ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

SELF-HELP

How to Complain in 12 Easy Steps
Anita Brooks
AuthorHouse
978-1-4685-9649-6
Three Stars (out of Five)

It's hard to know whether author Anita Brooks is serious or not. With her extremely short and simple book, *How to Complain in 12 Easy Steps*, she purports to offer twelve pieces of advice, and she does so in a mere twelve pages, with a single idea—and often a single sentence—per page. Is this a parody of the self-help genre in general, or is Brooks making an earnest attempt to offer useful advice about complaining?

One clue to her motivation is the format of her book. Bright red covers house square pages that each present the same image: a piece of yellow note paper with one or two phrases scribbled upon it. Step ten, for instance, suggests that the reader "create a supportive network" and "find strength in numbers." This seems like solid, useful advice, if lacking in detail.

Other steps, however, seem more tongue-in-cheek. What should one make of Step three, for example: "Wear eye glasses. They make you look intelligent." Brooks doesn't champion actual intelligence here, but she does seem to believe that looking the part is sufficient. Is this her sense of humor coming through, or is this truly a tool Brooks finds useful? Without any accompanying explanation, it is difficult to tell.

The author's cover notes hint at humor. She attributes the inspiration for her book to her psychiatrist, who apparently chided her for not complaining frequently enough. *How to Complain in 12 Easy Steps* could be seen as a cheeky answer to that challenge.

Alternatively, the reader can take Brooks's advice at face value, using her suggestions to actually complain effectively when the need arises. Brooks does, after all, extol the virtues of patience, clarity, and perseverance. A few misspellings and incorrect word choices, however, detract from the potential impact of her words.

How to Complain in 12 Easy Steps is certainly not the last word in self-improvement, but it does make an interesting conversation starter.

Sheila M. Trask