

10 Rules for Finding Your True Path in Life

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What does it mean to win in life? Does it mean starting out with a grand vision of what your life should be and then achieving all of the steppingstone goals that make that vision a reality? Many self-help books would have you believe that, but what do you do when you don't have a grand vision of what your life should be? Rudy didn't. I'm talking about the real-life Rudy—Daniel “Rudy” Ruettiger, Jr.—whose early life served as the basis for the movie Rudy. Rudy as a young man wanted to attend the University of Notre Dame and play varsity football there, period. He had no clue about what he was going to do with his life afterwards. Is there something wrong with that? Do you really need to start out knowing everything about your true path in life in order to win by eventually living the life you were meant to? Absolutely not, which brings us to our first rule:

1. Don't be surprised if your sense of a life path isn't quick to reveal itself, and don't lose faith in yourself when that happens; trust that everything will start making sense eventually. In the meantime, resist succumbing to pressures to make a premature decision.

Because of the difficulty of living this sort of life, I thought that I would begin with a success story, a story of how someone burdened by a serious pathogenic belief and bad relationships and no long-term vision whatsoever struggled for years until he finally arrived at the life he was meant to live. I am speaking about the real-life Rudy. To discuss his early life in detail, I need to go beyond the movie to include information Rudy provided in his book, *Rudy's Insights for Winning in Life*, and on his Web site at <http://www.rudyintl.com/truestory1.cfm>. My aim will be to show how Rudy accomplished it, so that you can do the same thing easier and possibly quicker.

The movie begins with Rudy as a young boy who is too small to compete with his older brothers at football yet who announces to his family that he will one day play football at University of Notre Dame, while the family is gathered around a TV set watching a Notre Dame football game. Visually the movie makes the connection between Rudy's statement and his father's love of Notre Dame football. The next time we see Rudy, he is in high school, playing on the football team. All of this makes for a tightly scripted movie, but it does so at the expense of details that are important to our story.

In the first place, Rudy didn't have any older brothers. He was the oldest son and the third oldest in a family of seven boys and seven girls. Whatever early interest he had in football paled in comparison to his interest in baseball. Rudy played Little League and Pony League baseball, and he was good at it despite his so-so size and slow speed. He was in fact something of a star, mainly because he outthrustled everyone else, much to the delight of his coaches.

Rudy's early dream was to be like Mickey Mantle. He didn't hope one of the local professional teams, the Chicago Cubs or White Sox, would discover him because they were not special. In his mind, the New York Yankees were special, the same way the

University of Notre Dame was special in football. They were both recognized winners, and that's what he wanted to be. Rudy says that at some deep down gut level, he always thought he was a winner. "I just didn't know how to bring it out." Rudy also had an interest in public speaking at about this time, which didn't fit with anything else he was interested in and which didn't seem at the time to point to any particular life path.

Rudy saw athleticism as a way of avoiding the "lunch bucket" life of a factory worker that seemed to be his fate as a youngster living in a lower middle class neighborhood in Joliet, Illinois. Like many kids from poor neighborhoods, Rudy saw sports as providing an escape route despite his lack of school smarts. His Pony League team seemed a shoo in to make it into the Pony League World Series. In Rudy's mind, playing in the World Series and helping the team win would make him a winner for the first time in his life. He was therefore devastated when his team dropped out of contention by losing its last regular season game. That loss killed Rudy's dream of becoming a Major League ballplayer, leaving him with no sense of direction for a time.

Rudy's main interest then switched to football, which he played in high school, as the movie shows, and it may have been here that the fantasy to play varsity football at Notre Dame began to take hold. As was true with baseball, Rudy's coaches loved him, not because of his talent, but because of his grit and determination to play the very best that he could. Rudy again outthustled everyone else, thereby becoming a role model for others on the team, as he had done when playing baseball.

The movie shows Rudy being denied a chance to visit the Notre Dame campus on a field trip with other high school students because of his poor grades. Actually Rudy did visit the campus during his senior year. The Catholic high school he attended sponsored a religious retreat at Holy Cross Seminary, which lies across St. Mary's Lake from the Notre Dame campus and is a short walk away. Before the visit, he had the notion that Notre Dame was for rich, smart kids and great athletes, not the likes of him. "But when I got there," Rudy says, "I was struck by the spirituality of the place. It seemed like home, a place of peace and faith and hope." And best of all, he saw that many of the students there were the sons and grandsons of European immigrants, just like him, and they weren't all rich or geniuses. Many were regular guys. Right then Rudy's fantasy became a full-fledged a dream, because he became able to visualize himself walking on the campus with books under his arm and a Notre Dame jacket on his back.

