



12 Rules for Life; An Antidote to Chaos, by Jordan B. Peterson, Rule 1

Recently, I read a book titled *12 Rules For Life: An Antidote To Chaos*, by Jordan B. Peterson. I found it to be a deep, insightful book that requires a slow, thoughtful read, and then a re-read. If you have seen my previous blogs, you are aware that I have a voracious appetite for good non-fiction books. In my opinion, this is one of the better titles in my library. So, I thought I would begin a series of each of the 12 rules, starting with the first, and provide a short summary.

Stand up straight with your shoulders back.

This chapter is a lot about lobsters and birds. Yes, you read that right. Rule one discusses how most animals, from crustaceans to humans, have a natural hierarchy system that is built into their DNA. Lobsters are territorial. They make residence in areas that can provide food and shelter. But what happens when more than one lobster wants to occupy the same territory? This is where hierarchy and dominance enter. There are specific actions and levels of aggression that take place when one lobster challenges another. Once a lobster achieves dominance, its serotonin levels increase, and octopamine decreases. The opposite happens to the loser. These changes, over time, affect the way the lobster carries itself, and are easily observable. When a defeated lobster finally dares to fight again, it is more likely to lose while the previous winner is likely to keep winning.

These same attributes also apply to humans, including the chemical changes in the brain. Defeated humans often assume a posture that matches their hierarchical position. Winners tend to keep winning and losers continue losing. Those who have are likely to have more while those without are likely to continue without.

The writer encourages us to “stand up straight with your shoulders back”, both physically and metaphysically. There is something to be said about simply standing taller and straighter. Speak your mind. Put your desires forward. You are likely to begin to feel more confident as the serotonin flows.

In my own experience of observing other people, I have seen the way a person's self-image can be reflected, even in their posture. Someone who has been beaten down by life's difficult circumstances can often be identified by their slumped, defeated stance. Sometimes simply changing the way one carries him or herself can make a difference. This is not in any way meant to encourage arrogance or the suppression of others to gain the upper hand. But each of us, no matter the background or life circumstances, has a purpose and value, which is deserving of respect. So, stand straight with your shoulders back and face life with more confidence. As you do, that confidence is likely to grow and flourish.

Medworks thanks [Darrell Shires](#) for his contribution to this post.