



## CONTINUING EDUCATION THAT MAKES A CHANGE

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This is a side bar:

You will not be tested on the side bar information unless it is a highlight of information from the text.

When you are done with the course, take the posttest. When you pass the posttest (70% or higher) and pay the course fee (\$10 per unit), you will be issued a CEU Certificate of Completion. Enjoy!

**Course Name:** Life's Law #1: There are rules—deal with it or lose  
**Course Number:** LL#1  
**CEU:** 1.0  
**Instructor:** Philip Copitch, Ph.D.

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### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. You will study Life Law #1.
2. You will read real life examples of how to work with angry young adult patients.
3. You will study ways to keep defensive walls down.
4. You will experience story telling as a therapeutic tool.
5. You will see ways to open up a discussion with a teen or young adult patient.

### **SUGGESTED PREREQUISITE COURSES**

None

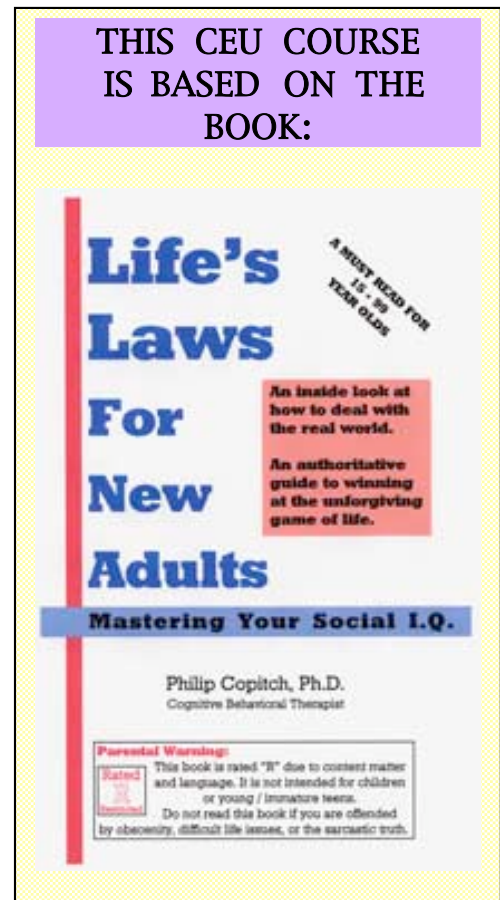
## Introduction

I have developed ten life laws that I teach to teens and young adults to help them navigate the rough waters of young adulthood. I have found, over the years, that these life laws give my patients directional posts that guide them outside of our therapy sessions. It is my intent for the young adult to have a framework to build their social skills on. I tend to “teach” one life law a week. (Based on the individual’s abilities.) I find that my patients quickly begin to implement change and self control into their lives. In this CEU course we will look at Life’s Law #1: There are rules—deal with it or lose.

In my treatment of angry and “misunderstood” teens and young adults I take a cognitive behavioral approach and find that they appreciate my nonjudgmental frankness.

We are going to look at how to get teens and young adults to listen to you in an open minded way. The goal is to talk with your patient, not at them. This sounds easy, but unfortunately it is difficult. Over the years I have found that if I explain a needed concept to someone in a relaxed story format, it keeps their defensive walls down and lets them emotionally participate in the learning process. By sprinkling my conversation with humor and a little “I think it’s like this, what do you think?” humility, I find that my teen and young adult clients readily play off my stories and seriously challenge their own ways of dealing with their world.

The following is the way I introduce patients to the fact that they have to share the planet. And, regularly their attitude gets them into uncomfortable situations.



## LIFE'S LAW #1: THERE ARE RULES—DEAL WITH IT OR LOSE

Most people, no matter their age, refuse to accept this rule. I hear it all the time, “I shouldn’t have to...” or, “It’s not fair...” To which I say, “Deal with it or lose!”

The fact is that life is a game. Like any game, life has rules. Unlike most games, the game of life has hidden rules. You need to get your head around this fact, or life will eat you alive.

What Law #1 teaches us is that every situation you encounter has rules. They happen with or without your knowledge. Without your approval. And either way, life’s rules influence you everyday.

When you walk into Mr. Monotone’s fifth period history class there are rules that you need to deal with. No one asked if you wanted to play by these rules, you’re just stuck with them. You are just expected to follow them. In addition, all situations have socially “known rules” and “secret rules” that must be figured out.

