

Book Review: *Own It- A Practical Guide to Defying the Odds and Claiming Your Life*

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Self-discovery is a powerful, but sometimes challenging journey, and we often seek out advice, insights, and resources to aid us along the way. Based on information communicated from the media and other popular press sources, the dominant message conveyed is that we can “fix” or address areas of our life on our own, without the need for professionals, and we can do this thanks to resources like self-help books. This is especially enticing given the consideration of individualistic cultures, which pride themselves on having high degrees of independence and self-efficacy, especially when it comes to taking care of one’s emotional well-being. I think part of the reason self-help books are so appealing is the notion that readers are learning from the author’s mistakes, which will hopefully arm them with the knowledge and tools not to fall into the same pitfalls, and they are able to do so without having to address potentially embarrassing or personal topics with someone else; self-help books usually communicate life lessons through a casual tone that makes the message content relatable, but it is important to keep in mind that there is rarely a “one size fits all” approach when it comes to topics, such as taking ownership of one’s life. Nevertheless, books like Adi Redzic’s *Own It: A Practical Guide to Defying the Odds and Claiming Your Life* offer an attractive place to start for inspiration and motivation.

The main topic of this text is to take charge of your life and win against all odds, and it is organized around two premises: 1) “You will take responsibility for your life and your pursuit of happiness and 2) You will dream big and never give up.” *Own it* offers practical lessons intended to empower readers to take ownership of their fulfillment journeys through finding one’s purpose, discovering passions, getting an education and paying for it, doing the work they love, and managing money; the text is divided into five parts that address these lessons: part one is about how we live, and parts two through five address the wider contexts that influence and are subsequently influenced by our pursuit of fulfillment, namely relationships (part two), learning

(part three), careers (part four), and money (part five). The text is structured in such a way that allows readers to either go directly to a section that appeals to them or read straight through. The main topic of the book is that “authentic happiness is not possible without taking responsibility for our own lives,” and claiming your life is an ongoing and active process.

Redzic intertwines personal narratives, quotes, practical advice in the forms of bullet points or numbered lists, questions in italics, built-in exercises, and additional resources to structure and support his argument that it is possible to succeed against seemingly insurmountable challenges. The book opens with a personal narrative to set the scene, and anecdotal stories continue to be an element that is implemented in each chapter in order to connect to overarching themes. Each chapter begins with a quote that gives readers an inspirational insight into what that chapter will focus on. For example, at the beginning of chapter 4, which is about defining your values, it begins with the quote “Values aren’t buses...they’re not supposed to get us anywhere. They’re supposed to define who [we] are.” The effect of using narratives and quotes is that it allows Redzic’s content message to come across in an accessible manner, therefore increasing his ability to convince readers that success and “owning it” is an attainable feat for anyone. He uses the structure of the book to his advantage by driving home the point that one can “make it” in the world by following practical advice and taking an active role in discovering what will work best for them. This is evident in the very nature of how the book is laid out: all the chapters build on each other, but the text is also organized in a way that allows readers to skip to individual chapters if there’s a particular area where advice is desired. For example, part one establishes the importance of taking ownership of one’s life and being authentically ourselves, which is the foundation for the entirety of the book, but it also shifts into explaining that we do this through

finding our purpose, seeking clarity, and defining our values, which all correspond to subsequent sections that readers can skip directly to.

Additionally, Redzic frequently sprinkles in bullet pointed lists and numbered tips throughout chapters, which is a clever strategy to appeal to readers who are simply looking for a “quick fix” or more information without having to read the whole text. For example he provides the following list of lessons that apply to deciding to be who we are and living it out daily: “finding yourself takes time, commit to exploring who you are, vulnerability is essential to our happiness, it is much easier to be yourself than to try to be someone else, people can spot fakeness from a mile, your acceptance of yourself has nothing to do with others accepting you, your job is to make yourself happy, if people judge you, that’s because they are uncomfortable, be compassionate with yourself, you are fundamentally good, and so is everyone, do not compare yourself to others, authentic happiness is not possible unless we seek that happiness from within, don’t play by other’s rules, and we were all created for a particular reason.” Furthermore, the use of rhetorical questions in italics and built-in exercises, have a similar effect by prompting brainstorming, further making points, and challenging readers to look at a particular aspect of their life differently. One of the built-in exercises regarding helping readers find their passions includes the suggestion to play a movie of your life and remember all the moments when you were really, truly unequivocally happy and excited and to write them down. Then, the reader is instructed to take some deep breaths and time away from the list and then to return to everything they wrote down and see if there is a pattern that ties all of the experiences together because those moments, activities, and situations describe passions. The inclusion of these elements help support one of the main themes of the text, which is that to “own their life,” readers must take an active role in it, and the questions, in particular, serve as a way for readers to actively engage

with the material, rather than passively taking it in. For example, questions like “*We all strive to be well-rounded beings, and life is short, so why spend time limiting ourselves?*” and “*How can we do much else for others if we can’t, at some level, do the same for ourselves?*” allow readers to contemplate the messages on a deeper level. Lastly, Redzic ends the text with a quick overview of additional basic information and resources surrounding important topics, such as the FAFSA, loans, and financial advice, which effectively ties together the systematic process that he had established throughout the book: this process included convincing readers of the need to take ownership of their lives, giving them tips on how to do so, defining relevant terms and how they relate, and circling back to themes explained in previous chapters. The text, therefore, comes full circle in an appropriate and meaningful way because it builds upon the foundation that was established in previous chapters, which emphasized the importance of managing one’s finances and claiming one’s life through responsibility by sharing resources that might not be common knowledge for all readers. Overall, the text and Redzic’s argument are structured in such a way that successfully utilizes stylistic strategies to allow his message to resonate with readers, especially through the practical and down-to-earth tone that the book embodies.

However, while this book takes a motivational approach to spark readers’ inspiration to act, one of the points of critique lies on the double edge effect of this blunt and straightforward communication. This stylistic tone is geared at a very specific audience that may not appeal to all readers. Depending on the different motives and mindsets readers have going into the book, the language may come across in a harsh or insensitive manner for those who are feeling particularly helpless or unsure of where to start in their self-discovery or ownership journey. For example, when discussing how to pay for college, Redzic emphasizes the need to “find a way.” An additional limitation is that the advice is sometimes oversimplified. While the book prides itself

on being practical and accessible, much of the advice is often easier said than done, and, because of the individual nature of self-discovery, it doesn't always provide the space for considering the variety of unique challenges that might arise when on this pursuit. For example, in the perseverance, patience, and passion section, the author says, "come up with a reasonable goal that is rooted in your passion, commit to it, and set your mind on pursuit of it to see what happens" or "life can be hard as it is, so don't make it harder; be smart. be positive and have fun." Therefore, some of the advice may be more difficult for readers to implement realistically.

Despite these minor drawbacks, *Own It* helps readers understand that taking ownership is an **active** task, and it is a very feasible and realistic one at that. I would recommend this book to others because it successfully tackles challenging topics, such as taking responsibility for your life and your pursuit of happiness, as well as the value of hard-work and persistence, in a relatable way, but it also places this process within the context of wider influences, through the discussion of relationships, learning, careers, and money. Stylistic elements such as personal narratives, quotes, overarching themes, accessible language, and clear formatting help support and effectively communicate the importance of how discovering your purpose and defining your values are key to taking charge of your life and winning against all odds. It is through self-help books like this one, whose main purpose is to motivate action, that readers feel empowered to live out the lessons and themes described in its pages on their everyday journeys of "owning it."

Reference Page

Redzic, A. (2014). *Own it: A practical guide to defying the odds and claiming your life*. Adi

Redzic.