This encouragement came too late for him to attempt to build up his grade-point average; Rudy graduated third from the bottom in his high school class. Despite his dream, Rudy had no option but find a job in a factory of some sort. He landed a job with the Commonwealth Edison Company, the local electric power provider, which paid very well. Still not completely willing to trade a big paycheck for his dream of going to Notre Dame, he took several night courses at a local community college to see how he might do at the college level. He failed every course.

Two years went by during which Rudy did nothing to bring himself closer to going to Notre Dame. Nevertheless, he continued to annoy his family and friends with the

prediction that he would one day go there, which at times led to barroom fights with friends and acquaintances who had heard it all before and wished he would stop making his unrealistic boast. Rudy then enlisted in the Navy, served two years, and applied to Notre Dame when he got out. Upon being rejected, he went back to work at the Commonwealth Edison plant and stayed there for another two years. At this point, Fate intervened. A close friend at the plant died on the job, just about as horribly as in the movie, and Rudy decided that life is too short to delay pursuing his dream any longer. So he quit his job and traveled to Notre Dame to find out how he could possibly gain admittance. He learned that he could get into Notre Dame if he got A's and B's at nearby Holy Cross College for two years. The fall semester had already started, however, so he took a construction job for a year before starting at Holy Cross. Despite being told that he had to remain at Holy Cross for two years, Rudy applied to Notre Dame at the end of each semester and was repeatedly rejected, as the movie shows.

Rudy initially did poorly at Holy Cross until his academic adviser helped him learn how to how to study; from that point on he did well enough to gain admission to Notre Dame.

The rest of Rudy's story at Notre Dame is pretty much as it appears in the movie, except for the omission of his amateur boxing career. The movie shows everyone in the football stadium shouting "Rudy," to pressure the coach into putting Rudy in the game. This actually happened, but the movie provides no basis for it. In his senior year, Rudy's barroom brawling paid off by helping him win the Bengal Bouts amateur boxing championship at Notre Dame. Rudy's boxing championship brought him some local publicity, which included the story of his wish to play football at Notre Dame. So many people knew that it meant much to him to get into the game.

Rudy left Notre Dame with a sociology degree with neither a dream and nor a career path to pursue. So he took a job at a car dealership selling financing packages and auto insurance. After he gave a talk about his Notre Dame experiences to a Notre Dame alumni club, someone suggested that he make a movie about his life story. After mulling over the prospect, he concluded that this was a great idea, so he had a dream once again but still no clear career path. He didn't pursue getting the movie made with any notion of becoming a screenwriter or movie producer.

It took six years of struggle and the loss of two jobs and every cent he earned to convince people to get the movie written, produced, and shown. After the movie came out, Rudy was left momentarily with no dream and no career path once again. Then the phone started ringing with people wanting him to speak at their corporations and events. It was at this point that Rudy realized that his gift of gab and long-standing interest in public speaking made sense in terms of a career path. He would become a motivational speaker to help others overcome obstacles in their lives. Helping others to pursue their own dreams would become his life's work.

Rudy took a hang-back approach to finding his life path, especially at first. Until it was nearly too late, he neither challenged his pathogenic belief very much, nor did he do much about his harmful attachment relationships. About all he did was coast along,

becoming more and more miserable with each passing year until finally the death of a close friend motivated him to act. In the Rudy movie, Rudy appears to be much younger than all of the other members of the football team. Actually he was seven years older than his classmates, in part because of the slowness of his hang-back approach. There is no benefit to hanging back. Take your first step now, which is to:

2. Become aware of the pathogenic beliefs that are holding you back.

Pathogenic beliefs create inhibitions, so look for pathogenic beliefs in every aspect of your life where inhibitions prevail. One place to start looking is your social interactions. Are you inhibited in dealing with men? Are you inhibited around women? Do you feel awkward at parties? Do you feel that you don't fit in, no matter where you are? Would you rather work at a project alone than with others in a group? If you answered yes to any of these questions, one or more pathogenic beliefs are possibly responsible, which could inhibit you in reaching your dream. There is nothing in a yes answer that indicates what exactly the pathogenic beliefs might be, but yes answers are warning signals. You possibly now think of these inhibitions as inborn personality traits. They are not. While it is true that some people are naturally more outgoing than others, it doesn't follow that serious social inhibition is genetically determined.

