

## MY TACTICS - THE RULES

Often times when people are confused it is not because they lack the ability to know but it is virtually impossible to figure things out properly if you are not truly aware of what game is being played.

**Rule One: Identify what is going on.** What is the game being played? Be aware of the system, think and reflect.

**Rule Two: Know the rules of what is going on (whether or not you agree).** Gather information, do some work, research, find out how to be involved.

**Rule Three: Know your choices under these rules (whether or not you agree).** Make a detailed list of your choices consistent with the rules, take control and be empowered.

**Rule Four: Choose and move on.** I pick a choice from rule three that is in the direction I want and I take responsibility for my own destiny.

This tactic made it easier for me to simplify many of the new strange and complex problems that I encountered. I viewed life as a game made up of many games within it and each one of these games had their own set of rules, it was important for me to know what game was being played so I could find out what the rules were, then using various methods to solicit information, I was able to determine what my choices were and then come up with a plan of action.

**Rule One** starts my awareness and challenges me to think and reflect on what is going on. In Rule one I determine what I think is going on (what I think that the system is). It is possible to be wrong when determining the system but the more I do this step, the more accurate I get at recognizing what system I am in. I have taught this method to people struggling with adapting to different situations and looking for tools. They were impressed by the simplicity and

repeatability of the method.

**Rule Two** challenges me to seek information and become well informed on what is going on, irrespective of what my opinion may be, it asks me to suspend judgement and realize that although my opinion is relevant, ultimately what is more important and would help me adapt is my knowledge of the rules of the system, how they apply to me and my situation.

**Rule Three** empowers me and challenges me to take control by clarifying my choices under the rules. It provides me with an understanding that in order to adapt to the system, I need to spend my energy on the choice or choices I have under the rules and pick the one that is most in line with my goals. The reality is even if I wanted to change the system I still have to understand the rules. Again surprisingly I discovered that although my opinions of my choices was relevant, understanding these choices and making a list of them was more important if I wanted to adapt and succeed.

**Rule Four** highlights the fact that once I have arrived at rule three procrastinating is a waste of my time. I have to make a decision and choose the best of all the choices that I have. No matter how bad my options are I should choose the one that is most aligned with the direction I want to go. Even a bad choice is still better than no choice at all. When I refuse to choose all I am doing is asking the system to choose for me and I lose control of my direction.

Choosing puts me in charge and makes me responsible for my own destiny, it does not guarantee success but it makes it more likely to occur.

I have found over the years that these rules work much better with someone who has the ability to think deeply, carefully and reflect on the situation they are in. It is not helpful for anyone in an altered state of mind or with significant cognitive deficits. The more insight the person has the more likely they are to succeed with this method.

It is important for me to work at my own pace and only deal with as

much as I am comfortable with at any time (never bite off more than I can chew). As I continued to repeat and reinforce the method I found myself more able to deal with more complex situations and systems.

Within my reality a system is any situation that involves interaction with a defined set of rules that determine this interaction. It was initially hard for me to grasp that although I may be a part of a system the system's priority is to maintain the integrity of that system and my individual needs are secondary to that system.

It is my responsibility to adapt to the system and not vice versa. Functional adaptation is required for success within the system although this is not a requirement to belong to the system.

### **Rule One: Identify What Is Going On.**

This involves forming an accurate impression of what is going on. To play the "game" I need a starting point and that starting point is naming the game. I am not afraid to define it wrongly as more information becomes available I can always come back to this step and through my re-evaluation I would be able to correct myself.

This is not a step that I spend very much time on as the purpose is simply to recognize what is going on, all other details are addressed in the next steps. In fact the most important aspect of this step is the realization that I need to recognize what is going on.

It is as if life is a game made up of so many other games that I am required to be proficient in, then in order to live a functional existence I have to be able to identify which game I am in at any point in time. That would be a fundamental first step in being able to play the game properly, after all if the game is **Monopoly**® there is not much point trying to play it with Poker rules.

