

Self Determination: The Strategy For Mastering Addiction in America

Anthony Canelo

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Anthony Canelo is a holistic health strategist, herbalist, and owner of the Phoenix Institute for Holistic Health and Research. *Self Determination*, his seventh book, focuses on the causes of addictions and disease and highlights his unconventional philosophy and unusual healing techniques.

Canelo has strong opinions about the myriad ills of contemporary society, and his writing is heavy on hyperbole and inflammatory condemnations of the status quo. Those who are open to experimenting with an intriguing variety of healing modalities will enjoy *Self Determination's* intense, messianic, manifesto-like style. Yet, complicated, expensive—and even bizarre—remedies are promoted over the sensible and accessible. Complex enema and tonic recipes, and time-consuming writing exercises, would appeal primarily to those with a lot of extra time on their hands.

The introduction starts a conversation about addictions and their insidious nature, and shares some tips on vitamins and diet. Canelo uses the opening pages to weed out the healing dilettantes and build an empathic rapport with those who are committed to recovery. "Above all," he writes, "you must be ready. You must have enough will to live, self-knowledge, social gravitas, and healing mobility before you can make a commitment to read 'Self-Determination'. Sometimes certain people are not able to be saved. It's a very hard truth to face. I know it."

Chapter 1, on smoking, corresponds to the first item on Canelo's list of preventable, lifestyle-based causes of disease and addiction. He calls these "America's Seven Enemies of Self-Determination." The other six are toxic lifestyle, alcohol, sexually transmitted diseases, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, and drugs. Breathing, the first of the healing strategies, is presented as the primary treatment for overcoming a smoking addiction. The other six healing strategies each relate to the above causes, in order, and they are sleeping, drinking (water), attitude, eating, exercise, and a connection to nature. These two lists form a workable scaffold as titles and subtitles to the remaining chapters.

In every chapter, there are exercises, healing treatments, herbal remedies, and a diatribe or two about what's wrong with the world and the people who inhabit it. For example, in the chapter on sexually transmitted diseases, which might more aptly be titled "Sexual Addiction," Canelo opens with a lecture to men about wasting the power of their orgasm and how "to transform the energy of temptation into wholeness and then joy, inspiration, and creative genius." To help with this transformation, he advocates seven days of celibacy, a two-year program of reduced sexual activity, conscious dance, yoga inversions, speed dating, and "peroxide castor oil bathing."

Canelo's creative crafting of a rich smorgasbord of healing modalities is arguably the book's greatest strength. From profound breathing techniques to beautiful meditations to deeply moving writing exercises, the potential for finding a healing treasure that resonates is almost guaranteed. Many of his nutritional, fasting, and herbal prescriptions are also compelling, as is his suggestion to build a simple pyramid from bamboo, instructions included.

Self Determination is well written, with few errors, and the cover is attractive. New Age bookstores and holistic healing centers would be good markets for this book.

PATTY SUTHERLAND (February 10, 2014)

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