Amazingly, a search for pathogenic beliefs in Rudy turns up nothing related to his social interactions. Rudy was very outgoing in his dealings with men. The movie shows Rudy arriving at Notre Dame at night to talk to a priest about enrolling at the school. In reality, he didn't come to talk to just any priest. He knew where Father Hessberg, the president of Notre Dame, lived, and that is who he went to see. Father Hessberg was not unapproachable, but as a student at Notre Dame at the time when Father Hessberg was president, I can tell you that people didn't just walk up to his door any time of the day or night to chat about their lives. It simply wasn't done. Rudy probably knew that, but he had the chutzpah to go anyway and met with Father Kavanaugh because Hessberg wasn't available. That he would take such a step indicates that he probably had no problem in dealing with other men on a social basis. That he also simply walked into Ara Parseghian's office out of the blue to talk about one day playing football at Notre Dame offers supporting evidence for this view. All this indicates that he had a very good relationship with his father. His father respected him and openly loved him and treated him as a friend.

We have only the movie to go by to judge Rudy's relationships with women. He is portrayed in the movie as someone who is outgoing in dealing with women, and if that is correct, he also probably had a very good and warm and loving relationship with his mother.

Although pathogenic beliefs are very often unconscious beliefs, they may be reflected in our conscious attitudes about ourselves and the world at large. These beliefs become so much a part of what we seem to be that we take them for granted. In this case, we do find a serious pathogenic belief operating in Rudy, the belief that he wasn't very bright, which he undoubtedly got from his parents. Wait a minute! Didn't I just say that he had a

wonderful attachment relationship with his parents? So how could they have been mainly responsible for his pathogenic belief?

Very often parents who were born into working class families have low expectations about themselves and then apply those low expectations to their children. For its part, a child looks to its parents for information about what it is and can be, and when all it finds are low expectations, the message that it isn't very bright gets inevitably transmitted, much as poison entering a fetus from a mother on drugs. My guess is that Rudy learned that he was a "Ruettiger," and that that meant that he was a lot like his father, who didn't get great grades in school but who was smart enough to get by and to provide for his wife and rather large family in a factory worker sort of way. If Rudy had had a bad relationship with his parents, his pathogenic belief would have been much worse. He would have come away with the message that he was much stupider than anyone else in the family and possibly in the whole world.

Rudy learned of the implications of his pathogenic belief when he got out in the world a bit, particularly as he began attending school. There it became painfully clear that he was a member of an underclass of goof-offs who were destined to stay in the neighborhood as factory workers while others in school escaped to college and much more interesting lives. Rudy rejected this assessment of himself, and this rejection probably caused him to try harder at school now and then. But seemingly no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't achieve anything better than D's and C's.

Notice that Rudy's first dream—that of becoming a ballplayer—represented a way of succeeding in life without challenging his pathogenic belief. Being discovered by a professional ball club because of his play during the Pony League World Series wouldn't have required any increase in smarts. Rudy could remain as intellectually disabled as everyone considered him to be and still escape to a better life. Notice also that Rudy's second dream—that of going to the University of Notre Dame—had an entirely different character. To go to Notre Dame, he would somehow have to find a way to prove his pathogenic belief wrong. The centerpiece of his dream had switched from evading his pathogenic belief to overcoming it.

This switch does not seem to have resulted from psychological growth. Rather, the failure of the first dream to come true seems to have led Rudy to recognize how unrealistic it actually was. With no other credible way open to him to become a success without challenging his pathogenic belief, Rudy had no choice but to either accept factory life as his lot or develop a new dream that took on his pathogenic belief. To his credit, he chose the latter, even though for many years his choice would make him seem to be as hopeless and crazy as Don Quixote.

Rudy seems to have settled on his new dream around the beginning of his high school years, but that didn't have any impact on his level of effort at school. Once again, his emphasis was on athletics—this time football, which fed the dream of one day playing football at Notre Dame. Not even the death of his close friend, Ralph, at the end of his high school years was able to motivate Rudy to actually challenge his pathogenic belief.

Rudy says that when Ralph died, he asked the eternal questions: Why this? Why now? But found “no answer.” Six years later when his friend Siskel died, Rudy would know exactly what to do, but at this point in his life, Rudy was not yet ready to combat his pathogenic belief, so no answer came to mind.

True, Rudy did take a few courses at a local community junior college at about this time, but I don’t see this as a serious attempt to challenge his pathogenic belief. What I find suspicious is the fact that he flunked every course. A freshman junior college course is not that much more difficult than a senior high school course, so I would have expected at least one D among the grades. I see his failing every course as a self-destructive attempt to bury his dream by showing himself that he wasn’t college material. This was therefore a temporary step backwards. We tend to do that sort of thing when crushed by self-doubt.

