

HOW TO AGE

ANNE KARPF

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Anne Karpf

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The School of Life is dedicated to exploring life's big questions in highly-portable paperbacks, featuring french flaps and deckle edges, that the New York Times calls "damnably cute." we don't have all the answers, but we will direct you towards a variety of useful ideas that are guaranteed to stimulate, provoke, and console.

Society has a deep fear of ageing, and showing your age is increasingly one of our most pervasive taboos. Old age in modern life is widely viewed as either a time of inevitable decline or something to be resisted, denied or overcome. In *How to Age*, sociologist and award-winning journalist Anne Karpf urges us to radically change our narrative.

Exploring how our outlook on ageing is historically determined and culturally defined, Karpf draws upon revealing case studies to suggest how ageing can be an actively enriching time of immense growth. She argues that if we can recognize growing older as an inevitable part of the human condition, then the great challenge of ageing turns out to be none other than the challenge of living. In *How to Age*, learn how ageing isn't about your wardrobe or physical fitness, but a determination to live fully at every age and stage of life.

How to Age Details

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Author : Anne Karpf

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From Reader Review How to Age for online ebook

Angela Gentile says

For to age is to live and to live is to age

"How to Age" by sociologist and award-winning journalist Anne Karpf is a complete guide to helping one learn how to embrace ageing and to reject all stereotypes of old age. I am a specialist in ageing and I enjoyed reading this book immensely (except for it's tiny font). Karpf's main messages really hit home for me, and I wish that everyone would read this book. It would make the world a much happier place. Here are the messages that stood out for me:

- Ageing is a lifelong process that starts at birth (or I would think even at conception!)
- Perhaps we could replace the word ageing with growth – as the word ageing is so contaminated by contempt and fear.
- Adopting an aptitude for gratitude can help one embrace the ageing process.

The book isn't all positive talk, either. One page is dedicated to dementia, a topic that I think deserves much more attention. She tells us horror stories of what the Sardinians and Japanese used to do to their elders. Karpf explains that elder abuse is on the rise in Japan. She touches on the concept of "age shame." It's enough to scare one into embracing ageing because the alternative looks pretty grim.

Most of the topics are related to our attitudes, versus telling us how-to-age in the physical sense. She ends the book by saying that the best way to "age well", turns out to be the same as "living well." A great read that makes you think. It will leave you realizing that being anti-age is the same as being anti-life, and adopting a pro-age belief system appears to be the more sensible option. Age well, my friend.

Joy says

1 star because the contents don't align with the title. I assumed the book would cover *how* to age. It really didn't cover how until the last 3 pages. Instead it was just a dump of info we largely already knew the general idea of—that our culture is anti-aging. The entire book rambles on about that concept.

Jeneba Charkey says

Was more upset about Aging AFTER I finished.

Tempted to hurl it against the wall with all the strength my 58 year old arm could muster. Ugh! I heard an interview with the author on NPR and was intrigued. But, as it turns out, the interview was concerned with the idea of "ageism," which intrigues me but is only the diagnostic part of the book. The remedial parts, where the solutions are presented, are just ludicrous. The author thinks that the only "correct" way to age is to "Remember You Must Die" and just accept that decrepit and ugly is your Fate and it is Beautiful. You must behave yourself and "act your age" but never fear - if you must express your individuality, it is

"allowable" to be eccentric - but you must not ever think of yourself as "youthful." For goodness sake! All this time I was under the impression that going to the gym 6 days a week, doing yoga, meditating, eating well, keeping my mind active, and engaging with other people were simply being done because I have ALWAYS done them. No, says the author, I am doing all this in a sad and ridiculous attempt to defeat the dreaded aging process and keep myself in a state of denial. What?????? Now that I think of it, think I will remove the second star. This is a waste of time. You have better things to do than read this. Booooo!

Nickolette says

How to Age explores the preconceptions of and prejudices against old age and is concerned with the social aspects (historical, economic, cultural). The author explains how we got to where we are in terms of assumptions as a society. I was expecting the advice section (influenced by another book from the School of Life series I just finished) but it never came. The pieces of advice are there but they are very subtle and spread throughout. Overall How to Age is an intelligent and informative read that offers a healthy change of perspective. The main point it argues - Aging is a process, and not a crisis.

<http://slpssm.blogspot.com/2015/07/ho...>

Lance Willett says

Vitality and creativity know no age. Aging well is the same as living well.

My favorite quote: "There is no template for aging, or aging well. The best way is one's own way." This applies to many aspects of life, indeed.

A good and interesting read with stories and real life examples; not my favorite of the series, though (*Exercise* and *Nature* are much more inspiring to me.)

