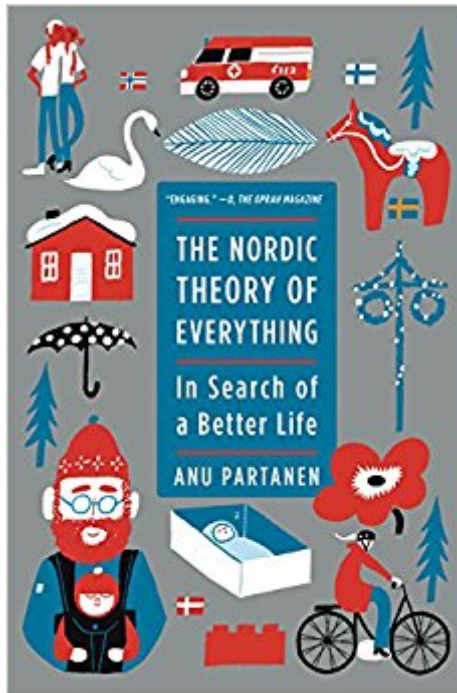




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# The Nordic Theory Of Everything: In Search Of A Better Life



## Synopsis

A Finnish journalist, now a naturalized American citizen, asks Americans to draw on elements of the Nordic way of life to nurture a fairer, happier, more secure, and less stressful society for themselves and their children. Moving to America in 2008, Finnish journalist Anu Partanen quickly went from confident, successful professional to wary, self-doubting mess. She found that navigating the basics of everyday life—from buying a cell phone and filing taxes to education and childcare—was much more complicated and stressful than anything she encountered in her homeland. At first, she attributed her crippling anxiety to the difficulty of adapting to a freewheeling new culture. But as she got to know Americans better, she discovered they shared her deep apprehension. To understand why life is so different in the U.S. and Finland, Partanen began to look closely at both. In *The Nordic Theory of Everything*, Partanen compares and contrasts life in the United States with life in the Nordic region, focusing on four key relationships—parents and children, men and women, employees and employers, and government and citizens. She debunks criticism that Nordic countries are socialist nanny states, revealing instead that it is we Americans who are far more enmeshed in unhealthy dependencies than we realize. As Partanen explains step by step, the Nordic approach allows citizens to enjoy more individual freedom and independence than we do. Partanen wants to open Americans' eyes to how much better things can be—to show her beloved new country what it can learn from her homeland to reinvigorate and fulfill the promise of the American dream—to provide the opportunity to live a healthy, safe, economically secure, upwardly mobile life for everyone. Offering insights, advice, and solutions, *The Nordic Theory of Everything* makes a convincing argument that we can rebuild our society, rekindle our optimism, and restore true freedom to our relationships and lives.

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## Customer Reviews

"...meticulously researched. [Partanen] offers a clear, informative, fact-filled survey of the differences between American and Nordic childcare, health care, education, elder care and taxation arrangements. It could be a game-changer in national conversations about the roles that governments should play in their citizens' lives." (Seattle Times)"An engaging fusion of reportage and memoir." (O, the Oprah Magazine)"...Partanen is good at blending the individual stories of her friends in the cold,hard facts of national statistics... Partanen is a careful, judicious writer and she makes a careful, judicious case." (New York Times Book Review)A Best Nonfiction Book of Summer 2016 (Bustle)A Book You Desperately Need to Add to Your 'To-Read' Pile This Summer (Gizmodo)"Partanen's pride in her homeland and genuine concern for the struggles of middle-class Americans infuse her book with candor and charm, and her perceptions about American struggles feel spot-on." (Booklist)"A passionate and intelligent argument." (Publishers Weekly)"This highly readable and entertaining work is timely, as the conversation about inequality and the role of social services in this country has never been more relevant." (Library Journal)A Best Book of Summer 2016 (O, the Oprah Magazine)"If Americans really understood how bad we have it-how unjust and wrong headed our child care, education, and public health policies are-we'd take to the streets. Anu Partanen rips up the stale stereotypes about Nordic welfare states and shows us all the kinds of human flourishing we're missing out on.This is a dangerous book. Don't let it fall into the wrong hands." (Judith Shulevitz, author of The Sabbath World)"In her careful, evenhanded series of thoughtful essays, Partanen, who just became an American citizen, parses the recipe for Nordic success that even the self-congratulatory 'exceptional' American may want to ponder and adapt. . . . An earnest, well-written work worth heeding, especially in our current toxic political climate." (Kirkus Reviews)"This is a wonderful, hopeful book about what American society can be-not by adopting Nordic 'socialism,' but by embracing the values that have allowed Nordic citizens to enjoy more freedom and quality than in present-day America. The American Dream was once an inspiration to the world. Anu Partanen shows us how to rediscover it." (Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at University of California, Berkeley, and former U.S. Secretary of Labor)"In this election year, Partanen's sensible book should be required reading for those who wonder why so many Americans feel resentful and alienated." (Foreign Affairs) "A MUST READ, SUMMER 2016"

(New York Post)