After two years of misery working at the power plant, Rudy was finally ready to take his first positive step. I’m talking about his decision to join the Navy. Joining the Navy seems to be a movement in a new direction. Hindsight, however, allows us to see it as a move that was dead on course. Rudy apparently didn’t have had any conscious plan in mind other than choosing his form of military enlistment during the Vietnam War, when he was certain that eventually he would be drafted into the Army. He says that enlisting was “like firing a shotgun up into the clouds because there might be a duck up there.”

This statement, though, does suggest the existence of a vague unconscious plan. I don’t know what Navy recruiting posters said at the time, but I would be surprised if the slogans didn’t promise recruits something akin to the “Be All That You Can Be” promise that the Army makes today. Thoroughly disheartened as to his ability to change his life on his own, Rudy opted to put himself in a situation where he would be forced to change, perhaps with regard to his pathogenic belief of being stupid. This brings us to the third rule:

3. Vigorously attack your pathogenic beliefs as if your life depended on it, because it does.

There did turn out to be a duck in those clouds when Rudy took aim as he prepared to join the Navy. That duck was his pathogenic belief that he was too stupid to get selected by the Navy and succeed there, and while he didn’t bring it down, he did seriously wound it by meeting all of the challenges the Navy set before him during his two-year enlistment. Feeling better about himself than he ever had and knowing that the G.I. Bill would help pay his tuition, Rudy applied to Notre Dame when he got out, but was rejected. So he went back to Peoria to his old job at the power plant, where he marked time for another two years.

Rudy describes this as a terrible time, as a period characterized by much anger and self-destructive behavior, particularly barroom brawling. That is not surprising. Rudy left the Navy a changed man because he had accomplished much to disconfirm the legitimacy of his pathogenic belief, yet he turned his back on everything he accomplished by going

back to the power plant. Rudy was angry mainly with himself, and for good reason, yet it took Siskel's death to bring him to his senses.

Rudy's most vigorous attack on his pathogenic belief came during the two years at Holy Cross College, and, strange as it may seem, I believe that his failing grades on all of the first tests he took there were part of that attack. I see the failing grades as a call for help born out of the recognition that he was not going to the A's and B's he needed unless something fundamental changed about his approach to studying. That call for help led to him gaining the skills he needed to succeed.

Rudy continued disconfirming his pathogenic belief throughout his Notre Dame years, yet none of this appears in the movie, probably because spending a lot of time showing someone study doesn't make for an interesting movie. Rudy says that he made it through Holy Cross and Notre Dame mainly on the strength of his constructive use of anger, which suggests that he dealt with much frustration because he kept failing to make facts and mental skills stick in his head.

You are going to fail, too. You will fail so many times that you will get used to it eventually and will even come to the point Rudy reached of becoming grateful for your failures because of the lessons in life they provide.

Why are you going to fail so much? For various reasons. Pathogenic beliefs have the effect of stunting your development, with the result that there are a lot of things that you should know now that you don't. So one reason you will fail is that you will need to quickly learn in a catch-up mode facts and skills that you should have picked up over the years as a basis for what you are trying to do now. Rudy, for example, had to learn how to study. I'm talking about learning the game of studying a course subject. The top grades don't usually go to those who know everything there is to know about a particular course subject. They typically go to those who know how to play the game of anticipating what will be asked on tests and then learning that. Reading the clues teachers provide as to what will be emphasized in a course is one of the fundamental skills Rudy had to learn.

Another reason you will fail quite a bit initially is that at times you will become so frustrated and so overwhelmed by the task at hand that you will become desperate to give up, which will reveal itself by failing even when you know what to do. When that happens, you'll ask yourself afterwards, "How could I have been so stupid!" Rudy could have passed the junior college courses he took right out of high school, but at that moment of his life, going to Notre Dame seemed out of reach, which he tried to demonstrate to himself by purposely failing, so as to temporarily remove all hope.

There are in fact many reasons for failing, and you shouldn't bother about trying to understand them all. All you need to understand is that:

4. The only real failure in life is the failure to pick yourself up and try once again.

None of us would have much trouble with failure if we were able to feel fully confident that we will eventually achieve our life goals. The main problem with failure is of course

that it strikes at that confidence, leaving us teetering between fear and doubt on the one hand and hopes and dreams on the other. So how do you deal with that situation? You could perhaps buy a self-help book or tape to bolster your self-confidence. And that might help a bit, but it won't be the whole answer.