Simon Vandereeken says

Je me suis senti un peu ridicule à lire ce livre à l'approche de ma trentaine, et pourtant je dois admettre qu'une certaine peur de vieillir s'installe (accentuée par ma démographie forcément). Ce petit livre est venu me rassurer doucement sur beaucoup de points. Certes on ne calme pas une anxiété en quelques pages, mais l'on peut apercevoir certaines pistes et commencer à se rassurer, et finalement parfois c'est tout ce qu'on a besoin, une main tendue qui nous emmène doucement vers le chemin qui s'annonce devant nous. Et pouvoir se dire que beaucoup de choses nous attendent encore et qu'avoir peur de vieillir n'a au final aucun fondement réel si ce n'est l'image que la société veut forcer en nous, alors que ce n'est qu'un long voyage où l'on ne cesse au final de grandir. Et que l'on aura toujours éternellement 18 ans. Et 25. Et 27. Et 29...

"If we're able to give ourselves the permission to grow older but at the same time resist the myths about ageing, then the gift we receive in return is invaluable: the ability to position ourselves in a whole lifespan, and see the integrity of a human life, however short or long it might be."

Einzie says

Very disappointing even when you apply the lower standards that apply to school of life books.

Its title should have been "20 reasons why we are wrong about age" or something similarly trite. What you get here is less of a book and more of a 1 page newspaper article stretched over 130 pages wherein the author just states the problems with how age is viewed rather than any constructive or critical discussion.

It gets worse as this book was either cobbled together from miscellaneous articles or hastily dictated. There is close to no structure or organisation of thought or argument, you could literally read paragraphs at random and change chapter headings and the book would read almost the same.

The book is about 95% the issues with how we look at age (with arguments when they are supported mainly through a reference to an anecdote -often from a work of fiction - a quote or vague reference to a study) and that we shouldn't do that and that age is a journey not an event.

There are a few gems of wisdom - mainly the few referenced quotes but not worth 130 pages of rambling. The hypocrisy by the latter half of the book is kind of entertaining though, after spending the first part talking about not glorifying/ignoring age or pretending it doesn't bring any changes it then speaks as though almost all problems of old age are psychosomatic and that the worst one physically suffers is a few wrinkles and the indignity of having to have some help walking down stairs.

A good example of why a book written by journalists should be an immediate red flag.

Carol says

First several pages I was skeptical but it turned out to be a good (helpful to me) look at ageism, and it had some resources that I'll definitely follow up on.

Age on!!

Ed says

A disappointing book that could have been so much better. Some interesting ideas but overall the book seemed journalistic, rushed in the writing and hardly worth the effort. Pity

Jane says

This little book is packed full of wisdom on how to age, just as the title says. Society is incredibly ageist, but this author points out, this makes you prejudice against your future self. Because I write about aging, I really believe we need to rethink how we treat older people and remind ourselves everyday, I too will be ____ (fill in the blank with any age) some day and how do I want to be treated? Also, knowing, understanding and

accepting that your looks are going to change is incredibly important. Are you going to be that person looking in the mirror bemoaning your aging skin and body, or the person engaged in life and just living healthy every day by eating well, reading, learning and laughing because in the end, if looks is all you have, when they go, life is going to be sad. This book also talks about the benefits of aging amongst all ages. Age apartheid is not a healthy way to go. There are lots of good tips here. Read this book no matter your age. We all age...unless we're dead. I'd prefer aging, thank you very much!

Rebecca says

“The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life’s morning.” (Carl Jung)

Another great one from the School of Life. It was therapeutic for me to read this in the run-up to another birthday; it reminded me that “growing older is inevitable – if we’re lucky. A long life signals that we’re privileged, either through genetic serendipity, affluence or sheer luck.” So who am I to bemoan a modest number and pluck the odd silvery hair? Of course I should be nothing but grateful.

Karpf convinced me that “the idea that ageing is nothing but a trajectory of decline is bewilderingly misleading.” Instead, she argues, “ageing can be actively enriching, a time of immense growth...we become more, and not less, diverse as we age. Age doesn’t obliterate our individual traits and identities – on the contrary, it heightens them.” In other words, we become more ourselves as we age; we grow into our skins and figure out what’s really important to us. This is something May Sarton hints at in her journals (*At Eighty-Two* et al.) – and indeed, Karpf quotes her more than once.

I learned a couple of new terms from this book: **gerontophobia** and **age-apartheid**. Karpf makes a strong case for both being unhelpful and, ultimately, self-defeating. After all, ageism is just “prejudice against our future self.” She concedes, though, that many are resentful of Baby Boomers for the ways they seem to have enjoyed themselves and squandered resources at the expense of future generations.

