



Ray Edwards Show, Episode 580 14 Rules For Success in Tough Times

Announcer 00:00

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Announcer 00:10

The Ray Edwards Show. This is the podcast for prosperity with purpose.

Ray Edwards 00:18

Hello, my friends, and welcome back to the podcast. Today's episode is called 14 Rules For Success in Tough Times, and a lot of people think we're in tough times. And they're probably right. We're either in tough times collectively, or each of us is in our own personal tough times. And that's pretty much all the time. We all need a clear, rational framework of principles to guide us to success, even when we can't see the way clearly, immediately in front of us because of the economy, because of jobs, because of politics, because of racial unrest, because of civil tension, because of personal problems, whatever is going on in your life. That seems like a problem to you right now can obscure your view of reality. In fact, I think it's always skewed in some way or other. Let's answer one question, though. First, because it's really important that we define what is success? Earl Nightingale has my favorite definition of success. He says, and notice this is not about money, or status, or cars, or how attractive your spouse is, or how great your clothes look on you. Earl Nightingale says, "Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal." Think about the power of that success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal. Break it apart. If you're making progress toward of some worthy ideal, whether it be a monetary goal, or character goal, or a habit goal, or whatever ideal you set up in front of you to work toward, if you're making any progress at all, you're already a success, you can be a success every day, even if you haven't arrived at the destination, which is good, because we never get to the destination. It's like the horizon. Try walking to the horizon sometime. Guess what happens when you get there. It's just as far away as it ever was. And that's a good thing. It's what keeps us moving in life, keeps us moving forward. So remember that success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal, you get to define what the ideal is, nobody gets to define it for you, unless you allow them to. Hmm, something to think about. So what are the 14 rules for success? Even in tough times, or maybe especially in tough times? Well, rule number one, commit to the mastery of the most important skill in life. And I believe that skill is clear,

persuasive communication with yourself first then with others. Why with yourself first? Because if you ever tried to sell anything you did not believe in, you know why, if you don't believe in something, you can't convincingly persuade anybody else to believe in it either. Nor should you. But if you love something, like if you're an Apple computer fan, and you love the iPhone, for instance, you don't have to be prompted, or prodded to say great things about the iPhone, you just love Apple products. Or if you love a certain kind of art or a certain kind of food, you are an enthusiastic promoter of things you love, probably have a favorite TV show, or music artists or album or movie that you talk about all the time, because you love it, you enthusiastically talk about it. And that's why Zig Ziglar defined sales as the transfer of enthusiasm from one person to another. If you're enthusiastic about something, you can convince other people to be enthusiastic as well, in fact, to kind of absorb it from you. It's like osmosis. So that's a general idea of what persuasion is. But specifically, there are skills about how to assemble words in the right order prepared for the right people being aware of who they are, what their problems are, what their worldview is, in a language they can understand, and enthusiastically presenting them with a solution to their problem. That's persuasion. First, with yourself, you got to convince yourself of what's important. Sell yourself on what you must do in order to experience the success you seek to make that progress towards a worthy ideal. And then you can convince and persuade others. And that's all of life. Think about it. If you say to me, Well, I'm not really a persuader. I'm not a copywriter or a salesperson, really, aren't you think about moments in your life when you're persuading people to do what you want them to do. Because you know it's for their good too. Clear, persuasive communication is only important to anybody who has anything to say, or anything to sell. That's of any importance. And that, my friends, is all of us.

Ray Edwards 04:25

Rule number two for success in tough times. By the way, all these rules also operate in not-so-tough times. They're still good rules to live by. Rule number two is, let your word be your bond. What this meant in the old days is your word was as good as a written signed contract. It was legal, it was binding, it was your bond. In the book, *The Four Agreements*, the first agreement is Be impeccable with your word. And the word impeccable means without sin without flaw, without harming yourself or anybody else. Let your word be your bond. In the *Bible*, Jesus said Let Your yes be yes, let your no be no, that should be good enough. People should know if you say it, that's how it is. That's letting your word be your bond. That's being impeccable with your word. That's rule number two. And by the way, it doesn't matter what other people think. Some people are gonna think you're lying to them, no matter what you say, this is not about what other people think this is about what you are practicing yourself. And what if you don't always practice this perfectly? We'll get to that.

