

## **I've Only Read Self-help Books For The Past Year And A Half; Here's What The Authors Have Taught Me**

Summer is slowly sputtering to an end (as unbelievable as that may feel given the record heat across the U.S.), and with its passing typically comes a goodbye to [beach reads](#) and a return to work, school, and the regularly scheduled activities of life. However, the endeavor I've taken up this past summer—reading as many self-help books as I possibly can to see what their authors have to teach me—has ended up being so illuminating that I'm reluctant to say goodbye to it. I began reading self-help books as an anecdotal attempt to learn how to better navigate life and the fundamental principles of adulting. Upon my initial discovery of the genre, I was looking for inspiration, something that would give me the motivation to grab life by the horns and manage the unpredictable yet invigorating practice that is maneuvering adulthood. Before actually starting my expedition to reading self-help books, I envisioned them being some sort of rudimentary educational take on how to change my life in 90 days (given that everything I was doing prior to the reading was utterly distasteful). To my surprise, the authors greatly challenged the preconceptions I had towards the genre, guiding me through ways to enhance my overall quality of life in an uncondescending—and somewhat comforting—way. After plowing through the first five chapters of the first read, I was highly intrigued and thought I'd give it a go.

When I began reading *The Audacity to Be Queen* by Gina DeVee, I was trying to create a new version of myself as I transitioned to a new environment in college and felt like I might have been losing parts of myself in the process. It was a challenge having to rekindle a sense of creativity, humor, and charisma, often feeling like I would never escape the period of art block I

was in. I felt lost and almost apathetic toward the forthcoming developments of life. Thankfully, DeVee's work quickly caught my attention, allowing me to unlock an emancipating and powerful side of my identity that seemed to have been hiding. The book helped me redevelop an awareness of my confidence, poise, and unapologetic feminine nature, which encouraged me to release any feelings of self-doubt and self-sabotage, revealing a better version of myself.

“Queens, of course, have confidence, but certainty is a whole ‘nother realm of power... Unless we *know* in every fiber of our beings that our dreams *can* and *will* be brought to fruition and that we *do* have what it takes to achieve our goals, we'll find ourselves wishing, wanting, procrastinating, and making excuses not to avail.”

I know I'm not the only young person who's had trouble establishing financial independence and stability on their path to adulthood, and Napoleon Hill's *Success: Discovering the Path to Riches* talks about money and financial responsibility in such a brutally honest way that it almost scared me into shaping up.

“Tell me how you use your spare time and how you spend your money, and I will tell you where and what you will be in ten years from now... The man who does more than he is paid for will soon be paid for more than he does. When your desires are strong enough, you will appear to possess superhuman powers to achieve.”

It's important that finances are rationed and not constantly splurged—but that's still a skill I'm learning to undertake. Now, I don't quite agree with Hill's axiom that money equals success, but I appreciate and accept his steadfast belief that any goal is achievable with a fervent passion.

*Atomic Habits*, by James Clear, is one of the most recently well-known self-help books of the past few years, and while its advice may seem prosaic, its ground-up approach to changing your life made genuine sense to me. While I was sure Clear was going to tell me to try and make my bed every day and wake up every morning with a positive attitude (already doing it, thanks!), I was actually confronted with a list of small, easy, and proven changes I could make each day to build good habits and break old ones.

Self-help books certainly aren't the only tool I use to manage my history of intense anxiety, but I was able to learn some great anxiety-reducing skills and exercises by reading *Unwinding Anxiety* by Judson Brewer, MD, Ph.D. Brewer does a wonderful job of communicating scientifically proven ways to cope with the cycles of worry and stress that are constantly overtaking the brains of people with social anxiety, generalized anxiety disorder, or chronic worrying. Brewer's approach taught me more about the scientific background behind my anxiety, which—somewhat ironically—has helped to reduce it, as I finally understand where it's coming from.

The last self-help book I read (but definitely not least) is *Self-Care for Black Women*, By Oludara Adeeyo, which takes a deep dive into the healing process of a Black woman who may be struggling with prioritizing herself and maintaining her identity in society. It can often be a struggle to combine my identity as a young Black woman with my constantly evolving personal

and professional life, but Adeeyo's book reminded me that I don't have to go at it alone; other people, and Black women in particular, are facing similar challenges, and sometimes just reminding myself of that fact is enough to make me breathe easier.

There are still a multitude of lessons that I hope to learn as I grow into my adulthood, like how to cope with my anxious attachment style in relationships or what I can do to help manage my ADHD and OCD when it comes to completing daily tasks. Of course, however, I recognize that adulting is a process and I must also learn from experience, but self-help books have given me the confidence to voyage upward toward the never-ending road of navigating adulthood.