

12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos is a 2018 book by Jordan Peterson. It's a self-help book that provides life advice through various essays on both ethical principles and psychology in mythology, drawing heavily from personal anecdotes and some scientific studies.

## **A 3 Minute Summary of the 15 Core Lessons**

### **#1 Stand Up Straight With Your Shoulders Back**

This doesn't always literally refer to a mandate to stand up straight with your shoulders back (although Peterson says this can certainly help). What it really means is to act in the way you want to feel. Standing up straight or positioning yourself in a confident manner will help you produce real confidence in your day-to-day life and actions.

### **#2 Treat Yourself Like Someone You Are Responsible For Helping**

Peterson suggests that you should take yourself seriously and pay attention to how you feel and what you do as seriously as you would with someone else. All too often, we pay great attention to the motivations and feelings of others but failed to take adequate care or responsibility for our own actions. This needs to change if you want meaningful growth in your life.

### **#3 Make Friends With People Who Want the Best For You**

Surrounding yourself with people who will be good for your personal growth and who will improve your mental health is an excellent idea. Peterson suggests that spending time with friends or acquaintances who bring you down is a good way to lower the quality of your life. Instead, become friends with people who have your best interests at heart and you'll passively gain benefits.

### **#4 Compare Yourself to Who You Were Yesterday, Not to Who Someone Else is Today**

One of the worst things we can do for our mental health is to compare ourselves unfairly to others. You should always be competing with yourself from the previous day, not measuring your own accomplishments and growth with other people. Only you can be a valid measuring stick for a future version of yourself.

### **#5 Do Not Let Your Children Do Anything That Makes You Dislike Them**

This is a broad way of framing Peterson's idea that parents are responsible for how their children grow up. It's up to parents to prevent their kids from becoming monsters or terrible people, and this starts by refusing to let your children do things that you dislike or would not do yourself.

### **#6 Set Your House in Order Before You Criticize the World**

This idea can be boiled down to 'clean up your life before you try to change the world around you.' Everyone needs to start small before moving on to larger concepts and plans. You won't be in any shape to change the world or criticize the actions of others if your own home and life are in shambles.

### **#7 Pursue What is Meaningful**

Peterson advises that everyone should pursue what is meaningful to them rather than what is expedient. This means that your life will only be worth living if you sacrifice for things you actually care about. This is opposed to things you are told to care about or those that satisfy a momentary or short-term desire.

### **#8 Tell the Truth, Or At Least Refuse to Lie**

The truth is of tremendous importance both for your own internal consistency and integrity and society at large. Every lie you make, Peterson argues, weakens your integrity and your actions. Small lies should be avoided just as much as big ones whenever possible.

### **#9 Assume That the Person You Are Listening To Might Know Something You Don't**

Far too few of us know how to actively and competently listen to others. More often, we love to hear ourselves speak and assume that we know everything. Peterson advises that we should take an active attempt to listen to others and be open to new ideas or suggestions. It's the only way to truly intellectually grow.

### **#10 Be Precise In Your Speech**

Another way of framing this takeaway might be, "say what you mean". Don't settle for obscure language or miscommunication. Always be precise with your speech and say what you mean to say so that you can communicate clearly with others and pursue goals and relationships that really matter to you.

### **#11 Do Not Bother Children When They Are Skateboarding**

This "rule for life" might sound odd at first glance, but what it really means is that you should let children play, even if it seems like they might get a little hurt for their activity. Peterson advises against the modern coddling of children and claims that even safe environments will be turned a little adventurous and risky from normal play. Play is important for children's growth and development.

### **#12 Pet a Cat When You Encounter One on the Street**

This is another confusing rule for life, but the concept it demonstrates merely suggests that you should take the time to "smell the roses". Peterson advises that you should take the time to notice the good things in life and pay attention to the inherent fragility and beauty of nature. Peterson uses cats instead of dogs because cats do their own thing and are not to be controlled. You can only enjoy them while they pass by.

### **#13 Parents Are the Arbiters of Society**

Peterson stresses the importance of parents in modern society several times throughout the book. In his mind, parents are the first teachers of every generation and so have a great responsibility to produce successful adults.

### **#14 Help Your Friend As You Would Help Yourself**

Peterson argues that you should never let a friend do something harmful for themselves

if you wouldn't do it to yourself. Being a good friend is more than just bowing to their every need and desire. Sometimes it means helping them make hard choices for their own good.

### **#15 Look for Responsibility Instead of Resentment**

Peterson says that there are genuine times when it's okay to feel resentment, particularly if you've been taken advantage of. But many times, your own actions are responsible for a particular predicament or difficulty. In these cases, focus more on taking responsibility for your actions rather than feeling resentment.

## **Top 10 Quotes from 12 Rules for Life**

1. "When you have something to say, silence is a lie."
2. "Rule 4 Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not to who someone else is today."
3. "In the West, we have been withdrawing from our tradition-, religion- and even nation-centered cultures, partly to decrease the danger of group conflict. But we are increasingly falling prey to the desperation of meaninglessness, and that is no improvement at all."
4. "And if you think tough men are dangerous, wait until you see what weak men are capable of."
5. "Ideologies are substitutes for true knowledge, and ideologues are always dangerous when they come to power, because a simple-minded I-know-it-all approach is no match for the complexity of existence."
6. "To suffer terribly and to know yourself as the cause: that is Hell."
7. "Perhaps you are overvaluing what you don't have and undervaluing what you do."
8. "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 wisdom."
9. "Always place your becoming above your current being."
10. "The successful among us delay gratification. The successful among us bargain with the future."