

Acknowledgments

In the background of every book stands a small army of unseen contributors. Foremost among them in this case are the people who participated in this research. No words can repay their generosity in welcoming me into their homes, their thoughts, and their feelings. I can only hope they'll agree that what I've written here not only reproduces their words but is true to the spirit in which they spoke them.

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ground. Their contributions to my life are too numerous to mention, so it's easier to talk about how much they affected this book. They joined me in more discussions about aging than I can count, read every word of every draft, responded with the kind of critical acuity every writer dreams about, and not least, were the cheering section that kept me going when the "going" got tough. For their generosity of both intellect and heart in these behind-the-scenes roles, I am deeply grateful to Barbara Artson, for more than three decades, the sister I always wished for; Dorothy Jones, my oldest friend, the one who "knew me when"; and Alix Shulman, more recently in my life, but no less steadfast in her involvement with this work.

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Notes

Chapter One: Through the Looking Glass

1. Betty Friedan, *The Fountain of Age* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

2. Charlie Hauck, "My Plan to Save Network Television," *New York Times*, September 16, 2006.

3. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age*, translated by Patrick O'Brian (New York: Putnam, 1972), 5.

4. Lillian B. Rubin, *Tangled Lives: Daughters, Mothers, and the Crucible of Aging* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).

5. In preparation for writing this book, I conducted fifty-two face-to-face interviews with women and men between the ages of sixty-five and ninety-two, and also talked with adult children—sometimes the children of the people I interviewed, often not. Equally important to the shape and content of the work are the dozens of informal over-the-table conversations I've been having for the last several years with acquaintances, friends, and colleagues, and not least, my personal experience and understanding of what it means to grow old.

6. Gina Kolata, "So Big and Healthy Grandpa Wouldn't Even Know You," *New York Times*, July 30, 2006.

7. U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 PHC-T-13, "Population and Ranking Tables of the Older Population for the United States, Puerto Rico."

8. *Ibid.*

Chapter Two: Out of the Closet

1. Ken Dychtwald, *Age Power: How the 21st Century Will Be Ruled by the New Old* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2000); Ken Dychtwald and Daniel J. Kadlec, *The Power Years: A User's Guide to the Rest of Your Life* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2005).

2. James Barron and Anemona Hartocollis, "As Mrs. Astor Slips, the Grandson Blames the Son," *New York Times*, July 27, 2006.

3. M. S. Lachs and K. Pillemer, "Elder Abuse," *Lancet* 364, no. 9441 (October 2-8, 2004), 1263-72.

4. Richard Posner, *Aging and Old Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 202-3.

5. U.S. Census Bureau, "Older Americans Month Celebrated in May," Facts for Features CBo5-FF/07-2, April 25, 2005.

6. Anti-aging has become such big business that, in just a few years, the academy's membership has grown from a few hundred physicians and scientists to the seventeen thousand they now claim. And they are not alone. Dr. Allen Mintz, chief medical officer and CEO of the Cenegenics Medical Institute, claims to have developed a protocol that guarantees a new kind of aging. For \$1,000 a month or more, doctors associated with the institute provide treatment that includes the injection of performance-enhancing drugs, some of them illegal except under clearly specified conditions, like testosterone, human growth hormone, and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA)—all substances that can get athletes banned from their sports.

7. Stanley Tucci's character in the 2006 film *The Devil Wears Prada* strips away the young assistant's pride in her size six with an acid-tongued reminder that "six is the new fourteen." Vanity sizing of women's clothes isn't just a throwaway line in a film. While American women are getting heavier—on average weighing about 155 pounds at five feet four inches—sizes continue to dip, so much so that Banana Republic now offers size 00 (probably formerly size 2 or 4), and other designers have introduced a size called "sub-zero."

8. Pam Belluck, "As Minds Age, What's Next? Brain Calisthenics," *New York Times*, December 27, 2006.

9. Kate Scannell, "An Aging Un-American," *New England Journal of Medicine* 355, no. 14 (October 5, 2006), 1415–17.

Chapter Three: Staying Younger While Getting Older

1. Michael B. Katz, *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

2. Diane Ehrensaft, *Spoiling Childhood: How Well-Meaning Parents Are Giving Children Too Much—But Not What They Need* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999).

