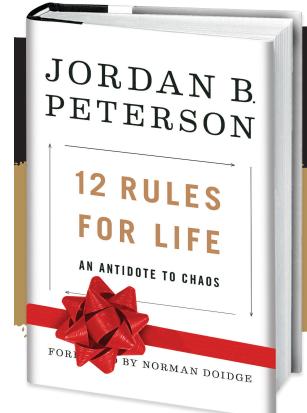
My Gift to your THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

A copy of Dr. Jordan B. Peterson's 12 RULES FOR LIFE, publishing on January 23, 2018. I have pre-ordered a copy for you, and will have it to you as soon as it's available.

- Happy Holidays!-



WHAT DOES EVERYONE IN THE MODERN WORLD NEED TO KNOW?

To the transfer of the second

Renowned psychologist Jordan B. Peterson's answer to this most difficult of questions uniquely combines the hard-won truths of ancient tradition with the stunning revelations of cutting-edge scientific research.

WHO IS DR. JORDAN B. PETERSON?

"One of the most important thinkers to emerge on the world stage for many years.... profound, charismatic and serious.... he has become increasingly difficult to ignore—and whoever choses to do so, whether out of partiality or prejudice, will deprive themselves of an intriguing intellectual journey." —The Spectator (UK)

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December 16, 2017

Merry Christmas!

Along with this gift certificate, you have received a preprint of the introduction ("Overture") to my new book, 12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos, which will be available January 23, 2018 and shipped immediately thereafter.

I hope that reading the introduction proves interesting and heightens your interest in the book, and that the book itself provides you with some additional defense against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

If you find yourself interested, you can also watch the lectures at Jordan Peterson Videos on YouTube, or listen to my podcast, which you can find at www.jordanbpeterson.com.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jordan B Peterson



OVFRTURF

THIS BOOK HAS A SHORT history and a long history. We'll begin with the short history.

In 2012, I started contributing to a website called Quora. On Quora, anyone can ask a question, of any sort—and anyone can answer. Readers upvote those answers they like, and downvote those they don't. In this manner, the most useful answers rise to the top, while the others sink into oblivion. I was curious about the site. I liked its free-for-all nature. The discussion was often compelling, and it was interesting to see the diverse range of opinions generated by the same question.

When I was taking a break (or avoiding work), I often turned to Quora, looking for questions to engage with. I struggled with, and eventually answered, such questions as "What's the difference between being happy and being content?", "What things get better as you age?" and "What makes life more meaningful?"

Quora tells you how many people have viewed your answer and how many upvotes you received. Thus, you can determine your reach, and see what people think of your ideas. Only a small minority of those who view an answer upvote it. As of July 2017, as I write this—and five years after I addressed "What makes life more meaningful?"—my answer to that question has received a relatively small audience (14,000 views, and 133 upvotes), while my response to the question about aging

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has been viewed by 7,200 people and received 36 upvotes. Not exactly home runs. However, it's to be expected. On such sites, most answers receive very little attention, while a tiny minority become disproportionately popular.

Soon after, I answered another question: "What are the most valuable things everyone should know?" I wrote a list of rules, or maxims; some dead serious, some tongue-in-cheek-"Be grateful in spite of your suffering," "Do not do things that you hate," "Do not hide things in the fog," and so on. The Quora readers appeared pleased with this list. They commented on and shared it. They said such things as "I'm definitely printing this list out and keeping it as a reference. Simply phenomenal," and "You win Quora. We can just close the site now." Students at the University of Toronto, where I teach, came up to me and told me how much they liked it. As of May 2017, my answer to "what are the most valuable things" has been viewed by a hundred and twenty thousand people and been upvoted twenty-three hundred times. Only a few hundred of the roughly six hundred thousand questions on Quora have cracked the two-thousand-upvote barrier. My procrastination-induced musings hit a nerve. I had written a 99.9 percentile answer.