It is your responsibility to figure out the rules for any given situation and use this information to your best interest. That’s right. The reason you need to figure out the rules is so that you can get your needs met. Get what you want and avoid what you don’t want so you can win at this game called life!

I want you to notice that I am not embarrassed by this level of selfishness. In fact, I pity the dumb asses that don’t figure out what is going on and constantly bash their thick heads against life’s walls. It is your responsibility, to yourself, to learn how to deal with your world.

Socially known rules, such as the classroom rules in Mr. Monotone’s class, are usually easy to find. Mr. Monotone probably droned on and on the very first day, boring you to death about his “classroom rules.” My assumption is that by now you know the basic classroom rules and Mr. Monotone is as informative as the flight attendant who stands in the front of the cabin and instructs you on how to put on or take off a seat belt. What’s with that? I would think that 99.99% of the airline passengers drove to the airport. Didn’t they use their seat belts? I guess that the airlines believe that if you’re willing to pay hundreds of dollars to cram your ass into a narrow airline seat, you’re probably not smart enough to un-

I always tried to make it a habit to do things good.

Sandra Day O’Conner  
Supreme Court Justice

derstand the mechanical physics of a common seat belt.

Law #1 is about the “secret rules” of dealing with Mr. Monotone. You need to know about these secret rules to navigate Mr. Monotone’s class. It is important that you figure out how to deal with Mr. Monotone and use this knowledge to get your needs met.

Let’s look at how this might work. During the first half hour of the first class you check out the lay of the land. You realize that even though Mr. Monotone said, “If you have any questions you must raise your hand.” He left out the secret rule that reads: “I’m really tired of you smart ass kids. After twenty-two years of teaching I have figured out what I need to teach, and if you simply pay attention I’ll tell you what I expect you to regurgitate on your test.” How the hell did you figure out this secret rule? You watched. When Betty Brownnose, sitting up front all perky like, asked a question, Mr. Monotone sarcastically let her know that he thought he clearly covered that already. He made it clear to all who were watching that his words said, “ask questions” but he didn’t really want to be bothered with answering them.

Is this fair? Absolutely not. Is it something you need to deal with? Hell yeah! This teaching drone holds your grade in his left hand. If he squeezes, your voice changes. When the principal comes by, you wouldn’t be surprised if Mr. Monotone perked up and became Mr. Stereo. He knows the secret rules that he learned from watching principals. He probably learned to leave his classroom rules out so that the principal could “accidentally” spy them. He learned it’s a good idea to have a clear rule that encourages one’s students to ask questions. He learned that as long as he gives lip service to the principal, the principal won’t care that Mr. Monotone is actually discouraging questions in the privacy of his classroom domain. Adults live in the same world teens live in. Smart adults know that Law #1 is powerful.

This paragraph is a good example of talking to your audience. Teens especially will feel more comfortable with you if your stories are more PG to R rated.

## Opening up the topic of “words” versus “behavior”

At this point I want to open the topic of interpersonal trust. Most teen and young adult patients fight tooth and nail to control the words in their relationships. Many of my clients have the reputation of being ruthless attorneys when it comes to words within their family. This type of argumentative behavior leads to negative consequences for them. But, it isn’t until

they start to see that behavior counts that they obtain personal and social controls.

### ***All things being equal, trust behavior***

Many years ago my oldest child, who was about three years old, was baking cookies with his mother, Geri. This may not sound all that remarkable, but it was. In the world of Norman Rockwell paintings moms bake cookies with their children. But, not in the Copitch household. Let me explain. Geri thinks I'm fat. She is very nice about it, she doesn't tease me or make faces, but she believes that I am fat. I will go so far as to say that it is one of her missions in life to un-fat me. I'm pretty sure that she believes that sugar is the devil's dandruff and that it is her job to keep sugar out of the house. Or, more specifically, out of me. So, making cookies at the Copitch household takes an act of Congress.

On this day, mom and son were baking cookies. Somehow, little Ethan had enough charm that Mom announced during the cookie making process, "Let's make a really big cookie for Daddy." Ethan was excited, while I was watching closely, trying to figure out how he had manipulated his mother so well for my benefit (I am not opposed to learning from a three year old if it gets me a big ass cookie).

A half hour later, when I entered the kitchen, Ethan was very happy to show me the cookie "he" had made me. Ethan also informed me, "You no want, Ethy's cookie!" To which Mom interjected, "No Ethy, that's Daddy's cookie, it is not for you." He seemed to take this in stride. I assumed he'd already had this conversation with his mother.

