100 Truths You Will Learn Too Late

@DellAnnaLuca
Luca-dellanna.com

This is an excerpt from the second edition
April 2020
Luca Dell’Anna © 2020 – All Rights Reserved
Introduction

RULE #001: YOU CAN CHOOSE THE GAME YOU PLAY, BUT NOT ITS RULES

Most frustration and unhappiness in your life will come from not respecting the rules of whatever “game” you’re a participant of – be it love, business, or whatever you chose to involve yourself with, knowingly or unknowingly.

Perhaps, you did not know about the existence of such rules because no one explained them to you. In this case, you might think that the world does not make sense. You might believe that people are irrational. This was the case for me when I was 14 and did not understand why some girls were so fond of the “bad boys” in my school.

Or perhaps, you knew about some of such rules but did not respect them because you did not like their implication. For example, everyone knows the two rules to lose weight: to eat healthily and to exercise. However, most do not act on them because they’re uncomfortable to practice them day after day, or they do not have the time nor the energy to do so.

People cannot live happily wishing that the world followed the rules they are comfortable with. Or, at least, they cannot do it for long. The universe will relentlessly punish those who do not follow its rules.

Paraphrasing Paulo Coelho, failures are life’s way to teach you its rules. In particular, those you do not want to learn.
IN THIS BOOK,

You will find 100 rules that apply to the most important areas of your life.

I call them rules because breaking them has consequences. In the words of bestselling author Stephen Cowey, **while we are free to choose our actions, we are not free to choose their consequences.**

Apart from the few unfortunate cases in which something bad happened to one of my close ones, **every single time in my life I felt pain, sadness, or frustration, it was because I broke one of such rules.** Pain, sadness, and frustration are signals that, because I did not know about the rules by which the world works, I got hurt.

Over the years, learning from my mistakes, I internalized these rules. Now, I live a fulfilling life of which I’m proud and for which I highly respect myself.

With this book, I entrust you with the rules I learned through experience, hoping that you might learn from them without having first to experience on your skin the consequences of breaking them.

DISCLAIMER

The content of this book consists of learnings I made based on my experience. While I genuinely think that they might help most of the readers, they are very contextual. Only you know what's best for you. Always use your common sense. None of what is written in this book is to be considered medical advice, financial advice, investment advice, or advice of any other kind. The author shall not be held liable for the consequences of the application or misapplication of the contents of this book.
Prioritizing your growth

Rules 2 to 7

The reason many people are stuck in life is that they do not find the time, space, and energy to work on improving their condition. Their mental space is too busy with commitments and urgent situations to attend. When they finally would have the time to think about themselves, their energy is depleted. They feel trapped in their condition. And often, they are.

In this chapter, I will show you how to escape from this trap and how to succeed in working on yourself, for yourself.

Before that, let’s see another reason why some people cannot change their condition: sunk costs. They invested too much of themselves into a given identity and consequently lack the incentives to change it. They might be stuck with a given identity, with a given job, with a given social circle, with a given partner.

It is never too late to change. Cling on what you have exclusively if it allows you to fulfill your needs and dreams, not if it prevents you from doing that.

You do not have to wait for the next life to reincarnate into a better existence. You can be a different self whenever you act so; your life will adjust to it.

This book will teach you how.
Rule 2

THE VERY IMPORTANT NEVER FEELS URGENT

The most common regret people have on their deathbed is to have spent their life chasing the urgent, neglecting to do what was actually important.

Family meals, drinks with friends, learning, taking care of our own health: all very important activities. And yet, often skipped to attend meetings and other urgent errands.

*Because the very important does not have a deadline,* we have the impression that we can delay it for a few days. This is a huge mistake. Delaying something once opens the door to delaying it forever.

If you think about it, the very important never feels urgent. Instead, *most things which feel urgent are important for someone else, not for you.*

Why do people acknowledge the very important only on their deathbed? Because, finally, facing death, the very important has a deadline. On the verge of leaving this world, the very important becomes urgent.

You do not have to wait for your life to be nearing its end. Make the very important urgent, now. *Incorporate it within your schedule.* Treat your family time, friends time, learning time, meditation time, and workout time as if they were meetings with clients. Give them slots in your calendar and be inflexible about them. After all, your schedule is where your real priorities show up.

Soon, you will respect yourself more for having done what is important. That will be the engine that will give you the motivation and energy to persist.
Rule 3

PROBLEMS GROW THE SIZE NEEDED FOR YOU TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEM

Jack Kent tells us the story of a little boy, Billy, who, one day, in his bedroom, finds a dragon the size of a cat. Billy’s mother ignores it, because there is no such thing as a dragon. Day after day, the dragon keeps growing, ignored. One day, it grows so much that, with its size, it wrecks Billy’s house. Faced with a destroyed home, Billy’s mother acknowledges the dragon. Finally, it starts shrinking. At the end of the story, Billy’s mother asks: “Why did the dragon grow so big?” Billy answers: “I’m not sure, but I think it just wanted to be noticed.”

Problems grow the size they need for them to be acknowledged.

There are many reasons for which problems appear. However, there is a single one for which they grow: if they are ignored.

Acknowledging a problem is the first step towards solving it and regaining mental peace. By acknowledging a problem and its consequences, the risks of letting it grow become clear and, therefore, urgent. You will be compelled to act immediately.

By ignoring a problem, instead, you deprive yourself of the very fuel you need to act.

The simple act of taking a pen and writing down the list of problems that are affecting you and the ways they are negatively impacting your life will often be all you need. If this is too much, choose a single problem and write about that one only. But write about it. Simply thinking about it will not be enough. Your unconscious mind needs material proof that you acknowledged the problem and its consequences.
ACTION:

Do it right now. Put down the book, take a pen, and write. What problems are you facing? How will your life be affected if you do not address them immediately?

You do not need to write about how you will solve the problem. You just need to write about the problem itself. The goal of this exercise is not to find out how to solve your problems, but to acknowledge them. This is the first, necessary step towards regaining control of your life and transforming it the way you want it to be.
Rule 4

PROBLEMS ARE NOT SOLVED BY ADDRESSING THEIR SYMPTOMS, BUT BY ADDRESSING THEIR ROOT CAUSE

If you look closely at some friend, relative or colleague of yours who has been stuck with the same problem for months, the chances are that he has been focusing his efforts on relieving the symptoms of his problems, rather than on solving their root causes.

A man in a sinking ship has a problem: water in the boat. Taking a bucket and throwing the water overboard will not improve his situation, at least not until he solves the source of that problem: the hole in the ship. Unless he fixes the hole first, the water he throws away will be replaced by a new one coming in from it.

Similarly, solving a problem without solving its root cause will only improve your situation temporarily. Until the root cause of problems is solved, it will keep throwing problems at you. Temporary relief never takes permanently away the feeling of being overwhelmed.

Solving a problem without solving its root cause is like taking a step forward and then one back. Many enjoy the dance, but then complain it doesn’t bring them anywhere. Don’t be like them.

Solving the root causes of your problems might not feel urgent but is the only way forward.

Fact: you will have to face problems all your life.

Also a fact: you have some decision power in whether they will be the same over and over.
ACTION:

Think about a recurring problem of yours. What have you done so far to solve it? Would repeating such actions prevent any further occurrence of such a problem? If not, you need to stop doing what you are currently doing to face that problem and do something else.

Write down, NOW, what you will do to ensure that the problem will never show up again.

If taking action on what you wrote down would take less than half an hour, do it immediately. Put this book down and do it. Otherwise, schedule a time slot in your calendar in which you will take action. Take your calendar now, and schedule the action.
Rule 5

SOLVING THE ROOT CAUSES OF YOUR PROBLEMS DOES NOT COST TIME; IT GIVES YOU TIME

In the previous rule, we saw how the problems you face are generated by root causes. For example, you might suffer from chronic back pain due to a sedentary lifestyle. Or you might suffer from stress and late nights at work because you’re not good at prioritizing (including saying “no” to your boss & colleagues).

The reason most people prefer to address the symptoms of a problem rather than its root cause is that the former is generally faster and easier than the latter. We trick ourselves into believing that if today we solve the symptoms of a problem at hand, perhaps, perhaps, tomorrow its root cause will stop throwing problems at us. Therefore, it seems rational to try the fastest and easiest way.

It isn’t. Never. Side-stepping the root cause of a problem is not a shortcut. It’s a detour. It’s not how we save time. It’s how we lose time.

Addressing a symptom of a problem might only take 1 minute whereas solving its root cause might require 1 hour, but if you face the same problem daily, it will have stolen 6 hours of your life in one year. Much better to roll your sleeves up and to solve the root cause directly, ignoring the seemingly urgent problem at hand.

Solving the root cause of problems is always more urgent than solving any problem it produced. Addressing the root cause of problems never costs time; it always gives time.

Remember: feeling stuck in life is a signal that you’re avoiding acknowledging and addressing the root cause of your problems.

1. A much better approach than saying “no” to your boss’ requests is to reply with “ok boss, I can do that, but I will have to postpone something else. What of the tasks on my plate should be delayed?” Not only it is a more constructive approach than refusing a new task, but it also has the added benefit of letting your boss know all the things you are doing, of which he might only be partially aware.
**ACTION:**

Pick a problem that you are facing at least on a weekly basis and which is preventing you from doing other activities (for example, by taking time away from them, or by fatiguing you so much that you do not have energy left). What is its root cause? To find out, keep asking yourself, "If I solve this, could the problem resurface, nevertheless? Why?" until you find a cause for which the answer is no. Then, *write* down what you will do to solve it.

For example: while checking my email, I used to lose a few seconds every day going over all the promotions and deals and other spam. The root cause: every time I received one such email, I would archive it (one click) instead of unsubscribing from it (two clicks). Last year, I decided to meticulously unsubscribe from all email lists I did not expressly want to be a part of. The benefit: my inbox is now one third the size it used to be. I am now much more motivated to read its contents and take action on the emails that actually require it.
**Rule 7**

**DO YOUR ACTIVITIES MAKE YOUR LIFE BETTER?**

*American History X* is one of my favorite movies. Academy Award nominee Edward Norton plays the role of a young adult who spent years in gangs, professing toxic political beliefs together with toxic acquaintances. A turning point in the movie, in which the main character begins to consider setting his life straight, is when his history teacher from high school asks him: “Did [any of those things] make your life better?”

In our life, we often engage ourselves in activities which are not good for us, especially if done in high volume. Some examples: drinking, frequenting friends who are still fleeing from responsibilities even after their 20s, watching TV or playing videogames till 2 am on a weekday, complaining...

The key question is: **did any of these make your life better?**

If not, it is time to stop it.

**It is the landmark of addiction to repeat something bad for us,** even after we know it is bad for us. Don’t behave like an addict.

**ACTION:**

What activity of yours do you regularly engage with even if it does not make your life better?

Any chance you can substitute it with something more likely to improve your life?

Do not focus on stopping the former. Focus on substituting it with the latter.

**BONUS:** Which emotions do you regularly engage with even though they make your life worse? Is there any activity you are undertaking to actively summon them? (e.g., looking at your ex’s social media feed?)
MOST MISTAKES ARE FORMS OF CLINGING TO THE PAST

Because our ego investments are determined by our experiences, they are a form of clinging to the past.

I’m not saying that aiming to become our past is necessarily bad, but by examining myself and my story, I noticed the following. Every single mistake I ever made was a form of clinging to the past.

Clinging:

• To who I was
• To what I was doing
• To what I knew how to do
• To whom I knew how to be
• To what made me feel good
• To what made me feel safe

You do not have to be your past. You can be someone else, without anyone having to give you permission to do so.

Authorization to change is mostly an illusion. Most changes that last are bottom-up, initiated without someone else’s consent – in those cases, the consent is usually formalized after the change takes place.

Give yourself permission to change.

Yoga teacher Heeki Park uses to conclude her lessons reminding her students that, as they leave the room, they don’t have to be the same person they were when they entered it.

**ACTION:**

What would you do if you weren’t obligated to be who you’ve been until today?
CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter was about prioritizing your personal growth.

This is vital for your success and your happiness because, as you will eventually learn through experience, all long-lasting changes to your personal life will take place indirectly.

You will not attract a great partner with a bold approach and some well-chosen words. You will attract him or her by having worked on yourself so that you become a partner of value, able to attract others.

You will not get a great job by acing a job interview or by asking a favor to the right person. You will get a great job by having worked on yourself so that you become a professional worth being employed by great companies or great individuals.

You have to shape yourself, so that your world shapes upon yourself in a way you like.

ACTION:

Look for an area in your life in which you feel some frustration and ask yourself: what is it that the world keeps shouting at you, and yet you’re ignoring?

Which implicit rule about how the world works are you failing to acknowledge?

Which implicit rule do you wish were different?

Failing to acknowledge the implicit rules of this world will always be your largest obstacle.

END OF THE EXCERPT

You can purchase the full book at gum.co/100Truths or at amzn.to/32pbumP
About the Author

An automotive engineer by training, after having led large teams and consulted for large multinationals, Luca quit his corporate job to become an independent researcher and author and dedicate his career to shedding light on the topic of emerging behavior. Luca believes that this topic is essential for preventing human suffering, especially as the scale of our civilization keeps increasing.

After having lived in Spain, Germany and Singapore, Luca recently moved back to his hometown of Turin (Italy). He spends his days between consulting, teaching, and conducting his independent research from his home, a coffee bar, or a park.

A few days a month, Luca also consults corporations and individuals that want to improve their businesses. Once per year, he teaches a Risk Management module at Genoa University, and a few times a year, he holds private intensive courses for entrepreneurs, operations managers, plant managers, and CEOs / COOs.

In the next pages, you can read a brief overview of Luca’s other books.