Ray Edwards 05:26

But first, rule number three, don't take anything personally. And by the way, those of you who heard me mentioned *The Four Agreements* will know that these next few rules all come from *The Four Agreements* are the follow up book, *The Fifth Agreement*, these are powerful books, if you haven't read them, I really suggest you get them. There'll be links in the show notes for this episode, where you can get these books, I really recommend you get them. By the way, if you're into audiobooks, they're both narrated by Peter Coyote, who's an extraordinarily good reader. So it's a great audio experience as well. So don't take anything personally, this, this is something I have to work on all the time. I don't know if you've ever had this experience, but I may be in traffic headed for an appointment somewhere, I'm maybe running a little bit behind,

and somebody pulls in front of me and they start driving really slow. I somehow become convinced that the entire universe, that Satan and his legion of demons, have all aligned against me to put that person in front of me to personally stop me from achieving my mission of getting to the grocery store on time. Now, of course, that's ridiculous. That's not personal. It's got nothing to do with me. I have no idea why that person's driving so slow. Maybe they just got a speeding ticket. And maybe they're preventing me from getting one too. I have no idea. But I know all the time, I tend to take things personally. If you find yourself saying to yourself, Why does this always happen to me? Or he's just being a jerk. He's just not thinking about me at all? Well, that's true. The other person is probably not thinking about you that much. That means it's not personal to you. Everybody has things happen in their lives that is not pleasant, that doesn't align with our plans, that doesn't align with our picture of reality about how we wanted things to go. And that's, by the way, this is the recipe for being miserable. Misery is equal to reality, minus your expectation of what reality should be like. So you expect reality's supposed to be one way, and reality's a different way, now you're upset. The better practice is to realize it's not personal. This is just how things are. Everything's as it should be. Everything's okay. Everything's okay.

Ray Edwards 07:24

Rule number four, for success in tough times. Don't assume anything. This one is all these agreements from from The Four Agreements. And then *The Fifth Agreement* as well, I find extraordinarily simple. When I read them in the books, my first thought was, well, this is common sense. Everybody knows this. But you know, common sense is not common practice. Do you agree with that? Don't you already know that to be true. And if you try practicing these five particular rules, and they are let your word be your bond, don't take anything personally, don't assume anything, and we'll get to the next two in a moment. I find them extraordinarily difficult to apply every single day. Not assuming anything means I don't assume I know anyone's intent behind why they say certain things, do certain things, about what external events in the world mean. Like if I get several unpleasant phone calls or text messages all in a row? I might start thinking is everybody does have conspired against me to start making my life miserable? Well, of course not. If I get a phone call from my attorney, does that mean somebody suing me? Maybe not? Maybe my attorneys just kind of wish me happy birthday? Or ask someone to go play golf? Why is it so often we assume the worst about anything that's happening in the world? We assume that the phone call that's coming in is going to be a problem we have to deal with. We assume that the person who wants to meet with us wants to meet about some trouble with their account with our company. We assume that because our spouse asks us a question, they're about to clobber us with some accusation or something we've done wrong we have to talk about. If somebody says to you, we need to talk. What do you assume immediately? You assume there's a problem. Most likely, if you're like me, maybe it's only me, maybe I'm the only one who has this problem. I don't think so.

Ray Edwards 09:16

Years ago, some brilliant person who was my coach to time, whose name was Armand Morin, told me Ray, I always try to assume that the person that I'm thinking about is doing whatever they're doing with good intentions. I'm always trying to get people the credit, that their intentions are good. They're trying to do the best thing that you know how to do. I don't think anybody wakes up, this is me talking, not Armond, I don't think anybody wakes up in the morning and says, I'm going to be a jerk today. I'm going to be the villain in somebody's story. I'm going to mess up somebody's life. Now, there may be a few people who have their own challenges,

emotional challenges that they do think that but I think that's very, very, very, very rare. Most of us wake up in the morning just thinking, I hope I make it through the day. I want to be Good, I want to be a good person, I'm gonna try my best to be a good person today. So, if you're going to assume anything, then assume the best. Assume that everything that is happening is happening for you, not to you. You won't always be right, but don't you already know that your life will be better if you make that assumption? Best not to make assumptions at all. Just see things as you see them and try to leave the interpretation of what they mean alone as long as you can. This is a case where wait and see is often the best practice.