3. Janny Scott, "Out of College, but Now Living in Urban Dorms," *New York Times*, July 13, 2006, paints a compelling picture of young people who can't fully grow up because they can't earn enough money to find an apartment, let alone to get married and have children.

4. Lillian B. Rubin, *Women of a Certain Age: The Midlife Search for Self* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

5. Rand Richards Cooper, "Fatherhood, I Now Learn, Is a Young Man's Game," *New York Times*, August 20, 2006.

Chapter Four: Does Age Count Anymore?

1. Paul B. Baltes and Jacqui Smith, "New Frontiers in the Future of Aging: From Successful Aging of the Young Old to the Dilemmas of the Fourth Age," *Gerontology* 49, no. 2 (2003), 123–35.

2. Philip Roth, *Everyman* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 103.

3. Cited in Simone de Beauvoir, *The Coming of Age*, translated by Patrick O'Brian (New York: Putnam, 1972), 5.

4. D. L. Ashliman, ed. and trans., *Aging and Death in Folklore* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1997–2005), www.pitt.edu/~dash/aging.html.

5. James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 1 (New York: Chase, Scribner & Sons, 1910), 5.

6. Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, in Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 469.

7. *The Pastor of Hermas*, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1962).

8. Saint Augustine, Sermon 108, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1956), 440.

9. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, translated by M. A. Screech (New York: Penguin Classics, 1993).

10. Betty Friedan, *The Fountain of Age* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 36.

Chapter Five: *The Marriage of Self and Society*

1. So concerned are these communities to protect their homogeneity that they often have rules limiting the amount of time grandchildren may visit.

2. Nora Ephron, *I Feel Bad about My Neck, and Other Thoughts on Being a Woman* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 129; 5.

Chapter Six: *The Golden Years? They've Gotta Be Kidding!*

1. Lillian B. Rubin, *Women of a Certain Age: The Midlife Search for Self* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 123.

2. U.S. Census Bureau, Table 101, "Age-Adjusted Death Rates by Race and Sex, 1920-2002," *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006).

3. Jacques Steinberg, "Mike Wallace Says He Will Retire from '60 Minutes' in Spring," *New York Times*, March 15, 2006.

4. Lillian B. Rubin, *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1976) and *Families on the Fault Line: America's Working Class Speaks about the Family, the Economy, Race, and Ethnicity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994). There is a large body of evidence showing the relationship between male unemployment and greatly increased

rates of depression, alcoholism, and domestic violence—evidence that supports the proposition that work, whatever it is, is central to a man's ability to maintain his identity and self-respect.

5. Matthew Greenwald & Associates, "2006 Retirement Confidence Survey," in U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, January 2006). Median net worth of all Americans was \$55,000 in 2000, with home equity constituting the largest share. U.S. Census Bureau, "Net Worth and Asset Ownership: 1998 and 2000," *Current Population Reports*.

6. Patrick Purcell, *Retirement Savings and Household Wealth: Trends from 2001–2004* (New York: Institute for Workplace Studies, Cornell University, 2006).

7. In a table comparing rates of savings in American households, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that savings dropped from 7 percent in 1990 to 1.2 percent in 2004. Table 659, "Personal Income and Its Disposition, 1990–2004," *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006).

8. About one-quarter of families at the bottom two-fifths of the income scale carry a debt load of 40 percent. Steven Greenhouse, "Borrowers We Be," *New York Times*, September 3, 2006.

9. Jack Rosenthal, "The Age Boom," *New York Times Magazine*, March 9, 1977.

10. Mary Cantwell, "Still At Work on a Self," *New York Times Magazine*, March 9, 1997.

11. Women over sixty-five are three times more likely to be widowed than their male counterparts. Among men in this age group, 71 percent are married and living with their spouses and only 14 percent are widowed. U.S. Census Bureau, "Older Americans Month Celebrated in May," Facts for Features CB05-FF/07-2, April 25, 2005.

12. www.timegoesby.net.

13. See Robert N. Butler, *Why Survive? Being Old in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 1985).

14. Quoted in Claudia Dreifus, "Focusing on the Issue of Aging, and Growing Into the Job," *New York Times*, November 14, 2006.

