



Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing As We Age

Mary Pipher

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A New York Times Bestseller

The New York Times bestseller from the author of *Reviving Ophelia*--a guide to wisdom, authenticity, and bliss for women as they age.

Women growing older contend with ageism, misogyny, and loss. Yet as Mary Pipher shows, most older women are deeply happy and filled with gratitude for the gifts of life. Their struggles help them grow into the authentic, empathetic, and wise people they have always wanted to be.

In *Women Rowing North*, Pipher offers a timely examination of the cultural and developmental issues women face as they age. Drawing on her own experience as daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, caregiver, clinical psychologist, and cultural anthropologist, she explores ways women can cultivate resilient responses to the challenges they face. "If we can keep our wits about us, think clearly, and manage our emotions skillfully," Pipher writes, "we will experience a joyous time of our lives. If we have planned carefully and packed properly, if we have good maps and guides, the journey can be transcendent."

Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing As We Age Details

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Author : Mary Pipher

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Michele says

I have mixed emotions about this - essentially a Chicken Soup for the Soul for older women. Each reader's perspective may well be based on how she's doing with aging. If you're faced with challenges from loss of spouse to loss of dexterity, and aging feels like a punishment, this book is for you. Personally I found it a downer. I had no idea there were so many things to be unhappy about.

The book is well written, many inspirational stories, and a big dose of the author's value judgments.

If you've already figured out that exercise, healthy eating, community involvement, pursuit of a special interest and nurturing relationships with friends and families are the keys to happiness at any age, your time will be better spent in pursuing those activities than in reading this book.

Shirl Kennedy says

Gave up about a third of the way in. Really disappointed. Too many platitudes. Friend said it left her with the impression that how you fare when you get older is mostly a function of having made "Good Decisions" numerous decades ago.

This one won't count toward my Book Challenge, but not sure how to make that clear. May just end up deleting it entirely.

Diane says

Pipher tried not to whine too much in this book about aging. But she also was rather preachy about her political and activist views that really weren't relevant to the topic - so that was annoying. She mainly discussed different topics and had interviewed the same group of women throughout the book - sharing their personal experiences. Think she could've broadened her base of women a bit more. Parts were good, but nothing really substantial on the subject.

Amy says

Did you ever read a book where each page you read at least twice because you wanted to commit the words to memory? This was the case for me. The book is an examination of the cultural and developmental issues women face as they age or as Pipher describes, women who are "navigating the last stretch of the river with its treacherous currents." Rather than a 'how to book' it is a 'how to think book.' Little did I know, she is a Nebraskan, and as such sometimes her advice comes across as Mid-Western. She was a professor at UN-L and still lives in Lincoln. While probably not meaningful to others who have not lived in Lincoln, she mentions Holmes Lake, the Malone Center, and other points of interest. I think all women can find something of value by reading.

Jenn says

Such a great read. As a psychologist who specializes in older adulthood, I can totally see myself recommending this to several of my clients.

Ellen says

Bliss in a book - a really moving, insightful read.

Jill Meyer says

I'm on the downward side of my 60's - heading straight for my '70's. Luckily, I've had family and friends who have hit the milestone ages before I have and I can see how they've dealt with aging. Of course, hitting 70 ain't like hitting 50, so I've seen different reactions from those who've gone before me. I have also just finished reading Mary Pipher's new book, "Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age". (That's such a long title that I could almost feel myself aging as I wrote it!) Pipher is the author of "Reviving Ophelia", which is about the problems and - I presume - joys of both being and raising a teenage girl. I didn't read it because I had sons, but I am growing older so I did pick up her latest book.

Mary Pipher's book is chock-full of good advise on hitting your old age. She does talk about "Young Old" and "Old Old"; those different sub-catagories of aging. Seventy seems to be the start of "Old-Old", but she manages to make it seem almost desirable as she writes about women who've both cast off and taken on responsibilities they wouldn't have done 20 years earlier. Life is easier as we slow down to smell the flowers and enjoy our friendships and family relations. She gives us examples of women who've found contentment and purpose as they've aged, as they take care of grandchildren and sick husbands, She also tells of women who've found the same contentment as they've shed these responsibilities and lived basically solo lives.

It's an interesting book that gave me a few ideas I hadn't originally thought about as the Big 70 - and "Old Old Age" - is fast approaching.

Debbi says

If you are new to aging this is a good place to start. There are a lot of anecdotes which makes the book a quick read, but I found the most interesting passages tended to be the author's own reflections on her aging experience. Piper's perspective has a Buddhist flavor which I appreciated, I only wish her profiles were deeper or that this had been a memoir.

Kathleen says

some good advice, repeated over and over and over and over and over and over

Bridget says

A perfect book to read on my mom's birthday- I remember at 70 she said she had never been happier. This book helps me understand why.

Lesa says

Even the subtitle of Mary Pipher's latest bestseller, *Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing as We Age*, doesn't really do an adequate job describing how fascinating this book is. If you're a woman over sixty, you might want to read this. If you're a woman approaching sixty, Pipher provides hints as to how to live a successful, happy life after that age.

