

## **Rule 2 Treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping**

Many would agree that men can be selfish creatures. However, it is often the case that people will treat other people they love better than they treat themselves.

If your dog is sick, and your vet gives you a prescription, it is likely that you will go buy the medicine and administer it to your dog properly. However, if you fall ill and you see a doctor, Peterson quotes scientific studies that there is a 30% chance you won't even pick up the medication, and even if you do, there is a 50% chance that you won't administer it to yourself properly. Does this mean that in our hearts, our dog is more deserving of love than ourselves?

Rule 2 is a deep meditation on why people don't like themselves very much. As a self-conscious being, we are extraordinarily aware of our own imperfections, uselessness, fragility, foolishness, and error. No one knows you better than yourself. Think of someone you might have a fair amount of dislike for because you know something they did – contrast that with yourself, as you know EVERYTHING you did. Not only that, but you know perfectly well that you are lazy, lack discipline, prone to temptations, and capable of doing wicked, vicious acts to others. Why should you take good care of something as sorry and wretched as you are?

Wah Yan College, Kowloon being a Roman Catholic school, you have probably heard of the saying: "love thy neighbour as thyself". This means much more than just being nice to other people. It is an invitation to reciprocity – you want to treat other people as you would like to be treated. But it is even deeper than that.

Imagine you had a child you genuinely cared for. How would you want others to treat this child? You don't want everyone to just be nice to the child – you want the child to be challenged, people to discipline him, tell him when he is wrong, so he will improve and become a better person. You don't want people to lay everything at his feet, because that's pathetic – who likes an immature, overgrown man child that can't take care of himself?

We all shoulder burdens of self-disgust, self-contempt, shame and self-consciousness. But it's not just you, as this is a problem that every human being has always had and always will! So despite the fact that you are not all that you could be, the proper attitude to act towards yourself, is the attitude you would have towards someone you genuinely care for – be it the imaginary child or dog. In some sense, this is a reversal of the golden rule of "love thy neighbour".

Peterson thinks deeply about religious stories in Christianity to learn life lessons from our collective culture and knowledge passed on to us by our ancestors. My favourite story in Rule 2 is how Peterson explains what happened when Adam and Eve took a bite out of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Their eyes were opened, they were conscious for the first time, and suddenly they were ashamed. They covered their private parts. They could see – and what they first saw was themselves, naked.

Naked means vulnerable and easily damaged. Naked means subject to judgment for beauty and health. Naked means unprotected and unarmed in the jungle of nature and man. Adam and Eve hid, and in their vulnerability, now fully realised, they felt unworthy to stand before God. God here can mean many things. If you are not religious, think of God as a concept – the ultimate Good, the ultimate Ideal, the judge and authority that we all naturally fear and resent. Strength shames the weak. Death shames the living. And the Ideal shames us all.

Yes, we will forever be shamed by those better than us. We will feel unworthy and undeserving at times. We know all of our faults. Maybe we subconsciously feel that even our dog is more deserving of love than ourselves. But what are we to do about that? Abandon all ideals of beauty, health, brilliance and strength? No! That only ensures we would feel ashamed ALL THE TIME, and we would even more justly deserve it.

When Adam and Eve opened their eyes, they did not only gain knowledge of Evil, but they also gained knowledge of Good. Men can be selfish creatures, but most would agree that men can also be self-less creatures. Although men are capable of terrible, wicked things, men are EQUALLY capable of selfless, amazing, brilliant acts, full of love and compassion.

Christianity teaches us that we are all made in the image of God. Peterson explains – just think of this to mean that within each of us, there is a small spark of divinity. We have equal capacity for both Good and Evil. As an individual, you have a light that you bring into the world. If you don't, the world is a dimmer place, and that's a bad thing, because when the world is a dim place, it can be very, very dark.

That is why we have a moral obligation to take care of ourselves as someone we genuinely care for. You make the world a much better place if you do, and a much worse place if you don't. Treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping.