
Even though this is the first page you are reading, I will confess to you that it is the last thing I am writing as I put this book together. I really couldn’t have done this introduction justice until the book was finished, because the writing of it has affected me in a meaningful way. To be candid, I usually feel tired and beat up after writing a book, but I don’t now. I feel energized and razor sharp about the subject matter. To say that I’m proud of this book would be an understatement. It has been written from a place of passion, determination, and concern. Given my profession and what I have dealt with every day for 35 years, I can unequivocally say I have seen the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of life. It’s in that “seeing” that I have gained what has, at times, been a painful wisdom that I seek to share in the following pages.

In this book, I intend to help you understand how the world really works and who you really are as you go about dealing with this real world. I don’t even want you to change who you are so much as I want to add to who you are—unless, of course, you are one of the people I am describing in Chapters 1, 2, and 3! I say that because in the first three chapters, you’re going to read about the people in your life who would just as soon cheat, exploit, and betray you as they would look at you. When you are done with that part of the book, those people will never be able to sneak up and “blindside” you ever again. Then, we shift gears in a big way, and you’re going to read about yourself and get an insider’s knowledge-based “Life Code” playbook on how to power up and win, and I mean win big, in your life, regardless of your encounters along the way with any of the “jerks” from the first part.

I want to share every part of the process with you because there’s a lot of value in how I developed these “New Rules.” When I decided to write about those people in this world who you wish would have never darkened your doorway, I started with my own personal life and experiences. I sat down at my desk at home on a Sunday afternoon and made a list of the people throughout the span of my life who, in my opinion, have sought to hurt me, betray me, and take advantage of me and those I love. Unfortunately, I had a pretty substantial list that spanned all the way from my childhood until this past Christmas! I was so consumed with the process that I forgot to eat, and for me, that is a serious omission!

Here is how I actually went about getting focused. I created a sheet on every single one of these jerks. (Some took several sheets to really capture the “essence” of who they were and what they had done or tried to do! I’m sure some of yours will too.) At the top, I described the scenario wherein they tried to jerk me around. Then, I did kind of an “autopsy” on what had happened in pretty good detail. I identified and listed what they had said and done when they had
me in their sights. Hindsight truly is 20/20, so it was not hard to see. As I said, I had a whole set of lists, and I actually put them up on the office wall so I could pace back and forth as I looked for, studied, and added to commonalities. I even color-coded certain things with my little granddaughter Avery’s highlighters so I could see whether certain tactics, certain underhanded dealings, recurred from situation to situation.

Boy, oh boy, was I shocked! The similarities between people who had sought to exploit me in different ways, at different times in my life, were huge. I mean, it was incredible how consistent some of these behaviors and patterns were when compared side-by-side. Remember, I’m talking about people who, in most cases, didn’t even know each other. It wasn’t as if they had gotten together and attended the same “how to screw people over” class. But somehow or another, they all seem to have similar traits, characteristics, and tactics. This may seem intuitively obvious, but trust me—it wasn’t, at least not at first. I didn’t just list generalities, like they lied through their teeth. I deconstructed their ploys and tied early behaviors (such as “grooming”) to later acts, and so on. I also looked at who they were, not just what they did.

As I peeled back the layers, I discovered that what these types of people do can be identified and described in a definable, observable fashion and put on a finite list. I could not believe, when I looked at what they had in common, how amazingly similar these jerks are in the ways that they use and abuse people. It jumped out at me like a neon sign, blinking in my face. I stood there thinking, “Are you kidding me? How could I be in this profession this long, get this old, and not have figured out and articulated this before now?” I was livid with myself.

Next, I started scrubbing the literature. I wanted to know whether anybody else had ever tried to figure this out and put it all together in one place. I went to bookstores, Amazon.com, the psychological/psychiatric literature, and the sociological literature. I scrubbed the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) that lists all the different mental illnesses and syndromes along with detailed traits and characteristics. It is great for what it is, but it distinguishes differences rather than commonalities. In short, I came up with zip. Zero.

Maybe authors and researchers were thinking that such an endeavor was too negative, unwieldy, or just indescribable. But come on! We have a world infected with a fungus of certain human beings whose primary purpose in life is to get up every day and take advantage of others, and who these people are, and how they do what they do, is knowable. It’s knowable! And if it’s knowable, then it should be avoidable. We can at least take away the element of surprise.

So, later in this book, I’m going to tell you about what I call the “Evil Eight”—the eight identifying characteristics that are dead giveaways when you see these people coming down the pike. If you’re like me, when I first saw this information put together in plain language, all in one place, you may hit yourself in the forehead with the heel of your hand and say, “It’s so obvious now! Man, oh man, if I had known then what I know now, some things in my life would have been a whole lot different.” Well, you’re about to know, and things are going to be different.

