

PERSONAL RULES OF EMOTIONAL PROCEDURE

The Florida Supreme Court updates Rules of Procedure to stay current with changing times. One such change, effective January 1, 2019, amended court procedural rules for service via email to remove the five extra days allowed for service by regular U.S. mail.¹ Since email service is nearly instantaneous, it made sense to update the rules and remove the five extra days.

The change got me thinking about whether it was time to update my Personal Rules of Procedure, specifically the rules that apply to emotions. What about you? When was the last time you revised *your* Personal Rules of Emotional Procedure? Wait...you didn't know you had rules that guide your emotions? You sure do. And those rules dictate how you view yourself, how you see the world, and how you interact with other people.

Have you ever said to someone, or had someone say to you, "If you loved me, you wouldn't do A, B, or C?" In this example, the A, B, and C are rules for feeling loved. If your rules are followed, you'll feel loved. But if someone breaks your rules, ouch!

And like the Supreme Court giving you the rules for practicing law, someone gave you the rules for experiencing emotions. Your rules came from the people you most respected during your childhood. The messages you received from your parents, siblings, teachers, friends, and even television shows and movies, shaped your beliefs and formed your rules. You picked up little pieces along the way, kept the ones you liked and discarded the ones you didn't like. That left you with a set of rules that help you determine whether something is "good" or "bad."

You then live your life according to the rules you adopted decades ago. Having rules is not a bad thing, the challenge is when the rules become unreasonable or outdated and start causing more pain than pleasure. That's when you need to reevaluate and update your rules.

I played baseball in High School and my coach had a rule about when you had to arrive for practices and games: 5 minutes early was on time, on time was late, and late was benched. After living by that rule for four years and getting "good" results I adopted the rule as my own.

The rule worked well for years, as long as people were on time. If you followed the rules and were on time, I was happy. If you broke the rules and were late, I got angry. Then I got married and quickly learned that my then wife had a different set of rules around being on time. My rule was now causing me a lot more pain than pleasure, so I updated the rule.

Over the years I've updated my rules for most emotions. My new rules make it easy to feel healthy, happy, loved, grateful, and other pleasurable emotions, and hard to feel angry, disappointed, depressed, jealous, and other painful emotions.

Here's my rule for feeling grateful: *Anytime I wake up and I'm above ground or breathe or have food to eat or a roof over my head or a car to drive or clean clothes to wear or I can move my body, or see, hear, feel, taste, or speak.* And here's my rule for feeling angry: *Only if I were to*

¹ The court acted in *In re: Amendments to the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, the Florida Rules of Criminal Procedure, and the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure – Electronic Service*, Case No. SC17-882.

consistently show inappropriate anger instead of realizing that everyone has different rules and they are not doing things to me – they are just living by their own rules.

What about you? Are your rules helping or hurting you? Take an objective look and update the rules that no longer serve you. If the Florida Supreme Court can update the rules, so can you.

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