By chance, a little while later I walked out of the den into the living room. Ethan stopped short and quickly put something behind his back. He looked up at me with fear in his eyes. He had cookie crumbs all around his mouth and lots more on the chest of his footed, terry cloth, blue pajamas.

"Ethan" I asked, "Are you eating Daddy's cookie?" I didn't have to be much of a detective. The little fellow was so tiny that I could see "Daddy's cookie" peeking from behind him on both sides.

"No ... I no eat Daddy cookie." His eyes gave nothing away. He then looked at his own pale blue terry covered little feet. There were lots more crumbs there too. He tried to brush them off. First, with his right toes, then with his left toes. He took a quick look up at me. I assumed my face was red because I was trying not to bust a gut and laugh at him. This was one damn cute kid. He then proceeded to bend deeply to brush off the

crumbs with his hand. His other hand was holding the “big” cookie behind his back, now in my full view. His little hand was covered with cookie crumbs, so no matter how hard he tried, he was adding more crumbs to his feet than he was brushing off.

In a firm but gentle voice I asked, “Ethan is there something you need to tell me?”

At this he stood up straight, handed me my cookie and calmly stated, “I brought you your cookie Daddy,” then scampered off upstairs. Thinking about it as I write this, I don’t think I ever busted him for stealing my cookie.

So, why did I tell you this story? To show you that behavior counts. Words are of limited importance.

In the real world—behavior counts. If your friend says that he is going to quit smoking for the hundredth time this year, you wouldn’t be too impressed. But, smoke-free for six days, that counts. If this same friend says, “At the end of this pack I’m quitting,” it’s hard to believe him. His behavior says, “I smoke.” His words sound like what they are—a lie. Harsh but true, deal with it.

Often the secret rules are first seen as behaviors. It is your job to figure out the unspoken rules so that others can’t use your lack of knowledge against you. If you are sure that Mr. Monotone is burned out and useless as a teacher, it doesn’t change the fact that he is giving you your grade. It is your job to figure out what you need to do so you can get him to give you the grade you want. Please note, I didn’t say the grade your mom wants you to get. I clearly stated, “the grade you want.” So, if you want a D+ figure out what you need to do to get it. If you want an A+ figure out what you need to do to get it. Once you have figured it out, then you need to ask yourself if it’s worth it to you. If it is, go for it.

Most teens get pissed that their teachers are not acting honestly. The fact is, no one who counts, such as the principal, could give a rat’s ass about your opinion. That is, except for you. You count, but you don’t have any power in this situation. So, you need to figure out what the unspoken rules are and use them to your best advantage. This is cold but true, deal with it.

You need to keep focused on what you need from this class. Usually, it is to learn something and to get a good grade. So, stay focused on this, learn stuff, and get a good grade. Figure out the rules and use them to your benefit.

Some of you are probably thinking, “I don’t want to figure out the rules, it’s all bogus anyway, get off my ass!” To this I soundly say, “Bullshit!”

I don’t believe for one second that you are willing to miss an opportunity to get something you want. That’s counter intuitive. People don’t work like that. We all want. It’s built into our DNA. We are basically a bag of mostly water that wants stuff. We want food, water, to be liked, to have sex, own a car, and not to be bitched at. We all want.

People set up attitudes to deflect pain. “I’d rather wipe shit on others before they wipe shit on me.” That’s like banging your head on a brick wall so when you stop, it feels good. That’s completely stupid. The world is not impressed with your attitude. In fact, if your attitude is too hard to deal with, most adults will work against you just because they can. If your behavior’s so crappy or scary that others are afraid of you, our society will lock your ass up. In the year 2000, the Justice Department reported that 6.47 million adults were in jail, on parole, or on probation. That is to say, 1 in every 32 adults in America is being “parented” by the government. Adults tend to get pissed when I refer to jail as parenting. But it is. If you’re an adult who is such a screw-up that you can’t control yourself, society will send you to your room—Cell J, Tier 112, Attica State Prison. Jail is the adult version of room restrictions. And, probation or parole is the adult version of being grounded. Wow, what a kick in the head. 6.47 million adults can’t figure out this game called life either!

You can put a nail into a wall with a rock. But, if you have a hammer only a moron keeps using the rock. Most of us would use the hammer because it works better. If you use life’s rules, life works better. However, if you’re that moron, stop reading this book. You know everything. You have it all figured out. Stop reading this book! Please donate it to your local public library.

