WHY WE NEED SAFETY RULES

It seems that there is a constant barrage of safety rules everywhere we go. There are safety rules posted about using the public pool. It is usually a good idea to follow these rules, since these rules reflect years of swimming pool wisdom that have been gained, undoubtedly, through people drowning and getting hurt in pools! There are safety rules about how to properly use the airbag in your car posted on the dashboard or the sun visor of the car. There are rules about how to use your lawnmower safely. At work there are rules about using your computer for personal business and there are rules about sexual harassment and business ethics. Unwritten rules abound as well, such as how to treat your friends or your spouse if you want to preserve those relationships (for example, the Golden Rule comes to mind). There are even unwritten rules about using the public Laundromat in an apartment building.

The Merriam-Webster offers some simple definitions of what rules are:

- a statement that tells you what is or is not allowed in a particular game, situation, etc.
- a statement that tells you what is allowed or what will happen within a particular system (such as a language or science)
- a piece of advice about the best way to do something.

So rules are there to tell you what is allowed and not allowed, what might happen if you don't follow the rule, and sometimes rules are merely advice. The question we might wonder is are all these rules really necessary? The answer is absolutely!

FOLLOW THE RULES:
THEY ARE THERE TO PROTECT YOU!

Rules are there for a several reasons. Life in the modern age is quite complicated because of the sheer number of situations and systems that we interact with every day. The use of technology requires training and skill in its use in order to not get hurt or hurt someone else. This complexity is to the extent that we cannot possibly remember everything about everything that we do at all times and under all conditions. So safety rules, first and foremost, are there to remind us, at the point of interaction, of what we are supposed to do to remain safe. They are there for everyone's protection, even those that already think they know all the rules. Instead of being dismissive of rules when you see them, pause for a moment to review them to serve as a reminder of

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what you are supposed to do. You just might learn something to increase your safety and the safety of those around you. At the very least, safety rules serve as a reminder.

Our society has also turned towards instant litigation when someone does something they were not supposed to do and someone got hurt because of it. While accidents are bad enough in terms of the physical harm they cause, they also can turn into costing you big money in retribution and fines and may even cost you time in jail. Rules are in place to protect you from getting yourself into a legal situation. Usually, the basis for a lawsuit is because someone broke a rule that they should have known. In other words, most laws are actually safety rules! For example, if you run a stop sign while driving and cause an accident and kill someone, the reason you will get sued is that you violated the safety rule (law) of not stopping at a stop sign. In marriage, there is a rule (a law in many states) that you don't commit adultery, and violating this rule will end you up in divorce court and cause you to lose your fortune and your family. So safety rules are often a mirror image of laws that govern our society and allow us to function as a community, family, and government. Even a no parking sign, when not heeded, can easily cost you several hundred dollars!

Finally, safety rules provide a common reference point for all participants to get started from in a given situation. This applies to sports, games, finance, relationships, technology – you name it. Imagine starting a game of poker without a common set of rules to get started? Sometimes it is OK to change rules or decide that rules might not apply to your situation. But that determination is not something to be taken lightly when it specifically comes to safety rules. Deciding to that violating the rule of not texting and driving just once is way more serious than deciding to alter the rules in a game of cards. The former could get you killed while the latter is merely a way to making the game more suitable to your needs. Therein lies a very important point. We must not mistake safety rules from otherwise benign rules that have little to no real consequences. When a safety rule is presented to you, consider it a clear reference point for you to get started from as you embark on the activity that you are pursuing. Safety rules have real consequences if they are not followed. Follow the rules, and you will generally avoid a lot of problems and heartache in your life and the lives of your loved ones.

Check out my safety books and other safety resources and information at http://www.markkowaleski.com for more insights to guide you on your journey to living a healthier, wealthier, longer, and happier life.

Remember: keep TABs on your safety: Think safe, Act Safe, Be safe!

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