Rudy's answer is contained in the movie but is unfortunately not emphasized. For an explicit statement of Rudy's way of handling failure, you need to go to one of his books, where he tells readers:

5. Rudy's Rule: Act as if you were absolutely certain that you will succeed.

Notice that he doesn't say you need to be absolutely certain. That would be impossible for most people. The trick is to act even when you have doubts and fears. Isn't that uncomfortable? Terribly, yes. And don't the doubts and fears skyrocket out of control when you fail? Sure, but then you remind yourself of your dreams, suck it up, and try harder. Being tough means doing exactly that.

Success in life is often a matter of trying hard enough and long enough to give yourself the chance to learn what you need to eventually succeed. Most of us have little trouble putting out the effort when the confidence is there. What Rudy is saying is that you need to keep trying every bit as hard as you would if you believed that success was near at hand. He advises you to do everything you can do for as long as it takes even when your mind harbors doubts and fears and even when you continually meet disappointment.

We all have doubts and fears on the one side and hopes and dreams on the other. Right now, you pay attention to both, but at different times. When you aren't actively trying to fulfill your life goals, you are free to live in a world of dreams. While dreaming, you pay scant attention to your doubts and fears. However, when your dreaming inspires you to actually work toward your goals, you find that your mind quickly switches to focusing on your doubts and fears, and now it is your hopes and dreams that become difficult to think about. Your problem is that your life is out of synch. Is it any wonder that you are not getting anywhere? Rudy is talking about living in a middle place, where hopes, dreams, doubts, and fears all coexist. He exhorts you to act on your hopes and dreams while actively combating your doubts and fears. Taking Rudy's road to success means getting your mind out of its comfort zone. This is essential because your mind's comfort zone is your do-nothing zone.

It is very natural for there to be doubts and fears as you move your life into new areas. Your brain is an information-processing machine that constantly looks to information stored in memory for help in doing things. So when you want to do something it has done before, it checks into its memory banks and says, oh yes, I know how to do that, and then confidently executes the task the way it successfully did it before. Its confidence is reflected in your feelings, so doing something you've done before becomes a no-brainer and you feel supremely confident while doing it.

When, however, you set out to do something you have never done before, your brain again checks its memory, but this time finds nothing helpful there. So it immediately starts sending out doubt and fear messages, which make their way to your emotions. The plain fact is that if you don't have a track record of success in memory for your mind to find, there is no amount of visualization or biofeedback or whatever that will make your mind believe that it is there. And without this track record for your brain to find, there can be no basis for an unshakable emotional high.

The situation gets even worse when pathogenic beliefs have created a track record of failure. In this case, your mind will really start pressing your fear and doubt buttons. The reason you should ignore these emotions is that they are not telling you anything you don't already know. If you are trying something new, you know that you are going to have to develop ways of succeeding out of next to nothing, and if you're trying to succeed where you once failed, you know of your failures, so your doubts and fears contain no new information. That's why it is senseless to dwell on them.

Remember that the struggle to combat your doubts and fears is temporary. As you develop a track record of success, your mind will find that record when it checks into its memory banks, then the emotions it produces will become progressively more hopeful as your track record of success lengthens. So a time will come when the confidence you so desperately want now will appear as a natural high.

Your brain actually looks around for every sort of success you had in your life in trying to manufacture hopeful emotions for you. When Rudy played baseball, he developed a track record of success by outhustling everyone else on the team. This track record of success then helped him stay confident in football, where again he applied the same technique. These early successes then fortified Rudy's self-confidence when he faced the much greater challenges of doing well in the Navy. Here again his approach of working extra-hard paid off, which helped fortify his emotions when he faced new challenges at Holy Cross and Notre Dame.

Rudy says that it wasn't self-confidence but a constructive use of anger that made for his success at Notre Dame. True, anger is the emotion he felt, but what I am saying is that the anger was born of a level of assertiveness that grew from a burgeoning self-confidence, not so much that he could feel cocky, but enough to begin overcoming his inhibitions. You should realize that if you are at the self-help stage of self-realization, you are on the bottom rung of the ladder to success, and are therefore as inhibited as you will ever be. You may be so inhibited now that you buy your self-help paraphernalia online, so you won't be seen doing it by a sales clerk. What you need to do is build your ladder to success rung by rung, as Rudy did, by using each success to inspire and provide a foundation for the next.

So how do you become more assertive? You do it the way Rudy did, by acting on your dreams, no matter what. There are no gimmicks to being a success. There's only hard work and self-discipline and mind control to continually draw your attention away from your doubts and fears. Remember, these are only telling you what you already know. So

act on your dreams and keep doubts and fears out of your mind by willing to focus on something else.

