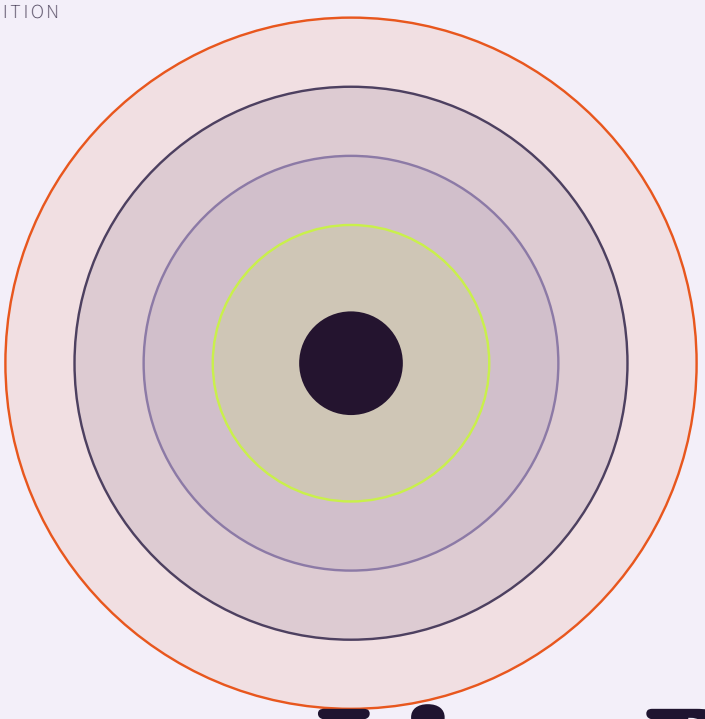


Rules to Live By: How Extraordinary Lives Define What Really Matters

A reading of the book by Jimmy Chin (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Rules to Live By: How Extraordinary Lives Define What Really Matters, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Jimmy Chin is a climber, National Geographic photographer and filmmaker who co-directed Free Solo. In Rules to Live By he sits down with ten people he admires: Lynsey Addario, Annette Bening, Simone Biles, Yvon Chouinard, Alex Honnold, Bill King, Yo-Yo Ma, Ridley Scott, Kelly Slater and Kristine Tompkins. Each conversation turns on the same plain questions: how they chose to live, how they got through the hard parts, and what turned out to matter. Chin says none of them handed him rules; they gave him honest answers, and the reader is left to draw their own. He threads his own story through the chapters, from his family and upbringing to his move from climbing into filmmaking. Mastery, service, identity and the cost of leaving a goal untried come up again and again.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The rules worth keeping are the ones you write yourself after listening to how others live.

Chin is plain about it: none of the ten people he talked to gave him a list of rules. They gave him honest accounts of their lives. The book leaves the step from their answers to your rules with you, which is why it reads as a set of conversations rather than a manual.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A good question from someone further along can do more than a good answer.

Chin describes mentors who tended to answer him with questions instead of advice. The book works the same way. He asks, they think out loud, and you are left with questions to put to your own life.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Getting through the hard stretch is a choice you make again and again, not a trait you are born with.

How people endure is one of the three questions under every conversation. The ten come from sport, music, film, war photography and conservation, so the hard stretches look very different. Seeing them side by side makes endurance look less like a gift and more like a practice.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Mastery is a long relationship with one craft, and over time it changes who you are.

Mastery runs through the book. A cellist, a gymnast, a surfer, an actor and two climbers talk about crafts they have practised for decades. Chin, who moved from climbing to photography to directing, sets their experience beside his own.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Success can be the start of a life of service rather than the end of the story.

The closing conversation is with Kristine Tompkins, who ran Patagonia and then, with her husband Doug Tompkins, turned to protecting and rewilding land in Chile. The talk with Yvon Chouinard also comes back to adventure and conservation. Both show a working life that bends toward giving something back.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The goal you never try has a cost too, even if it never shows up on a list of failures.

The book weighs the obvious risk of failing against the quieter risk of leaving a goal untried. The conversation with Alex Honnold returns to the free solo climb of El Capitan that Chin filmed, and to the feelings behind it rather than only the feat.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Know where what you do ends and who you are begins.

Identity is one of the threads in the book. Most of the ten are famous for one thing, and the conversations keep asking what is left when the role, the medal or the record is set aside. It is a useful question for anyone whose job has become their whole name.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your own story belongs in the conversation, including the parts about family.

Chin does not stay behind the camera. His upbringing and family come up in the conversation with Yo-Yo Ma, and his move into directing films in the one with Annette Bening. Asking good questions of others goes better when you are willing to answer them yourself.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You will come back to the same big questions many times, and your answers should change.

Chin frames the book around a question he has carried since his early expeditions. He presents the conversations as a way to return to basic truths as your understanding grows, not to settle them once. Rules written at twenty-five are worth rereading at forty.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Answer the three questions
- [ ] Draft five rules of your own
- [ ] Name three people you would ask
- [ ] Have one real conversation
- [ ] Name the goal you keep putting off

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Ask before you advise
- ◯ Test one rule against your week
- ◯ Practise the part of your craft you avoid

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Answer the three questions

On one page, write three headings: how I choose to live, how I get through hard stretches, what matters most.

Under each, write two honest lines about your life as it is, not as you want it to look.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Draft five rules of your own

Turn your answers into five short rules you could break and notice.

Keep each to twelve words or fewer, and cut any rule you only like because it sounds good.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Name three people you would ask

Write down three people whose lives you admire, including at least one you can actually reach.

Next to each, write the one question you would ask them about how they chose to live.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Have one real conversation

Ask the person you can reach for thirty minutes this month.

Ask how they decided and how they kept going, not what you should do, and take notes afterwards.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Name the goal you keep putting off

Write down the goal you keep postponing and the smallest real attempt at it.

Put a date on that attempt in your calendar this week.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Ask before you advise

When someone brings you a problem, ask one question before you offer any advice.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Test one rule against your week

Each Sunday, pick one of your rules and find one moment in the past week when you kept it or broke it.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Practise the part of your craft you avoid

Once a week, spend one focused session on the part of your work or hobby you are weakest at.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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December 2026

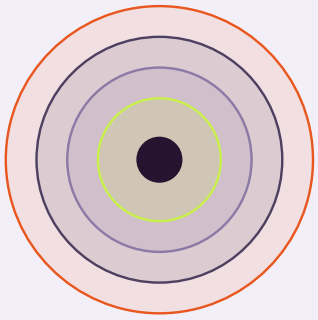
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Nobody can hand you the rules. Listen to how others live, then write your own and keep them when it costs you.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER JIMMY CHIN