This book is full of tools to make your life path easier. It’s your path, you get to do it your way. You can reinvent everything yourself as you travel, or you can pick up some insight from this little book and save yourself a shit load of heartache.

There are rules—deal with it or lose.

Let’s look at Life’s Law #1 in the real world. The following story shows how some people screw with us just because they can.

## Issues of self control and lying

The following is a look at self-control and personal choice. I find that

teens and young adults need to talk about how to deal with people who misuse power. The following story also opens up a must have conversation, “What is a lie, and what are the issues with lying.”

### ***Mayo mayhem***

For years I have gone to an all night poker game with friends the night before Super Bowl Sunday. The game tends to start at about eight. The biggest part of the whole ordeal is the bragging rights that go along with winning. If you win you are hated by your friends all through the Super Bowl game and party. The losers are relentless. “You ripped me a new one last night.” “You’re such a lucky bastard.” “We’re not inviting you next year, you dick!” It’s great when your oldest friends bitch at you because you kicked their sorry asses again!

Responses may be altered by their effects on the environment

E.L. Thorndike

Well, to say the least, I was all excited about getting to the card game. Due to things outside of my control we were held up for hours before we could leave. Nothing I could do about it. I was going to be late for the game. Maybe I could get there by 11 o’clock. What a bummer, all those hands that I was planning to win. When we finally got off the highway, the kids were asleep in the back seat. I told my wife that I was going to pop into the grocery store just down the street from the poker game. It was one of those really big grocery store chains that has everything but service. It was five ‘til eleven. They close at eleven.

I whizzed down the pet supply aisle and grabbed a five-pound bag of dog food. Enough for one meal for my big dog who was traveling in the way back of the wagon. I figured I would get more supplies tomorrow. But I was already late for some serious card playing. I swooped up to the Express Register and plopped my bag on the counter. I handed the clerk a ten.

He put up his hand and said, “Ya have ta use your ATM card.”

Not understanding I asked, “What?”

“Ya have ta use your ATM card.”

“How come?” I asked as I tried to hand him a perfectly good ten dollar bill.

“Ya have ta use your ATM card cuz I Z-ed out my register.”

He gestured to the ATM box. I felt myself getting pissed.

“How come I can’t use cash? What grocery store doesn’t take cash?”

“Look mister, you can’t use cash. I Z-ed out my register already. We close in just a few minutes. Do ya want the dog food or not?”

By this time a small line was behind me.

I took a few seconds to gather information. I analyzed the scene, I compiled the secret rules and I gave myself permission to lie. “I’m sorry dude, but the guy on aisle 5 told me I had to pay for the mayonnaise I broke. All I have is cash.”

The cashier rolled his eyes and poked away at the keys of the machine. He turned a key and pressed in some more numbers. The bell went off and the cash drawer popped open. As he was closing the drawer he looked at me and asked, “What kind of mayo did you bust?”

Calmly I said, “I didn’t break any mayo. I just want the dog food.” I offered up the same ten again.

He snatched the bill from my hand, grunted a few times and pushed the change back into my hand.

I picked up the bag of dog food and headed for the exit. Standing at the exit was

an older man with a white apron stained with blood. The butcher I guess. The butcher was starting to laugh, something about “...You got him” as I headed out the door. As I got to the car, my son Ethan, then about ten, was rubbing sleep out of his eyes.

“Daddy,” he said as I opened the car door. “There’s a fight.”

As I drove out of the parking lot, I saw the cashier and the butcher rolling around, arms flailing, in the doorway of the store. The automatic doors were trying, unsuccessfully, to close on them.

So what does this have to do with Life’s Law #1? I was just trying to buy dog food and the cashier was making it hard for me. I’m sure the owner of the Super Store wanted the cashier to take my cash. In fact, I’m sure that they want to take all my cash. But, the cashier had his own “secret rules.” My guess is that he wanted to get off as soon as the store closed. He probably had a hot date and was hoping to get lucky. So, he counted up the register just a little early. Figuring that he would “ask” the last few customers in the store to pay with their ATM.

Once I figured out that he was lying to me, I gave myself permission to lie to him. I needed to give him a reason to reopen his register. I needed to give him a *want*. As you will learn later on with Law #2, people won’t do shit unless they want to. So, I needed him to want to. I hadn’t been on aisle 5, but I figured if I had broken a jar of mayo there he would want me to pay for it. And, if I only had cash he would figure out how to

The world is but a school of inquiry.

Michael de Montaigne

accept my money. I learned from his behavior what I needed to get my needs met (as well as Jazz's needs).