Ray Edwards 10:28

Rule number five, for success in tough times, or anytime, always do your best. Now you might feel like, Man, that's a terrible expectation to carry around, that I'm always going to do my best. Think about it, I didn't say always be the best. Always do the best. I said, always do your best. And whatever your best is today, if your best as you can barely hold it together. And you need to crawl under the covers with your dog or your cat. And just watch things on Netflix all day and not talk to any other humans. If that's the best you can do today. That's the best you have. Do your best. That's all you can do. And it's enough. Just always do your best. If your best feels disappointing, just shrug and say, Well, it's my best. That's all I can do.

Ray Edwards 11:15

Rule number six for success in tough times. Be skeptical, but listen, and stay curious. Ask specific questions. Now, this is the last of the agreements that I've borrowed liberally from *The Four Agreements* and the follow up book, *The Fifth Agreement*. Be skeptical, but listen and stay curious. Guess what you're doing if you're curious, you're asking questions. You're wondering what does this mean? What do they mean by that word? What do they mean by that statement? Why would they say that opinion, that is the total opposite of mine. And I think that opinion, they just stated out loud is awful. But yet they seem to think it's good. I wonder why that is. And if you stay that curious, then you can ask specific questions to the person, do your best to be skeptical. In other words, don't believe anything at first, don't even believe what I'm telling you now. Test it out, see if it works for you, see if it's true for you. So be skeptical, but listen, and do your best to understand and appreciate the other person's world. What if we all were doing that over the last three years? Would this had been a more pleasant planet to live on? Yes, it would. Just nod your head with me and say yes, that would have been a lot more pleasant. We can start doing this today, you and me. We're not the whole world. But we don't need to change the whole world. We can't change the whole world. You can't control anybody else. You can't control anybody other than yourself. And for me, it has to be an extraordinarily good day for me to be able to control myself. So that's enough for me. That's all the work I need. Just listen, stay curious and ask specific questions, especially when you think you know what they're saying. I don't know about you, but I have this tendency when I'm talking to someone, if I think I know where they're going, I have this tendency to want to jump in speed along and tell them what they're saying and then move on, so I can make my point. And as I've been practicing this, listening, and asking specific questions, I find, you know, I often do not know where people are going, they're not going where I think they're going. They don't mean by those words what I thought they meant. So it's really good to ask questions like this. Can you explain what you mean by that? And sometimes, this will make people a little guarded, a little defensive. Just let them know. Just, I would say something like this I would say, Look, I honestly want to understand where you're coming from. And please treat me like I'm a child, I'm trying hard to

understand. So all I really want to know is what you mean by that? Can you explain why you feel that way to me? When people feel the genuineness of those questions, watch them open up like a flower, watch them be able to breathe and relax because they feel like, Oh, you're actually going to listen to me. You're not waiting for me let my defenses down. So you can stab me in the gut. So don't do that. By the way. Just listen and ask questions. If you just do this one thing, it will change your life. I promise you, it has changed mine.

Ray Edwards 14:14

Rule number seven for success in tough times or anytime. Ask yourself daily, every day. This is a question I ask myself, Is this who I really want to be? All throughout today, when I find myself in a conversation with a friend, and I'm expressing opinions, or talking about situations, or talking about other people, I asked myself, Is this who I really want to be in this moment? This is a powerful question because it allows you to step back and see who you're being in the moment. And then this is also a question I asked at the beginning of the day, I think about all the people, for instance, on my team who I'm going to come into contact with today, or maybe who I wasn't going to come into contact with today. But I have everybody on my team. I have a list of names in front of me, and I asked myself, who is it that I really want to be for this member of my team today? Who would they benefit most from me being? It's not that I'm changing my identity all the time. What I'm asking of my own self is, what's the best part of me that I can bring forward? For this person on my team today? Powerful question, if you actually do it, it'll bring powerful results in your life. I mean, test it, and let me know, I think you'll find I'm correct.