Luca writes regularly on Twitter (@DellAnnaLuca). You can visit his professional website and blog at www.luca-dellanna.com. You can also contact him at Luca@luca-dellanna.com.

You can show your support to Luca by recommending this book to your friends or colleagues, in case you appreciated its contents, by leaving a review on Amazon / Gumroad / Goodreads, or by contributing to his cause on Patreon (patreon.com/dellannaluca).
Other books
by Luca Dellanna

Luca’s books can be ordered on gumroad.com/dellannaluca or on amazon.com

THE CONTROL HEURISTIC, 2ND EDITION

“A SUPERB book [...] by one of the profound thinkers in our field [behavioral economics].” – Michal G. Bartlett

“This book is like a magnificent suspension bridge, linking the science of the human brain to the practical craft of applying it in everyday life. I loved it.” – Rory Sutherland, Ogilvy's Vice Chairman
“Luca’s book was so helpful to my work. Opened my eyes up to some more reasons why change is so hard.” – Chris Murman on the first edition

At a first look, human behavior appears as an inexplicable mess. Why do we behave irrationally? Why do I behave irrationally? Why is it so hard to change? What is happiness and why does it seem to escape us?

The brain can only be understood as a distributed entity. The key to understand it is in looking at how the different brain regions interact between each other, how misunderstandings become illusions, how selfish interests become irrational behaviors.

The Control Heuristic offers a new perspective to answer these questions and provides a guiding light to shed the darkness of the subconscious resistances that prevent us to behave like the man or woman we want to be.
REVIEWS OF LUCA’S PREVIOUS BOOKS

“I am amazed at Luca Dellanna’s ability to observe, compile, and articulate 99 very actionable life principles here. Each chapter describes the rule in a way that makes you think and then summarizes the Action. It’s filled with DEEP insights yet VERY readable.”
– Theresia Tanzil

“Absolutely brilliant. You might have grasped some of these concepts before but having them structured and in writing makes all the difference [...] I will surely recommend it to friends and co-workers.”
– Alberto Pisanello

“A very thoughtful piece of writing, deep and wiring!”
– David Krejca

“Luca Dellanna’s new book “100 Truths” is super tight! [...] Practical, directional advice.”
– Hari Meyyappan

“100 Truths has been a game changer.”
– Adam English

“A thoughtfully written book in very straightforward language.”
– A.L. Peevey
“Thank you for helping me understand! My son was recently diagnosed and I needed to be able to understand how he views the world. Why certain things would overwhelm him and cause so much anxiety and pain. This book made it so clear and easy to understand.”
– Geiger T.

“Thanks to Luca Dellanna for his book about autism and ASD. It’s probably one of the best works I have read in that matter (I have read a few) and it’s surprising how realistically he depicts the condition.”
– Manel Vilar

"Loved The World Through a Magnifying Glass – this analogy NAILS IT."
– Emerson Spartz, NYT Bestseller Author
This book is for parents, friends, or anyone related to someone with Autism. This is for neurologists and psychologists to help them understand the world of ASD. This book is for people on the Spectrum, to help them understand themselves.

Some of the topics covered inside:

- The Magnifying Glass: a metaphor to understand perception under the Spectrum
- Why people on the Spectrum are impaired in contextual fields (such as personal communication) and advantaged in mastering detailed fields (such as computer science).
- Peripheral Functionality Blindness: the reason people on the Spectrum do not develop appropriate body language and facial expressivity.
- Prioritization by Specificity: the reason literal meaning is the only thing which matters, for people on the Spectrum.
- The High-Pass filter: a novel hypothesis for the Autism Spectrum Disorder, coherent with previous theories and experimental results.

(Reading time is about 1h30)
THE POWER OF ADAPTATION

“This guy! Luca is amazing. So insightful with common sense applications of complexity and the ability to communicate clearly!!” – Bob Klapetzky

This book is for you if:

- You like books dense of information, such as Taleb’s Antifragile.
- You understand or are willing to accept that the world is dynamic, and that understanding how something changes is more important than understanding how something works now.
- You do not like usual business / self-help books that provide solutions that only work in the short-term.

"The Power of Adaptation" focuses on the topic of adaptation as the main force shaping the world as we know it. However, adaptation is an emergent process and thus cannot be understood with narratives, nor can it be acted upon directly. This book aims to describe the basic phenomena which weave together into what we perceive as adaptation and to provide a guide to help the readers practicing the four behaviors that will help them harness, rather than fight, change.
BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

A book on Operations Management for CEOs, COOs, and Operations Managers.

Written by an author who understands complex systems and how to design antifragile operations.

Inside:

- The Four Principles of Operational Excellence.
- How to roll-out and sustain a change initiative.