15. Frank Bruni, "Be Merry, Not Ancient," *New York Times*, April 9, 2006.

Chapter Seven: . . . And Now About Sex

1. Philip Roth's 2006 novel *Everyman*, exploring the dark side of aging, is a refreshing exception. The protagonist rages about his body's betrayal, not least of which is the impairment of his sexual functioning.
2. Gail Sheehy, *Sex and the Seasoned Woman: Pursuing the Passionate Life* (New York: Random House, 2007).
3. Abraham Morgentaler, *The Viagra Myth: The Surprising Impact on Love and Relationships* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).
4. Jessie Bernard, *The Future of Marriage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973).
5. Edmund Leites, *The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986).
6. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on Sexuality* (New York: Avon Books, 1962).
7. Not surprising, perhaps, since they were all women whose sexual behavior—even their sexual desires—were formed in the pre-sexual revolution era, when boys were warned they'd grow hair on their palms and damage their brains if they masturbated, and no one even talked about girls and masturbation, since it was assumed they didn't have any spontaneous sexual desires.
8. A British study with a sample of 179 men and women sixty years and over asked questions about specific sexual behaviors—mutual stroking, masturbation, or intercourse—and found that 82 percent said no to any such activity in the year before they were questioned. Of that 82 percent, 63 percent were women. Terri Beth Greenberg, Sherry C. Pomerantz, and Veronika Karmer-Feeling, "Sexuality in Older Adults: Behaviours and Preferences," *Age and Ageing* 34 (2005), 475–80.

Chapter Eight: The Shrinking Ties That Bind

1. Lynn Smith-Lovin, Miller McPherson, and Matthew Brashears, "Social Isolation in America," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 3 (June 2006), 353–75.

2. See Lillian B. Rubin, *Just Friends: The Role of Friendship in Our Lives* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), chapter 4, "Men, Women and Friends: The Differences Between Us," 59-79.

3. Doris Grumbach, "What Old Age Is Really Like," *New York Times*, November 1, 1998.

4. Doris Grumbach, *Extra Innings: A Memoir* (New York: Norton, 1993).

Chapter Nine: Hey Folks, You're Spending My Inheritance

1. John J. Havens and Paul G. Schervish, *Millionaires and the Millennium: New Estimates of the Forthcoming Wealth Transfer and the Prospects for a Golden Age of Philanthropy* (Boston: Boston College Social Welfare Research Institute, 1999).

2. A recent feature story on the American Banking Association's Web site, www.banking.com/ABA/, "Questions about the 'Inheritance Boom,'" by Denise Duclaux, suggests the far smaller number of \$10.4 trillion.

3. John J. Havens and Paul G. Schervish, *Why the \$41 Trillion Wealth Transfer Estimate Is Still Valid: A Review of Challenges and Questions* (Boston: Boston College Social Welfare Research Institute, 2003).

4. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 81 percent of householders sixty-five and over own their own homes. "Older Americans Month Celebrated in May," Facts for Features CB05-FF/07-2, April 25, 2005.

5. Bob Morris, "Stop Spending My Inheritance," *New York Times*, July 30, 2006.

6. See Roberta Satow, *Doing the Right Thing: Taking Care of Your Elderly Parents Even If They Didn't Take Care of You* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2005), for a compassionate and forgiving exploration of caregivers' conflicts when relationships have been strained by conflict.

7. The CEO Network, www.theceonetwork.com/facts/html, August 24, 2006.

8. U.S. Census Bureau, "Money Income of Families by Race and Hispanic Origin," *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington: D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006).

9. Statistics on the over-sixty-fives are from U.S. Census Bureau, "Older Americans Month Celebrated in May," Facts for Features CB05-FF07-2, April 25, 2005.

10. *Ibid.*

Chapter Ten: Taking Care of Mom and Dad

1. Cathy Booth, "Taking Care of Our Aging Parents," *Time*, August 30, 1999.

2. James Atlas, "The Sandwich Generation," *New Yorker*, October 13, 1997, 54-60.

3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, "Limitation of Activity: All Ages: U.S. 2000-2004."

4. It may be, as some predict, that this is the inevitable consequence of an industrialized society and that, as the Chinese economy continues to expand, the culture of familism will crumble. My own view is that while it may fray, it will not collapse entirely, at least not any time in the foreseeable future. We need only look at third- and fourth-generation Chinese Americans here in the United States to see the staying power of these old cultural norms, as even well-assimilated families continue to expect a far greater level of responsibility and obligation than do most American families.