It was not obvious to me when I wrote the list of rules for living that it was going to perform so well. I had put a fair bit of care into all the sixty or so answers I submitted in the few months surrounding that post. Nonetheless, Quora provides market research at its finest. The respondents are anonymous. They're disinterested, in the best sense. Their opinions are spontaneous and unbiased. So, I paid attention to the results, and thought about the reasons for that answer's disproportionate success. Perhaps I struck the right balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar while formulating the rules. Perhaps people were drawn to the structure that such rules imply. Perhaps people just like lists.

A few months earlier, in March of 2012, I had received an email from a literary agent. She had heard me speak on CBC radio during a show entitled *Just Say No to Happiness*, where I had criticized the idea that happiness was the proper goal for life. Over the previous decades

12 RULES FOR LIFE

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I had read more than my share of dark books about the twentieth century, focusing particularly on Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, the great documenter of the slave-labourcamp horrors of the latter, once wrote that the "pitiful ideology" holding that "human beings are created for happiness" was an ideology "done in by the first blow of the work assigner's cudgel." In a crisis, the inevitable suffering that life entails can rapidly make a mockery of the idea that happiness is the proper pursuit of the individual. On the radio show, I suggested, instead, that a deeper meaning was required. I noted that the nature of such meaning was constantly re-presented in the great stories of the past, and that it had more to do with developing character in the face of suffering than with happiness. This is part of the long history of the present work.

From 1985 until 1999 I worked for about three hours a day on the only other book I have ever published: *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief.* During that time, and in the years since, I also taught a course on the material in that book, first at Harvard, and now at the University of Toronto. In 2013, observing the rise of YouTube, and because of the popularity of some work I had done with TVO, a Canadian public TV station, I decided to film my university and public lectures and place them online. They attracted an increasingly large audience—more than a million views by April 2016. The number of views has risen very dramatically since then (up to eighteen million as I write this), but that is in part because I became embroiled in a political controversy that drew an inordinate amount of attention.

That's another story. Maybe even another book.

I proposed in *Maps of Meaning* that the great myths and religious stories of the past, particularly those derived from an earlier, oral tradition, were *moral* in their intent, rather than descriptive. Thus, they did not concern themselves with what the world was, as a scientist might have it, but with how a human being should act. I suggested that our ancestors portrayed the world as a stage—a drama—instead of a place of objects. I described how I had come to believe that the constituent elements of the world as drama were order and chaos, and not material things.

OVERTURE

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Order is where the people around you act according to well-understood social norms, and remain predictable and cooperative. It's the world of social structure, explored territory, and familiarity. The state of Order is typically portrayed, symbolically—imaginatively—as masculine. It's the Wise King and the Tyrant, forever bound together, as society is simultaneously structure and oppression.

Chaos, by contrast, is where—or when—something unexpected happens. Chaos emerges, in trivial form, when you tell a joke at a party with people you think you know and a silent and embarrassing chill falls over the gathering. Chaos is what emerges more catastrophically when you suddenly find yourself without employment, or are betrayed by a lover. As the antithesis of symbolically masculine order, it's presented imaginatively as feminine. It's the new and unpredictable suddenly emerging in the midst of the commonplace familiar. It's Creation and Destruction, the source of new things and the destination of the dead (as nature, as opposed to culture, is simultaneously birth and demise).

Order and chaos are the yang and yin of the famous Taoist symbol: two serpents, head to tail.* Order is the white, masculine serpent; Chaos, its black, feminine counterpart. The black dot in the white—and the white in the black—indicate the possibility of transformation: just when things seem secure, the unknown can loom, unexpectedly and large. Conversely, just when everything seems lost, new order can emerge from catastrophe and chaos.

For the Taoists, meaning is to be found on the border between the ever-entwined pair. To walk that border is to stay on the path of life, the divine Way.

And that's much better than happiness.