But, I didn’t stop there. I did exactly the same process with regard to the good guys. I was on a roll now! I listed those people in my life whom I admire and look up to and have enough intimate knowledge about to really know how they do what they do. These are people whom I have
seen succeed, overcome, conquer, and contribute to this world. At the risk of sounding egotistical, I even included myself on that list, because I am proud of my family and my career and my spiritual life. I’ve been happily married almost 40 years with two great and thriving sons, so I figured, hey, take a look back! At the top of the sheet, I wrote down why I was including a particular person. Their successes spanned business, family and spiritual leadership, and athletics. I included successful people from all walks of life, males and females, young and old, rich and poor; but every single one of them was, at least in my view, a winner in some significant way.

Then, I started making the list of their traits, characteristics, and behaviors just as before. What is it that this person does that has contributed to their success? Education? Intelligence? Commitment? Passion? Social skills? Risk-taking? Analytical skills? Was it their strategy of problem solving or maybe their negotiating skills, philosophy, or coping skills? I put these up on a different wall in the same room. (I was driving Robin crazy!) Again, I started going through and color-coding to see whether there were similarities or whether these were a bunch of unique people who shared little or nothing with others who were also successful. Again, I was shocked! Even though these people came from different walks of life and might never have even heard of each other, the commonalities were incredible. There were differences, certainly, but more importantly, the core list of traits and characteristics, strategies, and styles shared by all of these people was overwhelmingly clear. Success doesn’t happen by accident; people don’t just get “lucky.” Success is created, and, just as importantly, once obtained, it must be managed and protected. I didn’t see a single success story in which the person at the center, the hero, the victor, didn’t come under some attack at some point. You’ve heard the saying “It’s lonely at the top,” and it’s true.

To say I was excited is a huge understatement. All of these people’s formula for success, just as with the bad guys mentioned earlier, was knowable. It was definable and observable and could be put on a finite list. And, believe me when I tell you, this was not a commonsense list. This was not a list that you would easily come up with if you sat down to speculate about what was at the core of their successes. But the good news is, even if not commonsensically obvious, success leaves footprints. You can track success and figure out what is at its core. So, I did the same thing that I did with the other list. I went to the bookstore, I scrubbed Amazon.com, and I got into the psychological, psychiatric, and sociological literature to see whether anyone had done what I was doing. I found a lot of “rah-rah” motivational-type books, tapes, and programs (some pretty good ones, actually, as far as they went), but I did not find one example of anybody talking about how to win in the real world and how to protect that success once you have it. They talked about things like vision and purpose, but nobody talked about how the world really works and how sometimes you have to invent a way and fight the battles.

Now maybe, just maybe, I live in a completely different world than they do, but in my world, cheaters do sometimes win, the early bird doesn’t always get the worm, and doing unto others as you wish they would do unto you doesn’t always get you what you want, need, or deserve. It makes good copy, it’s a good story to tell, and it’s how we all wish the world was, but it is not the world I live in, and I’m telling you it’s not the world you live in. To win in the real world, these people I studied became “street smart” and didn’t take any “wooden nickels.” They didn’t sell out their integrity, they didn’t settle for what they didn’t want, and they played to win.
I have written seven other books and am proud of every one of them. As I said, writing a book is a lot of work. If you’re really going to do it right, it takes a lot of time and effort and a really dedicated team. I don’t know how other authors do it, but, with me, sometimes a chapter will go through 20 or 25 drafts before being locked, and that’s after what might be months of research. Because of that reality, I hadn’t been at all sure that I wanted to write another book right now—that is, until I started covering my office walls with all of this information. Once I did that, I became a rabid man on a mission, and this book started to write itself. Robin would come in and say, “Why aren’t you complaining about all the work and time this is absorbing?” I said, “Sit down and let me tell you about this book.” About ten minutes later, she laughed and said, “Calm down, I get it! I get it.”

So, maybe I’ve told you more than you want to know about where this book came from and how I went about putting it together. But I just thought I would “pull back the curtain” and let you see behind the scenes of everything that led up to what you are about to read. I’m excited about writing it, and I’m excited for you that you are about to read it. Like I said, I’m going to tell you about the “Evil Eight” identifying characteristics of the bad guys, and then I’m going to tell you about what I call the “Nefarious 15” tactics that these people use to get to you and me and everybody else they target. I’m going to show you their secret “playbook;” I’m going to show you exactly, precisely how they do what they do. That knowledge is going to be amazingly empowering to you. And then, we’re going to stop talking about the bad guys and start talking about you, and I’m going to give you what I call the “Sweet 16”—the 16 things that the successful people who I have studied consistently do to win. And these “Sweet 16” things are things you can do, too. I don’t want to change who you are; I want to add to who you are and to what you know.

If up until this point you’ve been doing everything “by the book” but your life still isn’t where you want it, you’ve been reading the wrong book. It’s time to read the right one.

Here we go.