

Self-help books: Do they make you happy?

Discussion at The Park

Wednesday, 20 June 2018, 7:30pm at *The Park Tavern*, Macclesfield.

Every year, more than 2,000 new self-help books are put on bookstore shelves in the hopes that they will give guidance to those who are struggling with all sorts of things, from dating to finding positivity.¹ However, new research suggests that self-help books may trigger more stress related thoughts and in turn, leave you less content than you were before.

1. What self-help books are you aware of? What have you read? Which, if any, made any meaningful difference in your life?
2. Why do you think self-help books are so popular? Are they for everyone?
3. Is happiness an object that can be purchased? Can you learn to be happy by reading a self-help book?
4. With the support they do provide, should self-help be taught at school/college?
5. The best-selling 2006 book, '*The Secret*', which has sold more than 19 million copies based on the premise of the '*Law of attraction*': that if you think positively enough, you will attract more positive 'energy' and good things will happen to you. Brown ² says, "It epitomizes the infantile notion that we can and should be able to have anything we want, by wishing it - by demanding it - and that the universe is there to give us everything that we want." What is your view?
6. Why might self-help books be unhelpful?
7. Unhappy people make companies a lot of money (11 billion dollars spent in 2008³), and preys on the vulnerable and manipulates their weaknesses by selling false hope.⁴ What are your thoughts on this?

Some useful pre-reading:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-help_book
- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/oct/26/booksonhealth.lifeandhealth>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_attraction_\(New_Thought\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_attraction_(New_Thought))

S Robinson, 05 June 2018

¹ Website: <https://classpass.com/blog/2016/08/30/news-self-help-books-study/>

² Interview with Derren Brown:

https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/derren-brown-happy-book-interview_uk_57d96debe4b0a32e2f6d9710

³ Website

https://www.forbes.com/2009/01/15/self-help-industry-ent-sales-cx_ml_0115selfhelp.html#6cd2b95f6758

⁴ Website:

<https://www.inc.com/matthew-jones/11-billion-reasons-self-help-industry-doesnt-want-you-to-know-truth-about-happiness.html>