The literary agent I referred to listened to the CBC radio broadcast where I discussed such issues. It left her asking herself deeper questions. She emailed me, asking if I had considered writing a book for a

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^{*} The yin/yang symbol is the second part of the more comprehensive five-part *tajitu*, a diagram representing both the original absolute unity and its division into the multiplicity of the observed world. This is discussed in more detail in Rule 2, below, as well as elsewhere in the book.



general audience. I had previously attempted to produce a more accessible version of *Maps of Meaning*, which is a very dense book. But I found that the spirit was neither in me during that attempt nor in the resultant manuscript. I think this was because I was imitating my former self, and my previous book, instead of occupying the place between order and chaos and producing something new. I suggested that she watch four of the lectures I had done for a TVO program called *Big Ideas* on my YouTube channel. I thought if she did that we could have a more informed and thorough discussion about what kind of topics I might address in a more publicly accessible book.

She contacted me a few weeks later, after watching all four lectures and discussing them with a colleague. Her interest had been further heightened, as had her commitment to the project. That was promising—and unexpected. I'm always surprised when people respond positively to what I am saying, given its seriousness and strange nature. I'm amazed I have been allowed (even encouraged) to teach what I taught first in Boston and now in Toronto. I've always thought that if people really noticed what I was teaching there would be Hell to pay. You can decide for yourself what truth there might be in that concern after reading this book. :)

She suggested that I write a guide of sorts to what a person needs "to live well"—whatever that might mean. I thought immediately about my Quora list. I had in the meantime written some further thoughts about of the rules I had posted. People had responded positively toward those new ideas, as well. It seemed to me, therefore, that there might be a nice fit between the Quora list and my new agent's ideas. So, I sent her the list. She liked it.

At about the same time, a friend and former student of mine, the novelist and screenwriter Gregg Hurwitz, was considering a new book, which would become the bestselling thriller *Orphan X*. He liked the rules, too. He had Mia, the book's female lead, post a selection of them, one by one, on her fridge, at points in the story where they seemed apropos. That was another piece of evidence supporting my supposition of their attractiveness. I suggested to my agent that I write a brief chapter on each of the rules. She agreed, so I wrote a book proposal

O V E R T U R E XXIII









suggesting as much. When I started writing the actual chapters, however, they weren't at all brief. I had much more to say about each rule than I originally envisioned.

This was partly because I had spent a very long time researching my first book: studying history, mythology, neuroscience, psychoanalysis, child psychology, poetry, and large sections of the Bible. I read and perhaps even understood much of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Goethe's *Faust* and Dante's *Inferno*. I integrated all of that, for better or worse, trying to address a perplexing problem: the reason or reasons for the nuclear standoff of the Cold War. I couldn't understand how belief systems could be so important to people that they were willing to risk the destruction of the world to protect them. I came to realize that shared belief systems made people intelligible to one another—and that the systems weren't just about belief.

People who live by the same code are rendered mutually predictable to one another. They act in keeping with each other's expectations and desires. They can cooperate. They can even compete peacefully, because everyone knows what to expect from everyone else. A shared belief system, partly psychological, partly acted out, simplifies everyone—in their own eyes, and in the eyes of others. Shared beliefs simplify the world, as well, because people who know what to expect from one another can act together to tame the world. There is perhaps nothing more important than the maintenance of this organization—this simplification. If it's threatened, the great ship of state rocks.

It isn't precisely that people will fight for what they believe. They will fight, instead, to maintain *the match between* what they believe, what they expect, and what they desire. They will fight to maintain the match between what they expect and how everyone is acting. It is precisely the maintenance of that match that enables everyone to live together peacefully, predictably and productively. It reduces uncertainty and the chaotic mix of intolerable emotions that uncertainty inevitably produces.

