

Review of “12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos”

Jordan Peterson, “12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos” (Penguin Random House UK, 2018), pp.409.

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To explain the complexity of the world and provide solutions to these complexities, ideologies are essential. Further, ideologies are simple ideas like philosophy and science. People with definite ideologies know how to balance their own chaos and make the world a better place to live. A person who is able to balance its chaos is known as virtues and avoids vices at all cost. Moreover, an ability to differentiate between virtues and vice leads to the attainment of true wisdom.

But in the modern age, people are too judgmental about how to live and the possibility of an implication of relativism is very low. Another reason is really good and true virtue is closely related and is relative terms. Further, a high level of tolerance is expected from a virtue's person according to relativism. It is the only tolerance that leads to a peaceful society and provides social cohesion between different groups in society. However, rules, laws, and customs differ from territory wise and change over time. But there is one similarity and that is people like to make laws, rules, and customs at every place and in every time period, ancient or modern. People like to abide by morality they need a structure of law and order. The reason behind may be, a person who supposed to be highly tolerant forgot to behave virtuously when attacked personally. So, an idea that supports a society free from moral concern and said there is no right and wrong is just an idea and cannot have a practical implementation.

In this book, “12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos” Canadian clinical psychologist and psychology professor Jordan Peterson explained twelve rules about life, formulated on the basis of his experience and knowledge related with biology, literature, religion, myths, clinical experience and scientific research. This

is a self-help book that leads to a better life. Further, the author elaborates on freedom, adventure, responsibility and discipline with the help of life-changing twelve practical rules for life. The author discussed order and chaos with the help of yang and yin. He reveals that order is masculine and chaos is feminine. Further, an order can be predictable while chaos is related to something unexpected. A balance between two is essential for a more meaningful life.

The basic idea of this book is life is suffering and people have a choice either to withdraw or face it bravely. To live in a world of chaos and order is not an easy task. The solution is adjusting our aims and gives preference to meaningful life over happiness. Happiness is not permanent by nature. The author also supports the idea that human beings have a basic instinct for ethics and meaning and they must give preference to search for the meaning of their life over their own interests. The book is divided into twelve chapters and each chapter represents a specific rule for life.

Rule 1: Stand up Straight with your Shoulders Straight

In this rule, he explained that the poor and stressed always die first and prone to more non-infectious diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. He gives an example of a lobster with a high level of serotonin and low level of octopamine, who help to maintain impressive posture. The same thing is applicable to humans. To support his idea he gives reference to Matthew (25:29) principle “to those who have everything, more will be given; from those who have nothing, everything will be taken”.

He argues that the posture is so important for the male who is in a dominant position in the hierarchy. The reason behind is, with upright and confident posture he not only gets richer but also gets a privileged position in the female. So the author gives importance to posture and suggests standing up straight with shoulders back to accept the responsibility of life. It is essential to speak our mind and explain our desires with a gaze forthrightly ahead. As we know life is suffering and we people are on this earth for suffering, so why not we suffer like a man.

Rule 2: Treat yourself like Someone you are Responsible for Helping

In this rule, the author defines that people give more importance to others than own. Even they take care of their pets more than themselves. He gives an example of ice when we are skating on solid ice it consider order, but when the bottom drops out it is chaos. He further explains that we never think about chaos unless order interrupted. Chaos revealed itself when we deeply engaged in our lives and felt it more meaningful. This is the borderline where we can locate chaos and order. Here, author symbolically represents snakes as humans' attraction towards evil. These snakes may be in spiritual, personal and psychological form. He argues that no human being can reach its full potential without dangers and difficulties. Further, these dangers help him to be more attentive and courageous.

The darkness related with human beings can only be understandable by humans only, but no one else. So, there is a need to respect ourselves and take care of ourselves properly. They can set the world straight only when they take care of themselves. To take own responsibility means what is truly good for us, what we really want and what exactly makes us happy. He suggests that by taking own responsibility we need not wait for someone else to dig us out of our pitiful hole.

Rule 3: Befriend People Who Want the Best for you

In this rule, the author stressed to befriend people who want the best for us. It is not selfish to choose people

who want better things for us over those who don't want. Moreover, it is praiseworthy and appropriate to associate such people. These are the people who assume their life would become better by improving the lives of others. However, it is important to note here that how you can be befriended with a person whose friendship you would not recommend to others.