I'm pretty sure that if I had allowed myself to get all upset and throw a tantrum, I would have been acting like a jerk and he would have stuck to his lying words. If I had gotten pissed and stormed out of the store, he wouldn't have cared. He probably would have turned to the next person in line, and acting all hurt said, "Some people are so rude ... Ya have ta use your ATM card."

If you don't analyze every situation to learn the "known" rules and the "secret" rules you will bash your head up against the game of life.

[Just because it will "kill" my friends if you knew, the poker game that night was amazing. I kicked some righteous bootie.]

## Attitude

Next we look at how "attitude" gets in one's way. (Which really means "bad attitude".) When your patient's primary defense mechanism is anger, it is imperative that you talk openly about their anger and how anger is "working" for them. This is a great therapeutic starting point for angry teens and young adults. I find myself telling young patients, "I love anger, it is so easy to understand. It tends to be very honest and a great starting point for therapy." Anger lets you know that the other person has the ability to feel, how wonderful! I want my patients to have feelings.

### ***You can't make me***

I've never done the survey, but I think that one out of every hundred teens that reads the above, says, "Screw you, you can't make me. It's stupid. Life sucks. You suck!" If you're in the 99% group feel free to skip this section and move onto Law #2.

So, you're the one. You're that individual who believes that just because you're you, you don't have to deal with laws. However, you didn't donate this book to the library as I suggested earlier. So, there is still hope for you. I hope you're not reading this because you're locked up and it's better than staring at your cellmate as he passes gas. But, even if you are in jail, read on...

So, I ask myself, why are you continuing to read this *stupid* book. The answer is because you want better for yourself. Nothing fancy, you *want*. How hu-

People confuse freedom  
with license.

man of you. Even if you don't like it, you are stuck with the fact that there are things more powerful than yourself.

I'm sure you "believe" in gravity. It's a physical law that no one has any say about. It *is* and we all have to deal with it. There are things that are outside of your control. There are rules in life that cannot be repealed; like the Law of Gravity. If Congress decided to repeal the Law of Gravity, put it to a vote and announced that the Law of Gravity was no more, what would happen? Any moron who believed that it was repealed would walk off a tall building and splat—one less moron. According to the strange folks at Darwin.com that kind of stuff occurs all the time. Morons bumping themselves off and cleaning up the human gene pool. (See Darwin.com for more information on how some fellow humans clean up the human gene pool.) *I have hand outs of a few Darwin.com awards. This often leads to frank discussions about the value of life and dealing with drug usage and stress. Suicidal and or homicidal ideation discussions may come from this line of discussion. Make sure you leave enough time in the session. Suicidal and or homicidal ideation discussions can not be rushed.*

## Choice versus habit

*Next I want to promote a conversation with the patient concerning self-control and making personal choices.*

### ***People are creatures of habit***

I once watched a relatively intelligent person look for a stapler. She wanted to staple a few pages together for me. She opened and closed her desk drawer five times looking for the stapler.

"It's supposed to be right here," she muttered; each time getting a little more frustrated.

Now, think about this for a second. If you checked the drawer once or twice and the stapler wasn't there, why check it again? She checked because it was "supposed to be there." It wasn't, but she didn't let new facts get in the way of her beliefs. This seems crazy to me. If you keep doing the same thing over and over and keep getting the results you don't want, over and over again, that's crazy behavior. Why do it? It seems that anything you do that is not the same old behavior (the one you had proof didn't work) gives you a better chance of finding out what does work. If checking in the drawer has proven to be useless, then even standing on your head and reciting a poem would make more sense. Maybe you would

notice the stapler under the couch. Since your way wasn't working, anything else has a minute chance of working.

You have read all this crap for a reason. Maybe the reason is that you're tired of the way you are running your life. Maybe you are tired of how you are allowing others to run your life. Maybe you are so fearful of running your life that you can't even get started taking self-control.

You're not alone. Even if you're one in a hundred, there are a lot of you. We have close to three hundred million people in this county. That's three million people that feel similar to the way you feel. Don't give up on yourself.

## People can learn and grow

It is important to leave the patient with the understanding that they can personally learn and grow. I advise patients to take notes between sessions of their observations concerning life laws. This gives the patient much more than my time with them.

## POSTTEST

When you're ready, take the posttest to obtain your CEU certificate. Your test consists of 5 multiple choice or true/false questions per Continuing Education Unit (3 CEU course = 15 questions).