Ray Edwards 15:26

Rule number eight for success in tough times. Eliminate small discomforts before they become too large to eliminate. The actual way I heard this the first time was, "Kill the monster while it's little," you know, the little Godzilla that can walk underneath your bed, that's really super cute right now, by tomorrow morning will be 40 feet tall and not so cute. And also not so easy to get rid of. So don't let little monsters in your life, little problems run around while they're tiny and cute, and you think they're funny, and then one day you find the problem is now so big, you can't get rid of it. Eliminate small discomforts now, before they become too large to ever eliminate. That one, if I'd known that earlier in my life, could have saved me a lot of trouble.

Ray Edwards 16:11

Rule number nine for success in tough times, spend the most possible time with people who hold you to a higher standard. If there is one principle that really can radically change your life, without you even thinking about it very much. It's this, spend time with the people you want to be like, don't just spend time with the people you've been thrown together with by circumstance. And you might feel like this is harsh because for some people, this is going to be like, well, you're talking about my family. You're talking about my mama, my daddy, my cousins, brothers, sisters. Yeah, there comes a point where you have to look at the relationships in your life. Because there's a saying, it's very famous in our world of self-development, self-improvement. And I believe Jim Rohn, is credited with this phrase, but you become the average of the five people you spend the most time with. And I would add to that, you become the average of the five people you spend the most intentional, conscious time with. So you're with them for a purpose, you're with them because they hold you to a higher standard, they lift you up. The people around you, your peer group, are going to do one of two things in your life, they're going to raise you up to a higher standard of living, of being, of character, of becoming yourself, or

they're going to pull you down. And that sounds harsh. But I think if you just consider this idea for a moment, you're going to realize this is true. Example, let's say that you are obese and you have five friends who are also obese. And you all enjoy getting together and doing the things that make you obese, which is basically doing nothing and eating lots of sugar, and carbs, and prepackaged breads, and crackers and goop and stuff that your grandmother wouldn't even recognize as food. And you just spend all your time stuffing it in your face and not moving very much. That's why your whole obese. Now if you're if you're obese, I'm not. I'm not trying to hurt you. I've been there my heaviest I was 277 pounds. So, I understand. It's difficult. That's why it's important that you spend time around people who are not eating that way if you want to change. Because if you're the only person in that group, who decides you guys go ahead and have ice cream, pizza, and Doritos, and Pepsi for dinner. I'm going to have a salad with some fresh cut vegetables, and some olive oil and a big tall glass of water. If you do that, what's going to happen? Your friends are going to be like oh, now you're you're better than we are. Come on, you can just one night well, it's okay. Just here's some chocolate cake Just have one bite, it's not going to hurt you. What are you got some kind of superiority complex? No, I just don't want to die when I'm 40. From heart attack. I don't want to develop diabetes. I just don't want to carry on all this extra weight. You're just trying to do the best thing for you. And your friends, by the way, are not trying to hurt you. They're not they're not trying to damage your or sabotage you. But what they're fearing is if you're going to make this big change in your life, they're afraid you're going to leave them. That's why they try to pull you down. They probably couldn't put to words what's happening. But that's what's happening subconsciously. And they're also afraid you're judging them. And maybe you are. I'm not here to say whether that's right or wrong. I will say if you're the kind of person who thinks I'm going to pull my friends up, they're not going to pull me down. I'm gonna pull them up. Well, first of all, that's great self-confidence. You're convinced you're strong enough to overcome the collective will of five other people. And maybe you are, but it seems like lots of work, and you're not going to change somebody who doesn't want to be changed. Trust me, no matter how hard you try, you do not have a solution for a problem they don't believe they have. So what you want to do is find five people who eat healthier than you do, who are trim, muscular, flexible, in great cardiovascular shape, who fitness is their culture. And you want to hang out with those people if at all possible. And it is possible. Because if you come to those people, and you say, Hey, y'all look like you really know how to eat and how to stay healthy. I'm trying to get that way. Can you help me out? Can you give me any thoughts on what I should eat, how I should work out, most of the time, those people are going to be happy to help you make some progress toward being healthier? So do your best to get a peer group that is intentional on your part that will hold you to a higher standard. So the next question is going to be Well, Ray, the people that are pulling me down are my family, is my mom, or it is my brother, my sister or my wife or my husband, or it's my kids, what am I supposed to do? Just want me to walk out and shun them and leave them? No. Love your family. Choose your peer group. And yes, if you're in a relationship that you've done your best to make it work and you're being harmed, or you're in danger, or you can't get open communication happening, then you may have to consider ending that relationship. That's a decision you got to make, I can't make it for you. But take care of yourself first. Because if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of anybody else. Choose your peer group. And you can still love your family, you just can't let them exert influence over how you make your life choices.