Identifying the game could be difficult or easy but it should never be an extensive process, once I recognize what is going on I should be able to describe it with a word or sentence nothing more. It

could be as simple as, I am taking my dog for walk to as complex as, investing under complicated terms, whatever the case may be, it is important to first of all make some assumption about what game is being played. It is also important to realize that sometimes the game changes shortly after I have identified it, so this step needs to be reviewed often to determine if I am still in the game I think I am.

There are a lot of times when I have mentored people who are very frustrated about their lack of results and seeming inability to head in the direction that they want, the problem often becomes glaringly obvious with this first question when they find out that they are in a completely different game from the one they thought that they were in.

With rule one my goal is to simply define what I perceive the system to be. It is okay if the initial assumption is wrong as it easy to correct this as more information becomes available. This step should really be accomplished relatively quickly and often times takes just a few seconds of my time but it is interesting how often it can be ignored and so rather than adapting to the system I spend a lot of energy trying to make the system adapt to me.

I believe that I have a finite amount of energy at any given time and knowing how to utilize it wisely and efficiently is a key part of being able to survive and then thrive. My ability to adapt is significantly enhanced by my ability to think deeply and carefully about things. Reflect, consider, review, contemplate are words that accurately describes this process. By finding out what system I am in or what game is being played I improve my chances of using my energy more wisely and reduce the possibility of frustration.

Imagine that people were playing a game of **Scrabble**® and I thought it was **Monopoly**® how frustrating would that be? What are the chances of me being productive? What are the chances of me bonding with the other players? I realize that this sounds like an over simplification but my experiences have led me to the conclusion that more often than not it is the simple things that are overlooked, they are so simple that we often ignore them or no

longer see them as worthy of our attention.

There are times when I have been mentoring parents and their rebellious teenagers and realize that they are both operating in two completely different systems but continue to communicate as though they were in the same system. A few questions often revealed that the parent thought they were operating in the parent and child system but their communication was that of the friend system and so the child was responding appropriately.

Often times when people are confused it is not because they lack the ability to know, it is virtually impossible to figure things out properly if you are not truly aware of what game is being played. It is the reason why I consider this the first rule or step in becoming functional within systems.

It is important to note that this step is the same irrespective of how simple or complex the system is, the first rule is not an attempt to analyze the system (the other rules clarify that) just to simply identify it.

Some systems (games) are quite easy to identify and others are a little more difficult, sometimes because the system is made up of two or more systems, each with its own set of rules. For example appropriate interactions between the opposite sex has its set of rules that may be different when interacting with the opposite in a workplace, and even more different when they happen to be your supervisor. A certain behaviour that may be appropriate in a particular setting (e.g. socially) may be totally inappropriate in another circumstance with the same person e.g. at work.

A functional individual would be able to identify these different systems and adapt, but this could prove very difficult for someone who has difficulty recognizing subtle changes. The ability of anyone to function appropriately is very closely related to their ability to identify what game is being played and society as a whole is very invested in helping us develop this ability.

As we are provided with more and more complex information that we need to sort through, categorize, master, we often forget or ignore the simple underlying principles that allow us to be able to make use of the complex information in a functional manner.

**Rule Two: Know The Rules Of The System (whether or not you agree with them).**

Every game has its own set of rules most of us understand this concept and would not show up at a poker game complaining that no one is playing by Monopoly rules. We would not expect to be accommodated under those circumstances and yet in my practice I often see this happen when people have become frustrated and don't recognize that they are not following the rules of that system. Frustration is something that we experience when we try to control a potentially uncontrollable event or situation and it is understandable why people trying to succeed in a system where they are oblivious to the rules seldom succeed and often get frustrated.

Educating myself on the rules is my responsibility, contrary to what some people may think, the system does not owe me anything and is seldom concerned with my individual needs. Within any system, how well I do is determined by many factors, some I have control over and some that I don't. The goal is to focus more on the areas where I do have control and be aware of the important areas where I don't have control but not spend time dwelling on them.