The author opined that it is not easy to find a good healthy person as a friend. It requires lots of courage and strength to be friend with such a person. Further, most of the time it is very difficult to differentiate between a people who actually need our help or he just pretends he needs help. Such type of persons merely exploited the good people to help them. Their main aim is to drag us down to their level. So to find winners and stick with them is a big challenge for a person who wants the right person to be friend with.

Rule 4: Compare yourself to Who you were Yesterday, not the Useless Person You are Today

In this rule, the author gives stress on self-improvement. He opined that one need to compare himself with his previous self if he wants to be successful. It is just wastage of time to compare oneself with others. The reason behind is if you want to be smart and compare yourself with the person who is smarter than us, then it is impossible to lift up to his level. Every person is unique by nature. The solution is we need to pay attention and focus on our surroundings both physical and psychological. Moreover, people can learn even if they are unskilled in the beginning. Realization is everything. We need not playing the martyr or tyrant. We just need to attend the day but aim at the highest good.

Rule 5: Do not let your Children do Anything that Makes you Dislike Them

Children need the discipline to become a good human being when grown up. Children have a huge capacity for evil. The author stressed that it is essential to discuss your likes and dislikes with regard to your children with

your partner or friend. We need not to be afraid to have likes and dislikes. Clear rules and proper discipline help the child, and the family, and society, establish, maintain and expand the order that is all that protects us from chaos.

Rule 6: Set your House in Order before you Criticize the World

In this rule, the author emphasizes that one need to say only those things that make you strong. Do only that thing that you could speak of with honor. He opined that natural clematis is an act of god. Failure to prepare, when the necessity for preparation is well known that is a sin. The author says people are limited and life is tragic. If due to the suffering you are starting to become corrupt, there is something to think about. We need to clean up our life by considering our circumstances and start small.

Rule 7: Pursue What is Meaningful, not What is Expedient

It is better to have something than nothing. It is better to share generously and to become widely known for generous sharing. The author explains this with the help of an old maxim: He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you yourself have obliged. Further, the author argued that we need to set aim because aim defines progress and make such progress exciting. It reduces anxiety, but if you have no aim everything can mean anything or nothing.

Rule 8: Tell the Truth or At Least don't Lie

See the truth. Tell the truth. Truth is personal. It is not a collection of slogans or an ideology. Our truth is something only we can tell on the basis of the circumstances of our life. Communicate it carefully to yourself and others. This will ensure our security and life become more abundant. If our life is not what it could be, try telling the truth. Truth is the light in the darkness and to tell the truth is to bring the most habitable reality into being.

Rule 9: Assume the Person you are Listening to knows something you don't

Listening is paying attention. Genuine conversation is exploration, articulation and strategizing. When we involve in a genuine conversation, we are listening and talking-but mostly listening. Further, listening could transform people. So, listen, to yourself and to those with whom you are speaking. Your wisdom then consists not of the knowledge you already have, but the continual search for knowledge, which is the highest form of the wisdom.

Rule 10: Be Precise in your Speech

When we look at the world, we perceive only which enough for our plans and actions to work is. This is a radical, functional, unconscious simplification of the world and it is almost impossible for us not to mistake it for the world itself. It is for this reason that we must be precise in our aim. Absent that, we drown in the complexity of the world.

Rule 11: Do not bother Children while they are Skateboarding

There is a dark side to everything. You must know clearly what you want out of the situation and be prepared to clearly articulate your desire. Make your requests small and reasonable as possible-but ensure that its fulfillment would satisfy you. Further, the author reveals that agreeable people are compliant, and this robs them of their independence. They will go along with whoever makes a suggestion, instead of insisting, at least sometimes, in their own ways.

Rule 12: Pet a Cat when you encounter one in the Street

Shift the unit of time you use to frame your life. When the sun is shining, and times are good, you can make

plans for the future. But you cannot do that when you are in immense pain. So, be careful, put the things you can control in order. Repair what is in disorder. Make what is already good better. It is possible that you can manage if you are careful. People are very tough. People can survive through much pain and loss.

With the help of the above rules, one can change his/her life to be more meaningful. This is a self-help book and written in a more accessible style. Pictorial Presentation of each rule makes their explanation more impressive. Above all book is very useful for both researchers and academicians.