Ray Edwards 21:36

Rule number 10 for success in tough times, ruthlessly avoid time vampires and Emotional Vampires. My friends, vampires are real. Now they don't find themselves limited to walking around only in the dark. The vampires I'm talking about are the ones that will seek you out, and they want to sink their fangs into your neck and drain you of your lifeblood. And in this case, your lifeblood is two things. Number one, it's your emotions. And you know the kind of people that I'm talking about. You see them coming, and your stomach rolls, and you feel a little dread inside and you say oh my gosh, they're gonna come talk to me about that situation they're always talking about. And it's going to just pull me down into the depths of despair, and depression. Because these folks seem like they're always depressed and always having these huge emotional problems. And always, always, always trying to pull everybody else they know into that pit with them. Do you know someone like this? Just nod your head. If you do. Everybody will wonder what you're doing. Nodding your head with your AirPods in. Emotional vampires seek to create an emotional response in you of sympathy, empathy, me too-ism. As in, I'm not talking about the movement, probably a poor choice of words better to say. They want you to jump in the pit with them and say, Yeah, I want to be miserable just like you. So let's just stir it up as bad as we can. Now, again, don't misunderstand me. Sometimes we talk to friends about problems because we need somebody to talk things out with, and they help us move in a positive direction. That's very different. That's a healthy relationship. I'm talking about the emotional Eeyore, who just wants everybody to suffer along with them. You know that saying misery loves company? Yeah, you don't want to be part of that circle. What about time vampires? These are the folks who come to you, ostensibly asking for your help or your advice. And, again, when you see them coming, you kind of roll your eyes, you think Well, here goes an hour and a half, two hours. Because you can't ever get these people to stop talking. They suck up all your time and suck up all your energy. You can't fix time vampires, you can't fix emotional vampires, because they don't want to be fixed. And it's not your job to fix anybody. Therefore, avoid time vampires and emotional vampires. How do you avoid them? Well, you can simply say something like this. Oh, sorry, Tom, don't have time to talk now. Bye. Or if they just walk up to you and start unloading on you, you can say something like this. You might say, I'm sorry, I don't have time to do this with you right now. Do you have another topic? Or shall we move on? I know it's tough. What you're going to find is if you start implementing some of the things I'm recommending in these rules, speaking very directly to people, the first thing that's going to happen is they're going to get so confused. Because they're not accustomed to anybody saying what they mean and meaning what they say. It reminds me of that episode of Friends. I think it was Phoebe who was invited to go somewhere and the person who was inviting her said, Are you going to come to this party tonight? I don't remember what the circumstance was. But I remember her response very clearly. It was, Oh, I really wish I could but I don't want to. Beautiful. Use that.

Ray Edwards 24:55

Rule number 11 for success in tough times. Remember that in life, you have in your life exactly what you're willing to tolerate. You have in your life right now precisely what you're tolerating, there's probably one or two issues that come to mind immediately. And you're feeling a little unsettled now. Because you know that, um, one or two or three, or however many instances you can think of this in your life, that constantly annoying, troublesome problem that you're experiencing is only there because you tolerate it. You keep finding reasons not to do something about it. The day you decide, you really decide to change, you'll stop tolerating those things.

Let's talk about what a decision is for a moment. A decision is not a wish. It's not saying, well, someday I'm going to, I'm going to deal with this conflict I have with this other human being. Someday I'm going to deal with my overspending problem. Someday I'm going to deal with my overdrinking problem. That's not a decision. A decision, if you've looked at the Latin roots of the word decision, to decide to incise it means to cut off all other options. There's that story of Cortez, who came to the New World, which he then proceeded to steal from the people who actually lived there. But that's a different discussion. He brought his troops on the shore and then set fire to the boats. Why? Because they couldn't go home. Now they had to fight. They had no choice. That was a decision. Again, not really the greatest example. But you get the point. When you decide something, if you decide, I'm going to stop overdrinking, that means I've cut off other options, there is no option of ever going back to overdrinking, perhaps I've decided to quit drinking altogether. I'm never going to drink again. But Ray, what if I do, then stop and start over? There's a saying in the recovery world, which is if you fall off, simply resume, that's all, no need to make a big drama about it, just start back up.