I gather as much information as possible in an unbiased manner. How I feel about the information though relevant is not important to my success within the system. The more informed I am about the system, the intricacies, the traditions, the regulations and how it operates, the more empowered I am to choose a direction that will help me succeed.

I gather information from as many sources as possible within a reasonable period of time and I verify the information and make sure that it is valid and factual. Interestingly sometimes the people

in authority within the system may not be fully aware of the rules and how they apply, this has often provided me with an unexpected advantage.

The internet has made this rule very attainable and easy to fulfill, I utilize it often but I also remember that the information I obtain from it is only as good as the site, so I take time to determine the credibility of the site and verify the information prior to adopting it.

I find it is a lot easier to gather and review information objectively when I withhold my opinions about it (judgement) until I have gathered all the information I need. If I do not do this, my opinions would often affect the way that I gather and review information.

Although my opinions about the rules are relevant, knowing and understanding the rules is more important and determines how functional I am within that system.

I have often been surprised about how uninformed individuals would be about a system they complain very bitterly about and how they would sometimes try and pass on unreliable second-hand information as facts. It was little wonder that they were often not successful within these systems and end up being very frustrated and angry.

I remember when I worked as a physician within the Workers' compensation board system, I would often encounter very angry injured workers who address the system as a living entity and the case manager as someone who was out to get and destroy them.

On further questioning they would have no idea about the policies and procedures of the system, they were often unaware that these policies were within the public domain and easily accessible and often times they had very little knowledge about what case management was all about. It was no surprise that they were frustrated and did not know how to make themselves better understood within the system.

I discovered that by providing them with this information and

providing the opportunity for them to educate themselves on the rules of the system made them more willing to partner in their own recovery.

The process of and time taken to gather information on the rules of the system would often vary depending on the complexity of that system, sometimes it could take a few moments to determine all the rules, while at other times extensive research may be required. It is important to constantly check “Rule one” to make sure that the system is still the same one that you started with and it has not shifted or evolved as a result of the information that you gathered on it.

During my transition into Canadian life I often found that I felt less frustrated when I had a clearer idea of the obstacles I was encountering within the system. The more information I had the more empowered I felt and in fact the more empowered I was. The process of discovering and accessing the information resulted in significant growth and helped orientate me towards my choices and the changes required of me to adapt.

**Rule Three: Know Your Choices Under The Rules (whether or not you agree with them) Make a detailed list of all the choices that exist under the rules.**

I construct a detailed list of all my choices that exist under the rules and I do this without any attempt to determine whether these choices are desirable, acceptable or not. My goal is to be as objective as possible when listing my choices so as to not overlook anything. It is important that I only consider the choices that exist under the rules as this helps me maintain focus and conserve energy.

I realize that without knowing and having a working understanding of the rules it is impossible for me to fully understand and be aware of all my choices. When I use this approach I am always surprised at the number of choices I actually have even when I thought it was in a dismal situation.



I don't always like the choices I have but being aware of them and having a list of them allows me to accomplish rule four.

### **Rule Four: Choose And Move On**

I pick a choice from rule three that gives me the best chance of getting the results that I want. I have convinced myself that what is worse than a bad decision is no decision at all. When I don't choose what I am doing is asking the system to choose for me and this greatly reduces my chances of getting the results that I want. Making a choice can be overwhelming and it is very easy to get stuck. There is a thin line between being thorough and procrastinating, it is very easy to procrastinate when I am feeling overwhelmed.

As I go over these rules in my head I am always checking to make sure the system has not changed because sometimes simply by successfully resolving rule two or three I am actually now encountering a whole new system with a different set of rules and choices that I have to acquaint myself with.

There are times when I had not observed rule four and failed to stabilize a bad situation at that level, sometimes because I was unduly occupied with how unhappy I was with my choices, this always resulted in things deteriorating to the point where the original choices I was dissatisfied with looked pretty good if I could get them back.

## **Points to remember:**

**Rule One: Identify what is going on.** What is the game being played? Be aware of the system, think and reflect.

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