What I've just told you is what almost no self-help book will tell you, because quite frankly you don't want to believe it. So don't believe it. Stop reading this and switch to every self-help book, CD, and system that will promise you effortless and easy ways of achieving your life goals while feeling fully self-confident the whole time. Take years doing it. And when you've got all of that out of your system, come back to what you are reading now.

Or give up. People give up every day. You can, too. Giving up is so common that it's got a name. It is called "settling down." You can settle down with a lesser life. But if you do, you will have to exert mind control to keep your hopes and dreams out of your thoughts. Either that, or you will have to resort to drugs or alcohol or overwork or something else to accomplish the same thing. You cannot settle down and hold onto your dreams at the same time. So you can either exert mind control in the service of your dreams or exert it to purge your life of them. It's your choice. But just remember: You have only one life, and with each passing day, you have a little less left. What you do with what remains depends on your commitment today. Demonstrating that commitment is fairly straightforward. You simply need to:

6. Act as if you were who you want to be until you are.

If you would feel phony doing that, it's probably a sign of problems with your attachment relationships. Some of our attachment relationships are involuntary, such as those we have with our parents and brothers and sisters. In other cases, we unconsciously choose those with whom we will have attachment relationships. Included in this list are our close friends, mentors, and role models. When we have attachment relationships with these people, we establish a connection between their lives and ours. The effect of these connections is to make us tend to comply with them. This compliance isn't limited just to our opinions, goals, and thoughts, but to our emotions, too.

This means that when someone with whom we have an attachment relationship values our efforts at living a better life and encourages us to keep trying, we will automatically respond emotionally by feeling better about what we are doing and by feeling more confident, too. Encouragement from those we have attachment relationships counteracts our doubts and fears by enabling us to replace our own doubt-ridden vision of eventual success with their confident perspective. By the same token, if someone with whom we have an attachment relationship were to think that our effort to live a better life was stupid and that it had no chance of success, that negativity would tug on us, too, causing us to devalue our efforts and approach them with diminished hope of success. These reactions on our part are inevitable, which means that we have no real defense against them. This is why it is essential that we weed out detractors (dream busters) from our attachment garden and fill the vacancies with supporters (dream buddies). Incidentally, it is through an attachment relationship that self-help paraphernalia can help. In this case, the attachment relationship is with the authors of the materials. But because the

relationship is not with a real live person you can interact with, the attachment relationship has only a limited effect.

7. Limit your contact with dream busters.

If those who have low expectations about you and your chances of living a better life are your relatives, you're not going to be able to completely sever your attachment relationships with them, but there is one important thing that you can do to diminish the effect of their negativity on you. That is to limit your time with them to the greatest extent possible.

When Rudy was a small boy up through his high school years, there was little he could have done to limit his time with his parents and other relatives, all of whom had a low opinion of his abilities. He was stuck, and while he was stuck, he really had no defense against the natural tendency to comply with their attitudes by taking on a similar attitude toward himself. When he got a good paying job, however, he did have the option to move into an apartment but apparently failed to do so. That was a serious mistake. Rudy also failed to weed out the dream busters among his circle of friends, which was another serious mistake that had the effect of draining his ambition.

As bad as these mistakes were, they were nothing compared to the mistake of going back home and working at the power plant when his enlistment in the Navy was up. Rudy left the Navy a changed man, due in large measure to the helpful attachment relationships he had with his naval officers. Yet instead of giving himself a chance to build on this growth by seeking dream buddies and limiting his contact with dream busters, he put himself in the same negative environment that held him back before. Perhaps he thought he could better deal with it than he could before. He discovered, however, that the negativity of his old attachment relationships drained him of his self-confidence and of his positive vision of the future, just as ruthlessly as it had done before. Feeling utterly helpless about combating all of this, he grew steadily more angry with himself until Siskel's death pushed him to finally protect himself from his harmful environment by quitting his job at the power plant and breaking with his demeaning friends.

Rudy quit his job at the power plant before he knew whether he had any chance of getting into Notre Dame and without even checking to see whether the fall semester had begun. This can be interpreted as an irrational act, but it was not. It was exactly the right thing to do, because it was Rudy's statement that no matter what happens, he was through being dragged down by that crowd. His only mistake was not doing it two years earlier.

8. Seek out dream buddies.

After you limit your time with your demeaning relatives and cut yourself off from your dream buster friends, you may find yourself utterly alone. If that is the case, you have uncovered another reason why you had trouble making progress: the absence of dream buddy friends. As long as you have a limited track record of success to point to as a basis for hopeful emotions, you're not going to be able to generate those emotions on a

consistent basis entirely on your own. You need dream buddies, people who appreciate what you're going through either because they're currently going through the same thing or have gone through it and are willing to provide helpful support and advice. Attachment relationships are magical things that can either boost us to the stars or pound us into the ground. That's why you need to be very careful about who you let into your life.