Ray Edwards 26:56

Rule number 12, for success in tough times, be certain that profound change in your life can happen in an instant. And it does. In fact, it's often the most profound changes that happen just that way. Now, it may be a long time coming, let's go back to this drinking thing. Maybe you have a problem overdrinking. And you know, you should quit, but you haven't. And then one day, imagine something terrible almost happens. Maybe you've had a few drinks, and you come within inches of running over a child on their bicycle or hitting broadside into a school bus because you weren't looking as you went through an intersection. Something like that can shock you into a state where you feel like, okay, that was too close. Never again am I going to do that. And you probably have something like this in your life. Maybe it's not to drinking and almost killing somebody think but there's no doubt been things in your life, you reached a point where you just realized, Okay, that's it. That's enough, this is never happening again. I'm done with this. As of today, this changes. Change can and does happen in an instant. It doesn't have to take a long time. It doesn't have to take trial after trial after trial, although sometimes it works that way too. And then I would say to you, persistence, just persist.

Ray Edwards 28:13

Rule number 13 for success in tough times. Keep in mind, the obstacle is not in the way. The obstacle is the way. Now, this is obviously a reference to Marcus Aurelius and his meditations. And also to Ryan Holiday's book, *The Obstacle is the Way*. So many of us believe that the obstacle is the thing is in our way, preventing us from getting where we want to go. But Marcus Aurelius and the stoics had a different idea. And the idea was, the obstacle is there in your path because you need that obstacle to be able to overcome it. So that you can develop into the kind of person you need to be to continue on a journey you were put here for. That's a hard thing to take some times because maybe you've had some terrible thing happened to you. Maybe you've been hurt by another person. Maybe you've developed a disease, got a diagnosis, had a relationship breakup, had a business fall apart, whatever the obstacle might be, it's not in your way, it is the way. It is the that obstacle is the tough, hard, beat, you bloody almost kill you path you need to take so you can become the person you're potentially able to become. If you think of it that way. When you see an obstacle, your reaction will not be to groan and moan. It'll be to say, Yahoo, let's go. I'm about to get an upgrade. Let's climb that sucker.

Ray Edwards 29:40

Rule number 14, for achieving success, even in tough times. Remember, you are one decision away from changing your entire life. And again, I'll ask you to just sit with that for a moment. And I bet you could tell me if we were sitting across from one another at a table having coffee, you could probably tell me, Oh, I know what that decision is I need to decide to leave this job, move to a different city, start this new business, write this book, you know what it is. You're just one decision away from changing your entire life. If that doesn't excite you, you have you been listening? That should excite you. Because these rules, every one of them, these are not like rules of fear and safeguarding These are rules of being bold, and stepping out and doing something good in the world in a time where so many other people are not. There's a verse in the Bible in the book of Proverbs and ancient book of wisdoms, chapter 28 verse 1 says, "The wicked flee where no one pursues, us but the righteous are bold as lions." Let's be righteous, and what do I mean by righteous? Don't hurt anybody. Let's be righteous, let's be bold, let's go do good things. Let's make that one decision, overcome that obstacle, and use the rest of these rules to make your life and the lives of those around you better. That's what we're here for as entrepreneurs. That's what we're here for as humans. So be one, I encourage you to do so. I think you'll find it to be pleasant. So, looking back over our rules, I want to touch briefly on rule number one, which is, commit to mastery, the most important skill, clear persuasive communication. That's exactly what you get in the Copy Academy Monthly Membership we just opened up. Each month, we provide you pre-written copy templates with emails, even entire campaigns. Plus, we have tactical how-to marketing mini-courses, live Q&A sessions, copy critiques, and more. Check it out now at copyacademy.co. That's copyacademy.co We have a special deal going right now that you're gonna love. See you there. Until next week, I hope you have plenty of opportunity to put these rules to work. And I can't wait to hear what you have to share with us about the changes you've made in your life. Until then, just know that I love you very much and may you live long and prosper.

Announcer 32:09

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