Imagine someone betrayed by a trusted lover. The sacred social contract obtaining between the two has been violated. Actions speak louder than words, and an act of betrayal disrupts the fragile and

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carefully negotiated peace of an intimate relationship. In the aftermath of disloyalty, people are seized by terrible emotions: disgust, contempt (for self and traitor), guilt, anxiety, rage and dread. Conflict is inevitable, sometimes with deadly results. Shared belief systems—shared systems of agreed-upon conduct and expectation—regulate and control all those powerful forces. It's no wonder that people will fight to protect something that saves them from being possessed by emotions of chaos and terror (and after that from degeneration into strife and combat).

There's more to it, too. A shared cultural system stabilizes human interaction, but is also a system of value—a hierarchy of value, where some things are given priority and importance and others are not. In the absence of such a system of value, people simply cannot act. In fact, they can't even perceive, because both action and perception require a goal, and a valid goal is, by necessity, something valued. We experience much of our positive emotion in relation to goals. We are not happy, technically speaking, unless we see ourselves progressing—and the very idea of progression implies value. Worse yet is the fact that the meaning of life without positive value is not simply neutral. Because we are vulnerable and mortal, pain and anxiety are an integral part of human existence. We must have something to set against the suffering that is intrinsic to Being.* We must have the meaning inherent in a profound system of value or the horror of existence rapidly becomes paramount. Nihilism beckons, with its hopelessness and despair.

So: no value, no meaning. Between value systems, however, there is the possibility of conflict. We are thus eternally caught between the

O V E R T U R E XXV







^{*} I use the term Being (with a capital "B") in part because of my exposure to the ideas of the 20th-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Heidegger tried to distinguish between reality, as conceived objectively, and the totality of human experience (which is his "Being"). Being (with a capital "B") is what each of us experiences, subjectively, personally and individually, as well as what we each experience jointly with others. As such, it includes emotions, drives, dreams, visions and revelations, as well as our private thoughts and perceptions. Being is also, finally, something that is brought into existence by action, so its nature is to an indeterminate degree a consequence of our decisions and choices—something shaped by our hypothetically free will. Construed in this manner, Being is (1) not something easily and directly reducible to the material and objective and (2) something that most definitely requires its own term, as Heidegger labored for decades to indicate.



most diamantine rock and the hardest of places: Loss of group-centred belief renders life chaotic, miserable, intolerable; presence of group-centred belief makes conflict with other groups inevitable. In the West, we have been withdrawing from our tradition-, religion- and even nation-centred 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.

While writing *Maps of Meaning*, I was (also) driven by the realization that we can no longer afford conflict—certainly not on the scale of the world conflagrations of the twentieth century. Our technologies of destruction have become too powerful. The potential consequences of war are literally apocalyptic. But we cannot simply abandon our systems of value, our beliefs, our cultures, either. I agonized over this apparently intractable problem for months. Was there a third way, invisible to me? I dreamt one night during this period that I was suspended in mid-air, clinging to a chandelier, many stories above the ground, directly under the dome of a massive cathedral. The people on the floor below were distant and tiny. There was a great expanse between me and any wall—and even the peak of the dome itself.

I have learned to pay attention to dreams, not least because of my training as a clinical psychologist. Dreams shed light on the dim places where reason itself has yet to voyage. I have studied Christianity a fair bit, too (more than other religious traditions, although I am always trying to redress this lack). Like others, therefore, I must and do draw more from what I do know than from what I do not. I knew that cathedrals were constructed in the shape of a cross, and that the point under the dome was the centre of the cross. I knew that the cross was simultaneously, the point of greatest suffering, the point of death and transformation, and the symbolic centre of the world. That was not somewhere I wanted to be. I managed to get down, out of the heights—out of the symbolic sky—back to safe, familiar, anonymous ground. I don't know how. Then, still in my dream, I returned to my bedroom and my bed and tried to return to sleep and the peace of unconsciousness. As I relaxed, however, I could feel my body transported. A great wind was dissolving me, preparing to propel me back

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to the cathedral, to place me once again at that central point. There was no escape. It was a true nightmare. I forced myself awake. The curtains behind me were blowing in over my pillows. Half asleep, I looked at the foot of the bed. I saw the great cathedral doors. I shook myself completely awake and they disappeared.