5. Jane Gross, "Forensic Skills Seek to Uncover Elder Abuse," *New York Times*, September 27, 2006.

6. Eileen Alt Powell, "Study: Communities Unready for the Elderly," *New York Times*, September 27, 2006.

7. H.R. 4993, Elder Justice Act of 2006.

8. U.S. Census Bureau, "Geographic Mobility: 2002-2003," *Current Population Reports* (March 2004).

Chapter Eleven: Oh My God, We're Old!

1. Kate Scannell, "An Aging Un-American," *New England Journal of Medicine* 355, no. 14 (October 5, 2006), 1415-17.

2. I'm aware that's soon to be sixty-seven, but for my generation, sixty-five was the magic number.

3. Alzheimer's Foundation of America, "Statistics," www.alzfdn.org/alzheimers/statistics/shtml.

4. In California alone, 100,000 reports of abuse were filed in 2003, accounting for 20 percent of the 500,000 reports nationwide. But there is widespread agreement among professionals dealing with the old that these numbers underrepresent the problem. See Jane Gross, "Forensic Skills Seek to Uncover Elder Abuse," *New York Times*, September 27, 2006.

Chapter Twelve: *It's Better Than the Alternative, Isn't It?*

1. Sherwin B. Nuland, *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 255.

2. Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 55-56.

3. David Rieff, "Illness as More Than Metaphor," *New York Times Magazine*, December 4, 2005.

4. See Karen E. Steinhauser et al., "In Search of a Good Death: Observations of Patients, Families, and Providers," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 132, no. 10 (May 2000), 825-32.

5. State of Oregon, Department of Human Services, *Eighth Annual Report on Oregon's Death with Dignity Act*, March 9, 2006.

6. Jan Hoffman, "The Last Word on the Last Breath," *New York Times*, October 10, 2006.

7. Nuland, *How We Die*, 255.

8. Quoted in Hoffman, "The Last Word on the Last Breath."

9. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), 15.

10. Cited by Ronald Blythe in his introduction to Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 10.

11. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, xii.

12. Nuland, *How We Die*, 268.

Chapter Thirteen: One Last Word

1. Henry Amiel, 1874, quoted in George E. Vaillant, *Aging Well* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2002).

2. See, for example, John W. Rowe and Robert L. Kahn, *Successful Aging* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), a book based on a national study funded by the MacArthur Foundation, in which the authors define the three components of successful aging: avoid disease, stay physically and mentally healthy, and engage with life.

3. Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978).

4. Henry Fountain, "Old and Overscheduled: No, You Can't Just Dodder," *New York Times*, May 15, 2005.

5. Melvin Maddocks, "Long Live Decrepitude," *New York Times*, August 27, 1999.

6. Edward C. Prescott and W. P. Carey, "Why Do Americans Work So Much More Than Europeans?" *Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Quarterly Review* 28, no. 1 (July 2004), 2-13.

7. Gordon T. Anderson, "Should America Be France? Do Americans Work Too Much?" *CNN/Money*, October 9, 2003.

8. United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Table A-26, "Persons in Non-Agricultural Industries by Class of Workers and Usual Full- or Part-Time Status." Table A-27, which analyzes these data by gender, shows that men, on the average, work 44.1 hours a week, women 41. The difference when marital status is separated out is minimal: 44.6 for men, 40.9 for women.

9. Robert J. Samuelson, "The Monster at Our Door," *Newsweek*, September 10, 2006; Robin Toner and David E. Rosenbaum, "Age: The Elephant in the Room," *New York Times*, June 12, 2006.

10. Quoted in Claudia Dreifus, "Focusing on the Issue of Aging, and Growing Into the Job," *New York Times*, November 4, 2006.

Handwritten note: ...

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DR. LILLIAN B. RUBIN, a sociologist and psychotherapist, is the author of twelve books, including *The Man with the Beautiful Voice*, *Tangled Lives*, *Worlds of Pain*, *Intimate Strangers*, and *Just Friends*. She lives in San Francisco, where she recently sold her first painting at the age of eighty-two.

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