Rudy is a very outgoing person, a fact that made it fairly easy for him to seek out and find dream buddies. This was particularly true in the Navy where Rudy found a wealth of people who were interested in helping him do well, including a lieutenant who had graduated from Notre Dame and who took Rudy under his wing. If you are less outgoing, especially if you are something of a loner, finding dream buddies will be more difficult, but it is something that you must do, nevertheless. Seeking new friendships can be scary, and many times the people you encounter will react negatively. But there are also people out there who will amaze you with their supportiveness. You need to keep trying to find them, at which point your main problem will be believing that they actually want to help you as much as they seem to.

Trying to find people who will amaze you means talking more about your dreams than may be comfortable for you. So be careful—more careful than Rudy was—in choosing who you will open up to, to minimize the chances of negative reactions. Some people will be skeptical, which is understandable, since they don't have any memories of you doing great things in the past. But you will also encounter people who will be negative to the point of being openly hostile.

An example of this sort of thing is provided in the movie by Rudy's father who seemed more negative about Rudy's prospects than can be described as being merely skeptical. I don't know whether this scene has any basis in fact, so I will discuss the scene in terms of Rudy's "movie father" rather than his real one. The scene I am talking about is the one in which Rudy is at the bus station at the point of going off to Notre Dame when his movie father comes by to see him off. He tells him that doing things like going to Notre Dame and being on the football team are things that other kinds of people do, not Ruettingers, and that he shouldn't reach so high because he can have an okay life by working as a laborer, which can allow him to live securely if not particularly well in the lower middle class way.

His movie father then went on to tell Rudy a story about his own father, who saved enough money to bring his family to America from someplace in Europe and who made a good life for himself and his family by working in the stockyards in Chicago. Being not satisfied with this, the grandfather acted on his dream of owning a farm by using the family's savings to buy a couple hundred cows and a piece of land in the country. Within a few months, all of the cows had died of disease, leaving his father without a source of income. And since it was the Depression, he could neither sell the land nor find a job. So one day he abandoned the family. The point of the story was that it is dangerous to follow your dream, and that if you do so, you will hurt yourself and those you love.

At one level, Rudy's movie father was attempting to protect Rudy from heartache, based on his own concept of reality derived from his past experiences. But it's also clear from the movie is that he took the lesson he was preaching to heart in his own life. He stopped pursuing his own dreams early on and started taking the safe course instead of the most desirable one.

There are plenty of people around who have sold their own lives short and who are now using either drugs or drink or overwork or a preoccupation with something to keep from recognizing that fact. So now you come along and start talking about dreams and about living the best life possible—is it really surprising that they are not grateful to have you around, that they spew invective in your direction? It is painful to settle down with an undesirable life and more painful yet to be reminded of that by some hopeful upstart. When you come along with your dreams, you remind them of who they once were and how far from that person they have come. Being not ready to take chances with their lives any longer, they may react with open hostility to you. But you shouldn't take it personally because it is more of an expression of who they are than who they think you are. As a defensive maneuver, they would rather drag you down with them than risk being inspired by you to reach higher.

9. Have the courage to pursue your interests in life.

When people would ask the late sociologist Joseph Campbell how they should live their lives, his answer was always the same: "Follow your bliss," by which he meant that a person should continue pursuing those interests in life that bring him joy and that energize him, irrespective of whether those interests are recognized at the time as contributing to the attainment of a long-term goal. You should follow his advice, too. Your blissful reaction is the most accurate indication you will ever have in life as to the kind of things you should be doing.

Think of your true self as a beacon that has been coated in black paint so that its light initially shines through only in a few places. As you continue pursuing your interests, those tiny openings will widen, leading you to challenge some of the pathogenic beliefs that now make it especially difficult for your true personality to shine through. Success in challenging those beliefs will burn away more darkness in your soul, creating new openings, and possibly causing some separate areas of interest to merge into a new direction in life. As you continue following your interests and challenging your pathogenic beliefs, the barriers to self-expression will continue to peel away and a truer concept of who you are and what you should be doing with your life will start to emerge.

