Assessing Jordan B. Peterson’s contribution to the psychology of wellbeing: A book review of 12 Rules for Life

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v9i1.829

Keywords: Jordan B. Peterson

ABSTRACT

This article first critically examines the Jordan B. Peterson phenomenon and the popular appeal of his book, 12 Rules for Life. It then evaluates this book’s contribution to the psychology of wellbeing in four areas: (a) the psychology of religious values, (b) the importance of personal responsibility, (c) accepting suffering as the foundation for wellbeing, and (d) the process of finding one's meaning based on personal sacrifice and negotiating a balance between chaos and order. Finally, it examines empirical support for his ideas, as well as his contribution to the emerging domain of existential positive psychology. Finally, implications for the future of positive psychology research and interventions are discussed.
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Renowned psychologist Jordan B Peterson's 12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos combines the hard-won truths of ancient tradition with the surprising revelations of cutting-edge scientific research. Humorous, surprising and informative, Dr. Peterson tells us why skateboarding boys and girls must be left alone, what terrible fate awaits those who criticize too easily, and why you should always pet a cat when you meet one on the street. What does the nervous system of the lowly lobster have to tell us about standing up straight (with our shoulders back) and success in life? Why did ancient Egy Jordan Peterson is an enigma. At present, he is the best-known public psychologist (Murphy, 2018), but also the least understood, because of the opacity of his views (Johnson, 2018). “It can be tough to parse the Peterson phenomenon. It behooves us to assess Peterson's book in an objective manner so that we can find something to enrich our research and practice of the psychology of wellbeing. I believe that Peterson's meteoric rise to fame was no accident—it was a phenomenon waiting to happen. In this review, I will assess Peterson's contribution to the psychology of meaning and wellbeing. Therefore, I will not get involved in the maelstrom of the cultural warfare swirling around him. A preliminary analysis of Peterson's popular appeal. In 12 Rules for Life, Peterson makes a number of claims that obliquely relate to his opposition to the C-16 bill and to the points he has raised in his media appearances since then, but he does not credit any of this as contributing directly to this book. Instead, he cites his hero, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, as articulating Peterson's core idea for the book: an opposition to the view that human beings are created for happiness. Peterson is not an anti-hero or a
misguided scoundrel. He is a tenured full professor of psychology at a major research university, who decided to write a self-help book to profit from his newfound fame. His book is opportunistic. There was nothing spectacular about reading it; the experience was mostly boring and tedious.