).

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VALUES AND OUTCOMES

A major distraction from living by your values is thinking that certain results are an accurate measure of authenticity.

Our values are lived through actions, which of course cause reactions, also known as *outcomes*. Sometimes we see a reaction to our valued living as being the only measurable proof that we are doing things “right,” so we get locked onto this one outcome and over time lose track of the original value we were trying to live by. For example, you might get praised for working long hours, and think that you should therefore always work long hours to live by the value of determination, simply because once you were praised for it. We think that a single result consistently repeated represents living with integrity. This is a mental trap set by your mind in its never-ending search for simplicity and instant gratification.

When I first began working for the Department of Corrections, I was rewarded for hard work and skill development by receiving a promotion in my first eighteen months. I quickly came to the subconscious conclusion that a promotion was an accurate measure of work ethic, determination and mastery. It wasn't until much later, when I witnessed people woefully inadequate for the roles they were promoted to succeed over such obviously more effective people that I realized I was mistaken in my assumption that promotions were a measurement of good work.

Outcomes are the *by-products* of living by your values, not the values themselves. A large financial windfall may be an outcome of living by the value of *determination*, but it's not the only way to measure whether you are determined. Having sex with someone new might be the result of having been *courageous* with that person, but getting laid is not a reliable measure of courage. Receiving

encouragement and praise may come from showing *respect*, but you do not need other peoples' recognition to respect yourself.

Outcomes are in the same supply-chain as goals, where we aim goals at an outcome rather than toward living by values. We assume the outcome will *guarantee* a valued living system, but often our single-minded focus actually creates the opposite — an outcome-based system. In simple terms, we try to get something external rather than trying to live by our values.

Outcomes will often come when you are living by values. You'll know of people receiving rewards for being confident, but I sincerely believe it's a mistake to allow outcomes and results to become the source of your confidence. Outcomes and results are what you get when you live by your values, but they are not actually a reliable measure of how well you lived by your values. Think of results as icing on the cake; positive outcomes are an optional bonus rather than the reason to act.

School trained you to believe that you are only doing well when you get good results. In my first book *The Legendary Life*, I briefly referenced something I call the "Red Pen Effect," which is the feeling of shame you get when the teacher punishes you for getting the answers wrong. We were all raised on a system that taught us to use outcomes as a measure of how "good" we are as people, and how worthy we are of love, respect and happiness.

Unfortunately, that's all just a big load of scarcity-avoidant fear-based bullshit.

Imagine you have two students. One is academically gifted and scores highly in all her exams. Another is dyslexic and fails significantly at nearly all her subjects. The first girl goes on to take up a safe job and contribute little to society. The second girl is kicked out of school and ends up living in a commune. Who is living a better life?

The correct answer is "I don't know." Nothing about the above information tells you anything about their quality of life. Perhaps the

first girl's financially safe job is totally unsatisfying, and every day she regretfully wishes for a different life. Or maybe the second girl overlooked a talent for acting due to social pressure and has avoided pursuing that which she enjoys most. How well they did in school has no bearing on whether they are living in a valuable way. Perhaps they both are; we cannot tell from their outcomes alone.

Valued-living focuses entirely on the *process* of living, not the outcomes. Values are a guide to how you can live in each moment, which will provoke reactions considered either "good" or "bad" by other people. What's interesting about living by values is that over time the more authentic you become, the more *suitable* results and outcomes you will experience. You will start to trigger reactions based on an honest representation of your true desires, which will encourage results that match you specifically. They may not be outcomes approved of by others, but they will often be outcomes that *you* enjoy.

I see this happen often within my Brojo community. Someone will start living more by the value of honesty over time. At first, this creates conflict amongst their social circle. People become upset with the sudden upgrade of honesty; the apparent change in the person's character. Some people will leave them, but others will come to love them more. Over time, a new social circle is created, full of people they love and who love them in return. It takes a while, but honesty pushes away bad-fit relationships and magnetically attracts and builds good-fit relationships, each subjectively unique to each individual.

When you let go of an outcome like *marriage* as the sole measurement of how caring, honest and respectful you are, your world opens up to all sorts of other potentially more enjoyable outcomes. You might find that sleeping around is a fun and playful way for you to live right now, and if it wasn't for society's virtues and rules being stuck in your head, you would thoroughly enjoy it. You might also see that you can have multiple partners without being dishonest, callous or disrespectful. Later, you may meet someone

and monogamous marriage becomes a suitable action to live by your values. None of these options are better or worse than any other.

All I'm saying is to let go of the idea that there's only one possible outcome for living by your values... because there are billions!

Outcomes are a poor measure of values, though once you build confidence they can become a reference source for feedback during reflection.

COMMON OUTCOMES TO BE AWARE OF

- Marriage (a mistaken understanding of the value of *caring*)
- Cheating on a partner (a mistaken understanding of the value of *freedom*)
- Approval or acceptance by others (a mistaken understanding of the value of *respect*)
- A management position at work (a mistaken understanding of the value of *leading*)
- Feeling comfortable (a mistaken understanding of the value of *integrity*)

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