10. Trust yourself.

Rudy's progress toward self-discovery is typical in the twists and turns and seeming dead ends that appear along the way. Often a person's ultimate goal isn't discernible at all by looking ahead; it becomes visible only in retrospect, only as the person looks back on his life story. It can be very helpful to try to do this now and then as a way of building your self-confidence and self-trust. To see what I mean, let us look back on Rudy's life to see

what he possibly could have learned about himself long before he settled on a life path of a motivational professional and entrepreneur. These insights probably wouldn't have changed anything Rudy did in trying to get the movie produced, nor would it have had an impact on his decision recently to help start up a beverage firm (<http://rudybeverage.com>), but it would have given him some insight into what was driving him at the time, and probably would have helped him feel better about himself while he was taking these steps.

Our attachment instincts induce us to form attachments to our parents so that we may learn from them and become like them, with the learning that takes place becoming most pronounced along sexual lines. That is, sons will tend to look to fathers as role models and daughters to mothers. So when a son rejects his father's way of life, as Rudy did, it often points to a problem in their relationship. Yet that does not seem to be true in Rudy's case. So Rudy's early rejection of the kind of life his father lived and advocated for his son is somewhat puzzling at first. Hindsight, though, makes everything quite a bit clearer. I'm talking about Rudy choosing a way of life based on his serving as a role model for others to follow.

Children are much more perceptive and altruistic than adults usually imagine. It is quite possible that early on Rudy concluded that his father had sold his own abilities short and that this led him to underestimate what Ruettigers could achieve in life. My guess is that Rudy developed the goal of somehow inspiring his entire family based on his own example of success. I say this for a number of reasons, the most obvious being that that is exactly what Rudy did. All of his younger brothers went to college, no doubt in large measure because of Rudy's example and help. Another reason is that the desire for money and fame does not seem to have played a large part in pushing him. His main goal in life now is to provide humanistic help. I am merely supposing that that was true from the beginning.

If Rudy had recognized that in looking back on his life upon leaving Notre Dame, he may have come to see why it was so important to him to become a role model while playing baseball and football, and not as someone loaded with talent, but as an everyman who succeeded where others failed simply because he tried harder. He perhaps also would have come to see that he hobbled himself to an extent when it came to schoolwork. I believe that a pathogenic belief and troublesome attachment relationships were significant forces in Rudy's life, but that at least an element of his lack of school smarts was intentional to establish his status as an everyman so that he would become the kind of living example he wanted to be. A genius who does well is not an inspiration to anyone. I'm suggesting that to an extent Rudy purposely dug a hole for himself that he could barely escape from in order to help show others how they could escape from such holes, too.

Rudy perhaps also would have come to see why he couldn't shut up about one day going to Notre Dame when he was younger. I have indicated that it was a serious mistake for Rudy to maintain relationships with his dream buster friends, but Rudy not only maintained such relationships, he seems to have gone out of his way to pick verbal and

sometimes physical fights with these people regarding his dream for the future. Rudy may have been attempting to get these people to accept him as a role model, but I think that something else was also possibly involved. I see Rudy as possibly honing his skills as a future motivational speaker by doing this. I'm willing to bet that Rudy during these arguments didn't take the position that he was going to Notre Dame because he was better than everyone hoisting beers with him at the bar. He probably argued that there was nothing special about him and that therefore his adversaries could probably go to Notre Dame, too, if they wanted.

The subject of barroom brawling brings up a facet of Rudy's life that is absolutely spooky, whether or not you believe in a God. I will discuss it because you will discover similarly spooky aspects to your life as well. Rudy's past as an accomplished barroom brawler no doubt contributed to his winning the Bengal Bouts boxing championship his senior year at Notre Dame. Had he not won that, he possibly would not have received the publicity that led to everyone in the stadium yelling "Rudy," that helped induce the coach to put him in the football game. As it was, Rudy played only the final 27 seconds of that game. It is quite conceivable that without this pressure, the game would have ended with Rudy still sitting on the bench, which would not have made for an inspiring movie ending. It is also likely that without the tremendous emotional energy created by this chanting, Rudy's teammates would not have lifted him onto their shoulders, again to the detriment of the movie's ending. Would there have been a Rudy movie without Rudy's barroom brawling? Perhaps, but it does appear to be much less likely, and it would have been a much diminished source of inspiration to others if the movie's ending showed Rudy being carried off the field in triumph, when in fact he had trotted off under power after sitting out the game on the bench. Without the barroom brawling, there may not have been a Rudy movie to serve as a springboard for Rudy's career as a motivational professional. At the very least, the course of that career may have been much changed.

You too will find circumstances in your life that shape your future in unexpected ways, circumstances that will prove crucial to your discovering your life path, yet will be unexplainable in rational terms without supposing the participation of an unseen power.