

Life Clues: Unlocking the Lessons to an Exceptional Life

Angela C. Santomero

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Encouraging people to step back from the chaos and complexity of adulthood and renew their childhood senses of wonder, Life Clues is an exuberant self-help text that leads by example.

Angela C. Santomero was fascinated with *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* in her childhood to the extent that it shaped her later career. In her vulnerable and fanciful self-help book *Life Clues*, she draws on her personal experiences as the creator of *Blue's Clues* and *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* to share guileless insights into living an exceptional life.

Having gone from being a fan of Fred Rogers's to designing children's programming that reflected his values, Santomero seeks to remind adults of his wisdom. "A zillion years later, here's what still surprises me," Santomero beams: "I'm now an enthusiastic grown-up student of many of the same lessons I was tasked to impart to children." Her book features twenty value-based "clues" to unlocking one's potential, including play, laughter, and fun. Throughout, it draws inspiration from the unfiltered exuberance of children, treating them as the embodiment of pure joy. And it complements its insights with anecdotes about being a mother and with childhood memories.

The book's language is lighthearted and clear. It tackles complex concepts in a revealing manner, and its chapters—which are headed by Rogers's own sentiments, here repackaged for grown-ups—are succinct but effective. Its introduction to self-improvement and wellness concepts is lighthearted; indeed, it is at its most specific and direct when it comes to reflecting the philosophies of Fred Rogers himself, wherein it is concise but powerful, encouraging people to accept themselves as they are, to reach out and help others, and to pay attention to what piques their interest.

The book's design is spacious but encouraging, as with the breathers between chapters designed to help people absorb the preceding lessons. To increase engagement, a puzzle runs throughout the book, which places important terms in bold print; when read in order, these terms reveal an encouraging message. This whimsy replicates the overarching theme of seeking inspiration from youthfulness. References to scientific journals and field experts are used to build credibility. But at times, chapters' endnotes seem to deviate from their topics, as when, in concluding the chapter on self-acceptance, the book advises, "Music is therapeutic. It can change your mood almost instantaneously. When you need an extra boost, go to power ballads with strong, uplifting, hopeful lyrics that will immerse you in a world of positivity."

A playful self-help book, *Life Clues* encourages taking a young-at-heart approach to living a successful and happy life.

ALLISON JANICKI (March 15, 2024)

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