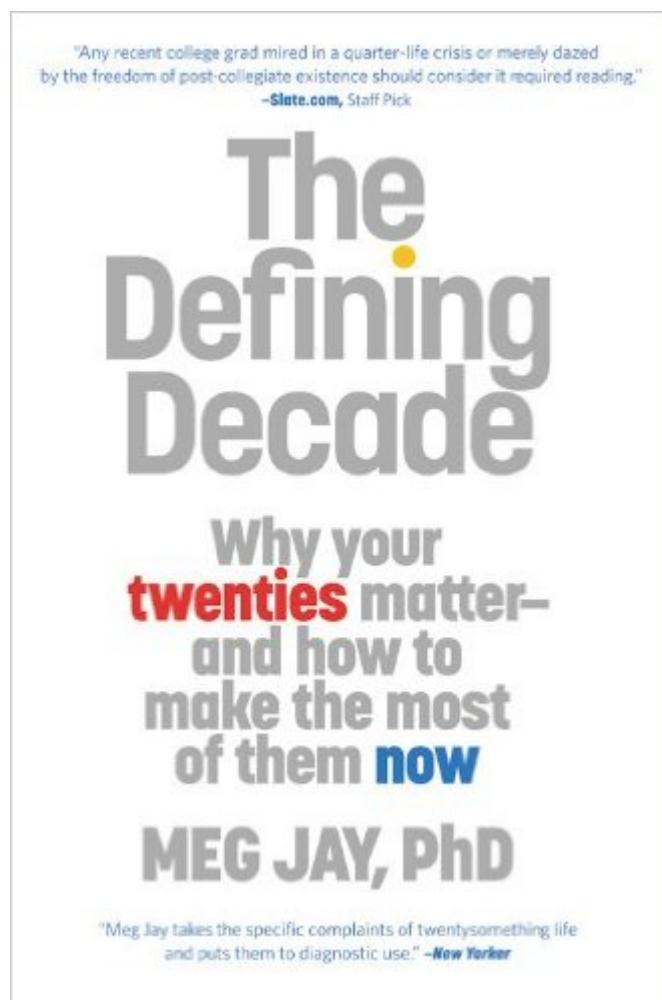


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The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter--And How To Make The Most Of Them Now



"Meg Jay takes the specific complaints of twentysomething life and puts them to diagnostic use." -New Yorker



Synopsis

Our "thirty-is-the-new-twenty" culture tells us the twentysomething years don't matter. Some say they are a second adolescence. Others call them an emerging adulthood. Dr. Meg Jay, a clinical psychologist, argues that twentysomethings have been caught in a swirl of hype and misinformation, much of which has trivialized what is actually the most defining decade of adulthood. Drawing from a decade of work with hundreds of twentysomething clients and students, **THE DEFINING DECADE** weaves the latest science of the twentysomething years with behind-closed-doors stories from twentysomethings themselves. The result is a provocative read that provides the tools necessary to make the most of your twenties, and shows us how work, relationships, personality, social networks, identity, and even the brain can change more during this decade than at any other time in adulthood—if we use the time wisely. **THE DEFINING DECADE** is a smart, compassionate and constructive book about the years we cannot afford to miss.

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Customer Reviews

I read Dr. Meg Jay's NY Times piece on co-habitation (...) which lead me to ordering her book. I received it yesterday and read it in one sitting. So, I think it's pretty good. As a twenty something, I would recommend this book to my friends and even those still in high school. Dr. Jay teaches lessons about how to ideally approach one's twenties and why it really matters. She interweaves research, stories, and counseling sessions with her patients to make a thought provoking but easy book to read. In many of those patients, I saw my friends or myself. There was the twenty

something coffee barista still waiting for the right opportunity to come by. There was the beautiful and successful, girl chronically hooking up and never dating because she's still plagued with teenager, self-image problems. There was the bicycle shop guy wanting to be original and afraid of settling down. What they all have in common is this intense desire to know, "Am I going to make it? And what the hell should I be doing in my twenties? School was so easy, but life is so hard." This book isn't a step by step guide. It won't go into how to systematically meet guys/girls, get over depression, or how to do well on an interview. There are plenty of books on getting into the details. Instead, this is a thought provoking book aimed against the popular twenty something zeitgeist today that, "we can do anything", "there's always time", and "I have until 30 to get my life together." Not to mention the million other stories we tell ourselves like, "I'm never going to get good at this", "It's better to wait rather than choose", or "Everyone on Facebook is doing better than me." In a sense, this book is like "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" to personal finance.

After I read this, I was surprised no one had discussed making the most of the twenties decade before. With the job market slow for college grads, and a seeming extension of the teen years into the entire twenties decade, this book is a huge wake up call and an excellent roadmap out of youth and into what should be the most exciting time of your life. This book covers two basic and profound aspects of life; choosing a mate and having children and choosing a path that leads, step by step, to a career that is fulfilling and rewarding. The author makes a point about dating: are you goofing around or really trying to sort out whom you want to spend time with? After all that is sorted out and you eventually find the right person, you could be a lot older and suffering from infertility. That's a great point; we spend a leisurely youth and then when we get serious, it may be difficult or impossible to conceive (I didn't get married seriously until I was forty, so I can totally support this advice. I have no children.) Here is a case for being serious about whom you choose and deciding to have children before the mid-thirties, when it starts getting a lot more problematical. (And you are at the peak of strength, less likely to be fatigued by the task.) The second very important point of this book is that frittering time away in jobs that don't lead to a career will cause you to be "damaged and different." In other words, one really doesn't have the time to take any old job and the more time you spend on what you think you want to do for the majority of your work life, the better off you will be. According to the author, the string of random, low paying and dull work can lead to depression and drinking.

This book provides tough love that many of us 20-somethings need, which is best-summarized with

the last sentences of the book: "As I gathered up my maps and turned to go, I hesitated and asked the ranger, 'Am I going to make it?' He looked at me and said, 'You haven't decided yet.' He was telling me what this book has been all about. The future isn't written in the stars. There are no guarantees. So claim your adulthood. Be intentional. Get to work. Pick your family. Do the math. Make your own certainty. Don't be defined by what you didn't know or didn't do. You are deciding your life right now." Reading this book, you get the sense that Meg Jay was gritting her teeth as she wrote it. She does her best to be sympathetic to the 20-something psyche, writing with all the delicacy she can muster, but you can still sense an underlying current of, "COME ON, PEOPLE, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!" That's good. We need that. We've been coddled for too long. If you are thinking of working at a coffee shop because that seems non-corporate, or going backpacking in Europe in order to "find yourself," or putting off marriage or children until you've finished grad school, then Meg Jay is talking to you, and you should listen. But there's one thing about this book that I found troubling: It has a rather Me-Against-the-World sentiment. In the epilogue, Meg Jay writes about her favorite sign, one posted at Rocky Mountain National Park that says MOUNTAINS DON'T CARE, meant to encourage preparedness against an uncaring wilderness. She views the world as out-to-get-you unless you are tenacious and strategic and forward-thinking. You've got to acquire all the resources you can as quickly as you can to ensure your safety before the world GETS YOU.

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