One of the most interesting chapters discusses gendered responses to ageing. Women who try to look young or preserve their sexuality are seen as pathetic man-eaters, whereas men ‘keep their looks’ longer and win congratulation for maintaining their virility. (Here’s a terrifying fact for you: Anne Bancroft played *The Graduate*’s Mrs. Robinson – that quintessential cougar – at age 36!) Karpf argues that for both sexes, “love is not the preserve of the young. The psychotherapist Marie de Hennezel argues that ‘something within us does not grow old. I shall call it the heart. I don’t mean the organ, which does of course age, but the capacity to love and desire.’”

We might deny the elderly their sexuality, but how much more do we deny them (or the ill of any age) a chance to discuss impending death with honesty and courage? Especially in America, the refusal to face death is rampant (something Denise Inge discussed in her superb posthumous book, *A Tour of Bones*). No more will you find “old age” or “natural causes” listed as a cause of death on death certificates. It’s all euphemisms and technical jargon nowadays. Why not join a Death Café or watch the Japanese film *Ikiru* and do some serious thinking about death instead?

“If we can cultivate a respect for our own growth, and develop the ability to greet our ageing self with both pleasure and realism, and without the need to either idealize or deride its younger incarnation, then we’re putting in place important capacities that will serve us our entire life.”

Note: this book is largely UK-centric (the School of Life, started by Alain de Botton, is in London), but here's some useful US information I gleaned:

- Maitri House, Maryland (an intentional community that happens to be intergenerational)
- Generations United
- Elder Wisdom Circle
- Order of the Good Death, Caitlin Doughty (author of *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*)

(Plus there are plenty of Death Cafés in the U.S.)

Huy says

??c sách ?? hy v?ng b?t s? già ?i, ??c xong v?n s? nh? th??ng. Quay ?i quay l?i th?y b?n b?c c??i xin, sinh con ?? cái h?t r?i làm mình th?y th?i gian tàn nh?n quá tr?i.
Cu?n này có nhi?u ý t??ng r?t hay, ??c xong s? già v?n s? nh?ng ch?c là ?? hoang mang h?n tí, mà cái ch??ng mình thích nh?t là ?o?n gi?i thích t?i sao ng??i ta s? già ?i nh? th?, c?ng vì cái th?i ?i ng??i ta ca ng?i tu?i tr? quá nhi?u, ??c bi?t là m?y trang báo m?ng lúc nào c?ng ra r?: "tu?i tr? ph?i...", nh?ng n?i c?n ?i tr??c n?m 30, sách c?n ??c tr??c n?m 25 ch?ng h?n, làm ng??i ta c?m giác ph?i s?ng g?p, s?ng v?i vì qua n?m ?ó là h?t ???c ?i, h?t ???c ???c :))). Mà th?t ra cu?i cùng thì v?n nh?m m?t ch? th?i gian ?p t?i thôii ch? ?âu làm ???c gì :'(

refgoddess says

This is a fascinating book, and the little I managed to read over the last few months has stuck with me and fed my ponderings. I loved the idea of resiliency and the ability to make connections being part of the beauty of the aging brain. Sadly, I found myself pulled to other books and other projects, and had to return this book to my cousin's bookshelf. Later, perhaps.

Julie says

I received a complimentary copy of this book via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

I have not read, nor was I familiar with, any books in the School of Life. If the rest of the books are as good as How to Age, I would read them all.

How to Age is short and to the point. The umbrella statement take-away is that societies have forgotten that everything, life included, has a beginning and an end. The end is not something to fear and demonize. The Woody Allen statement quoted in the book sums it up perfectly: "I've nothing against growing older since nobody has found a better way of not dying young."

Anne Karpf's book is about society's view on and fear of "ageing" as well as a call for a shift in paradigm about it. There are so many lovely catch phrases in this text; one of my favorites is "ageing zestfully". While society, skin care and cosmetic companies have taught us that 16 is the new 18 and, Anne Karpf teaches us that a suppleness of spirit is one of the trophies of growing older that the young should look forward to.

How to Age by Anne Karpf is a wonderful reminder to be thankful for every stage of your life from the first step to the last kiss.

Henny says

I stumbled upon this book, when finding books by Tristan Gooley. Since I am approaching 50 years of age, now a perfect square, and finding that I can do so much more than I expected when I was younger, actually enjoying this age more than I enjoyed my twenties, I needed a book that could outbalance the 50-plus clubs I encounter. I even found several 50-plus yoga classes, which I think are a 'contradiction in terminus'. However, this book was not a clearcut 'how to', mostly because you have to go your own path by yourself, but it did show some light at the end of the tunnel, mostly pointing to the reader to make the change. So I am going to get my act together and try to abstain from any age-secular communication. Please, read this book, whatever age you are, because it might well be an important driving force behind a more connected society.