My dream placed me at the centre of Being itself, and there was no escape. It took me months to understand what this meant. During this time, I came to a more complete, personal realization of what the great stories of the past continually insist upon: The centre is occupied by the individual. The centre is marked by the cross, as X marks the spot. Existence at that cross is suffering and transformation—and that fact, above all, needs to be voluntarily accepted. It is possible to transcend slavish adherence to the group and its doctrines and, simultaneously, to avoid the pitfalls of its opposite extreme, nihilism. It is possible, instead, to find sufficient meaning in individual consciousness and experience.

How could the world be freed from the terrible dilemma of conflict, on the one hand, and psychological and social dissolution, on the other? The answer was this: through the elevation and development of the individual, and through the willingness of everyone to shoulder the burden of Being and to adopt the heroic path. We must each take as much responsibility as possible for individual life, society and the world. We must each tell the truth and repair what is in disrepair and break down and recreate what is old and outdated. It is in this manner that we can and must reduce the suffering that poisons the world. It's asking a lot. It's asking for everything. But the alternative—the horror of authoritarian belief, the chaos of the collapsed state, the tragic catastrophe of the unbridled natural world, the existential angst and weakness of the purposeless individual—is clearly worse.

I have been thinking and lecturing about such ideas for decades. I have built up a large corpus of stories and concepts pertaining to them. I am not for a moment claiming, however, that I am entirely correct or complete in my thinking. Being is far more complicated than one person can know, and I don't have the whole story. I'm simply offering the best I can manage.

O V E R T U R E XXVII







In any case, the consequence of all that previous research and thinking was the new essays which eventually became this book. My initial idea was to write a short essay on all forty of the answers I had provided to Quora. That proposal was accepted by Penguin Random House Canada. While writing, however, I cut the essay number to twenty-five and then to sixteen and then finally, to the current twelve. I've been editing that remainder, with the help and care of my official editor (and with the vicious and horribly accurate criticism of Hurwitz, mentioned previously) for the past three years.

It took a long time to settle on a title: 12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos. Why did that one rise up above all others? First and foremost, because of its simplicity. It indicates clearly that people need ordering principles, and that chaos otherwise beckons. We require rules, standards, values—alone and together. We're pack animals, beasts of burden. We must bear a load, to justify our miserable existence. We require routine and tradition. That's order. Order can become excessive, and that's not good, but chaos can swamp us, so we drown and that is also not good. We need to stay on the straight and narrow path. Each of the twelve rules of this book—and their accompanying essays—therefore provide a guide to being there. "There" is the dividing line between order and chaos. That's where we are simultaneously stable enough, exploring enough, transforming enough, repairing enough, and cooperating enough. It's there we find the meaning that justifies life and its inevitable suffering. Perhaps, if we lived properly, we would be able to tolerate the weight of our own self-consciousness. Perhaps, if we lived properly, we could withstand the knowledge of our own fragility and mortality, without the sense of aggrieved victimhood that produces, first, resentment, then envy, and then the desire for vengeance and destruction. Perhaps, if we lived properly, we wouldn't have to turn to totalitarian certainty to shield ourselves from the knowledge of our own insufficiency and ignorance. Perhaps we could come to avoid those pathways to Hell—and we have seen in the terrible twentieth century just how real Hell can be.

I hope that these rules and their accompanying essays will help people understand what they already know: that the soul of the

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individual eternally hungers for the heroism of genuine Being, and that the willingness to take on that responsibility is identical to the decision to live a meaningful life.

If we each live properly, we will collectively flourish.

Best wishes to you all, as you proceed through these pages.

Dr. Jordan B Peterson Clinical Psychologist and Professor of Psychology





O V E R T U R E XXIX