Moving to America in 2008, Finnish journalist Anu Partanen quickly went from confident, successful professional to wary, self-doubting mess. She found that navigating the basics of everyday life was much more complicated and stressful than anything she encountered in her homeland. At first, she attributed her crippling anxiety to the difficulty of adapting to a freewheeling new culture. But as she got to know Americans better, she discovered they shared her deep apprehension. To understand why life in the United States is so different than that in Finland, Partanen began to look closely at both. In *The Nordic Theory of Everything*, Partanen compares and contrasts life in the United States with life in the Nordic region, focusing on four key relationships—parents and children, men and women, employees and employers, and government and citizens. She debunks criticism that Nordic countries are socialist “nanny states,” revealing instead that it is we Americans who are far more enmeshed in unhealthy dependencies than we realize. As Partanen explains, the Nordic approach allows citizens to enjoy more individual freedom and independence than the American way. Partanen wants to open Americans’ eyes to how much better things can be—to provide the opportunity to live a healthy, safe, economically secure, upwardly mobile life for everyone. Offering insights, advice, and solutions, *The Nordic Theory of Everything* makes a convincing argument that we can rebuild our society, rekindle our optimism, and restore true freedom to our relationships and lives.

**THE NORDIC THEORY OF EVERYTHING: In Search of a Better Life** by Anu Partanen. Reviewed by C J Singh (Berkeley, California). A “Must-Read” Book. Noticing the high praise by Robert Reich, Chancellor’s Professor of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, I purchased a copy last week. Yesterday, at the Books Inc Store, Berkeley, I attended the author’s lively presentation. She answered audience questions with precise knowledge, concision, and grace. “THE NORDIC THEORY OF EVERYTHING: In Search of a Better Life,” documented with more than 400 research citations and written in highly engaging style is an excellent example of lucid critical analysis. The widely held stereotype in the US of Nordic countries is that they are “nanny states” that discourage individuality and impose high taxes. In fact, the Nordic countries foster enhanced adult individuality by minimizing dependencies on family members and employers. And their Nordic countries’ taxes are comparable to the US taxes. Just how they accomplish is convincingly detailed in the book. The subtitle “In Search of a Better Life” accurately describes the author’s view-point and tone. An immigrant to the US who arrived from Finland eight years

ago, now in love with the country of her adoption, she is also proud of her heritage. Rightly so, the Nordic countries have been consistently top-ranked as the happiest. The US is not even in the top ten. Partanen offers suggestions based on the "The Nordic Theory of Love" (Chapter 2); for better "Family Values for Real" (Chapter 3); for children "Attaining Educational Success" (Chapter 4); for better health care "How Universal Health Care Could Set You Free" (Chapter 5). The titles and subtitles of the next four chapters are also equally apt: "Ask What Your Country Can Do for You"; "Bringing Back the American Dream"; "Business as Unusual: How to Run a Company in the Twenty-First Century"; "The Pursuit of Happiness: It's Time to Rethink Success." Recently, I posted an update of my review of the earlier edition of the most widely adopted college textbook in the US: Diane Hacker and Nancy Sumner's "A Writer's Reference: Eighth Edition." Anu Partanen's "THE NORDIC THEORY OF EVERYTHING: In Search of a Better Life" merits just as wide adoption for all college students. Not only for college students, I whole-heartedly recommend this book to all readers. (May I add that after having posted reviews of more than 120 books on .com, this is the first that I recommend as a "must-read.") -- C J Singh-----

Partanen's clear, simple and personable writing style, combined with the glimpse she gives into her own experience, brings to life the reality of the stress and anxiety Americans are enduring - by choice - due to the nature of our social policies. Different choices are just a vote away. This book is for every American who thinks your anxiety is uniquely your own; the luck of the draw of bad genes. Imagine how different we might all feel if we weren't a medical emergency away from bankruptcy, or if we weren't worrying about how we will put our kids through college or care for our parents in their elder years. Imagine a family life where both parents work and still have time to care well for their kids. Partanen's book helps us do just that.

I can see how my life would have been different in so many ways had I lived in a Nordic country. This book has been an eye opener for the possibilities in our modern world.

An excellent and well-written book. I have learned a lot about Nordic countries and cultures. I believe we could learn a lot from them, especially with education and healthcare. It all starts with the Nordic theory of love, which seeks to help each person be their best, and independent of all others.

An interesting and thought provoking read. Very practical and realistic comparison of the way the Nordic cultures address health insurance, child care, vacation time and elderly care in comparison with addressing the same issues in the USA.

Excellent book with thorough understanding of the issues

It's a terrific societal look at how we could make democracy even better. I loved her take on what freedom really is and how she politely peels off the rose colored glasses that many Americans have about America. In a world with a large conversation right now about protectionism versus globalization, this book highlights where we need to go to work to truly be the best again.

The author makes absolutely clear what the differences are between the way the U.S. and the Nordic governments operate on behalf of their citizens. Essentially the Nordic theory of love offers care for its people from prenatal life to retirement and old age in such ways that their citizens do not have to worry about money at every stage of their lives, like American citizens do. Heavy on footnotes (over 300) and bibliography, Anu Partanen presents a carefully detailed comparison of all aspects of life in the U.S., particularly education and health care, at the same time as she exults in her American citizenship. Down-to-earth, almost conversational, this book is a must-read for anyone who mistakenly dismisses the Nordic countries as "socialist" without understanding how their systems really work.

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