Successful does not mean what so many people think when they see that word - "having achieved popularity, profit, or distinction". Successful, instead, means satisfied with what life has given us. Pipher is a psychologist who is over seventy herself. Her personal observations, her life experiences, and interviews and observations of other women led to this book. She examines issues women face as we move from middle age to old age. "This book focuses on the attitudes and skills we need in order to let go of the past, embrace the new, cope with loss, and experience wisdom, authenticity, and bliss."

Granted, not every woman will accept her life or learn to live with it with grace. However, Pipher includes women of various economic groups and some with health issues to show that many of us have grown to a stage in which we don't need a lot to be happy, and we appreciate the lives we have. It's a book about courage and growing into wisdom.

This isn't a flowery, self-growth book. This is a book that analyzes women's issues - the role of caregiver, the inability to say no, the disappearance of women over a certain age in the eyes of society, the aging body. At the same time, Pipher celebrates the ability of many women to learn to cope with changes in their lives.

I'll admit, I cried at times in reading this book, and not because I know I'm in the last third of my life. I cried at some of the positive messages in the book, ones that struck home, or reminded me of people I love. One of the most important messages, for me, was "Almost every morning we can build a good day for ourselves."

Contentment. Life. Satisfaction. *Women Rowing North* is filled with stories, suggestions, and people's mistakes. It's not a road map as to how to live life, but it certainly can be used as a tipsheet.

And, I'll end with this. Now, I'm going to have to pick up a collection of William Stafford's poems. Pipher mentions a William Stafford poem begins with this line: "When they shook the box and poured out its chances, you were appointed to be happy"

Ellen Loulou says

2.5. After awhile this book really got on my nerves.

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

Women Rowing North: Navigating Life's Currents and Flourishing As We Age by Mary Pipher is a highly recommended examination of the issues facing aging women.

Pipher tackles the cultural, personal, social, and developmental issues and challenges women face as they age and explores ways women can cultivate happiness through their responses. She shares stories from women in a variety of circumstances, backgrounds, and economic circumstances, and demonstrates how their struggles result in them becoming authentic, empathetic, and wise people. The summary of her encouraging advice is that happiness is a choice and skill set you can develop as you live a life of authenticity, gratitude, and adapting

In Women Rowing North Pipher doesn't shy away from the problems older women face, including health issues, ageism, loneliness, misogyny, lookism, caregiving, and loss. She notes that: "Old women in America suffer a social disease. For us, ageism may be an even more serious challenge than aging." She offers practical advice and suggestions as she shares the stories of the various women interviewed and featured along with her own personal journey in the book. She purposes that: "One of the great gifts of our later years is the possibility of authenticity....which comes from growing out of fears into wholeness."

She divides the book into three sections. The first section deals with the challenges that may face aging women. The second discusses the skills women need to navigate aging, with the ability to adapt being pivotal. The third section discusses the importance of relationships. Pipher realistically points out that, "We do not need to like all of our family members. Who does? Especially as we get older, we can select the people who we want to consider as family....No matter what our families are like or how difficult people are to get along with, we can almost always find at least one person to love."

Pipher has a calm, affirming writing style and this book should have a wide appeal to women approaching or in their sixties and beyond. While her advice won't apply to every aging woman, it does provide a platform for individuals to chart their own course, set boundaries, confront obstacles, and make their way through this time of life. "We can set priorities and separate the essential from the nonessential. We can ask, 'Am I spending my time in accordance with my values?'... Each of us has the freedom to decide what is essential."

Disclosure: My review copy was courtesy of Bloomsbury via Netgalley.
<http://www.shetreadssoftly.com/2019/0...>

Nicole Jarvis says

Though I'm only in my late twenties, I really loved this book. Reading Mary's writing is like talking to a wise older friend, and I loved the glimpses she gave us into the lives of the people she knows. Her points about resilience, building families (found and biological), and choosing happiness apply to everyone.

As a wlw, I really appreciated how many wlw she included in the story. As she writes, it's time to reclaim the narrative of older generations from cultural stereotypes, and I realized that too much of my understanding of other women in relationships with women is limited to people my age. Reading about multiple older lesbian relationships was so refreshing, and made me want to go make friends with some of the older members of the community!

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Disclaimer: I work for the publisher, but my opinions are my own.

Kathryn Bashaar says

This book was well-reviewed on the radio, and seemed written just for me: it's about how women navigate the transition from middle age to old age. But, I mostly found it disappointing.

There was no wisdom in this book that I didn't already have, and I think that would be true of most readers. The typical reader of this book will be a well-educated, middle to upper-middle class woman in late middle age who is probably already pretty self-aware. We already know that yoga and meditation are good ideas, that forgiveness is better than grudge holding, and that we've earned the leisure to take time to savor the moment.

I enjoyed some of the personal stories of individual women that were included as examples. But, again, most of the examples were of women with resources, who have a good chance at navigating health changes and loss better than our less fortunate sisters. Only a few of the examples involved working-class people, and there were zero poor people. I also thought that Pipher glossed over the difficulties a bit just in general, for women of any social class.

In her effort to be positive and show the advantages of wisdom, mellowness and savoring life that come with age, I feel like Pipher swaddled the genuine challenges in a vague pink mist. This book kind of reminded me of the books about "becoming a woman" that mothers used to give their daughters in the 60s when I was growing up, the ones that made it seem like rose petals were about to emerge from your vagina instead of clotty, stinky blood.

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