

THE RULES OF LIVING WELL

Richard Templar, 2023, Pearson: London, Pp. 253,
ISBN: 978-1-292-43564-0

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The Rules Of Living Well

The book's title contains two concepts that need outlining. The idea of 'living well' seems a sensible and logical approach to life. But what does 'well' mean here? It means balancing our physical, emotional, and mental needs and wants to achieve contentment. If we can access enough resources and engage in practices that enhance well-being, 'living well' might lead to moments of happiness and satisfaction with the Self, family, social life, and retirement. In turn, this might give us the resilience to face life's inevitable challenges.

In contrast, the idea of 'rules' is more challenging for those who value freedom and liberty. Prescribed rules for this or that action or behaviour restrict. In this context, a 'rule' is defined as: *'an accepted principle or instruction that states the way things are or should be done, and tells you what you are allowed or are not allowed to do'*.²

In religious traditions, living well and rules combine to provide a road map to contentment. Can this apply to a book that includes all religions, spiritual views, humanists, agnostics, and atheists? Richard Templar's book *The Rules of Living Well* explores this question, drawing on his lifetime of observations and reflections. He presents 100 rules as 'guidelines' for achieving good physical and mental health, highlighting those that emotionally healthy people follow. Templar is a British author, born Richard Craze (d. 2006).

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² 'Rules', *Cambridge Dictionary* online, Available: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/rule?q=rules> (accessed 18 Feb 2026).

Templar says: *'These are not practical tips ...These are guiding principles you can apply to any and every situation. They require you to look inside yourself and understand how you work, how you think, how you feel'* (xiv). His guiding principles emphasise balance, resilience, confidence-building, and, in particular, contentment.

What has been the public response to Templar's book? Critical reviews of the book on Goodreads.com and Amazon Books argue that Templar is really talking about 'common sense'³ matters and that his guiding principles are ones most people acquire as they learn about life (for instance, as they interact in the workplace or during adulthood). Those critical of his book argue that its weakness is Templar's obvious statements. These are fair critical points. Perhaps keeping a diary of lived experiences and observations from a young age onwards, along with daily conversations with more knowledgeable and (supposedly) 'wiser' people, and reflecting on oneself, both positively and negatively, might make Templar's book unnecessary. With a critical eye, it could be suggested that the book's title should have been *The Common Sense Rules of Living Well*? In the UK, 'common sense' is often invoked by conservatives and right-wingers as an answer to liberal and left-wing progressive thinking.

Despite criticism, the book's target audience is the self-care and self-development markets. Especially individuals who, for whatever reason, are wrapped up in the complexities of everyday life and fail to notice or learn from what happens around them. So, adults might save time, energy, and money if they had such a book to assist them along their life path. Teenagers and young adults might find the book insightful, as it lets them dip into the content as required. Indeed, why not give younger people the information and 'wisdom' about life early on? A counterargument might suggest that individuals must learn each rule through everyday lessons and that we learn best from our mistakes.

The strength of Templar's work is his concise delivery. He presents each 'rule' over two pages and distils each 'rule' to its core. In addition, the author,

³ 'Common sense', *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, 'sound and prudent judgment based on a simple perception of the situation or facts', Available: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/common%20sense> (accessed 6th March 2026).

in collating the ‘rules’, has spent many years reflecting upon how best to live well and has arranged the book to present his findings to a wider readership.

The book contains 11 chapters and 100 ‘rules’ (chapter headings are: *Balance, Confidence, Resilience, Exercise, Relaxation, Food, Learning, Parenthood, Work, Retirement, and Challenge*). The 2023 version contains a twelfth chapter summarising 10 more ‘rules’ about adopting a basic spiritual or value-based consciousness (‘The Rules of Spirituality’). Chapter One addresses the need for balance in all aspects of life (at school, university, growing up, at work, parenthood, and retirement) and the need to avoid over-focusing on one area. This sounds simple enough to understand, but it’s easy to slip into patterns of thought and behaviour that may not necessarily be the best for our long-term contentment. The rules in Chapter One explore the problem of excessive introspection at the expense of what is going on around oneself; (2) the need to look outward as well as inward. (3) Advice about not comparing oneself with others, as each individual is unique and equally valid. (4) He suggests not getting distracted by short-term fixes; instead, take on the feelings that are deep-rooted and important. (5) Templar mentions discovering and working with your unique biological rhythms and energy cycles. (6) Other points highlight listening to people, (7) and the need to contemplate social balancing acts. Are we overemphasising one area over something that would improve your life in the longer term, or that we would learn from? (8) The author explains that ‘serious planning’ today can make dreams come true sooner rather than later. (9) Finally, he says, while balancing life’s demands, consider with equal measure the past, the present and the future.

Templar’s words are simple yet meaningful, offering readers scope for personal growth. For workplace teams: *‘All you have to do is to be kind, polite, say please and thank you, smile’* (p. 187). In the case of ageing and maturity: *‘Wisdom isn’t about not making mistakes but learning to escape afterwards with our dignity and sanity intact’* (p. 251), helping readers to learn through mistakes.

Lastly, Templar’s book would be suitable for any public, college or workplace library. The author aims to help people understand the complexity of modernity (which is increasingly so with new technology, ‘forever wars’, and artificial intelligence); Templar offers a pathway through the chaos and misunderstandings of life and individuals’ ineffective socialisation

experiences, with the intention of giving people meaning and purpose. Templar's values are fair and reasonable, and his book reaches out to all social and cultural communities equally, offering individuals his structured, thoughtful approach to living and message of hope.

Source:

Richard Templar, *The Rules Of Living Well*, Pearson: London, (2023).

Review's word total: 1,015 words.

Sevket Akyildiz wrote this book review without plagiarism. February 2026.

The written component of my book review was produced without the use of AI.

Ethical Statement: No ethical issues to report.

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Harvard reference style: Sevket Akyildiz. (2023) Richard Templar, *The Rules Of Living Well*, Pearson: London, [Preprint]. Available:

