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Getting On: Some Thoughts On Women And Ageing

Getting On.

SOME THOUGHTS ON
WOMEN
&
AGEING

Liz Byrski



Synopsis

Why are we so obsessed with staying young? In a culture that advocates the pursuit of endless youth and physical beauty how can we embrace the reality, the pleasures and the rewards of getting on? And what does the 'fight against ageing' mean when all women must eventually face the double-standard of ageism and sexism? Once past fifty, older women begin to sense that they have become invisible. From the visual displays in the mall to the pages of magazines and the television screens at the heart of our homes, young women with perfect skin, bouncy, enhanced breasts, pouting lips, long straight hair and perfect teeth gaze down on us. The ageing population is traditionally viewed as a problem; a drain on financial resources, health, housing and community services and a burden on younger generations. But living longer and living well are the triumphs of a civilised society. It is also the future that all generations want for themselves. Can we change the conversation on ageing? Getting old is tough, but it's also an opportunity to celebrate how far we have come and to shape a different future. In this essay, Liz Byrski (author of *Last Chance Caf  * and *Bad Behaviour*) examines the adventure of growing old in the twenty-first century: the new possibilities, the joy and the sorrow of solitude, the reality of grief and loss and the satisfaction of having travelled so far. "Writers like Byrski are needed not only for the clarity of their emotional intelligence but for the courage of their political convictions." *West Australian*

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Customer Reviews

As an older woman, there is much that resonates deeply with me in Liz Byrski's book, *Getting on - Some Thoughts on Women and Ageing*. I found myself frequently nodding in agreement as I read through each chapter. Like Byrski, I have always wanted to grow old, to live a long life. I celebrate each birthday and look forward with a sense of adventure and excitement to what the passing years might bring. Yet negative perceptions of ageing, particularly relating to women, surround us in our society and I despair at the way we are so often portrayed in the media. No wonder young women are terrified of growing old and devote so much of their energy to fighting against the inevitable. There needs to be a significant shift in perception and it is essays like Byrski's that can play an important role in achieving this. Her thoughts are timely, well considered and beautifully expressed. She urges us to set aside our fear of age and "think about the richness and value of lives that have been and are still being lived" and says she is "learning to glide" through her life now, knowing she has nothing to prove and needs no one's approval but her own. The insights into Byrski's own life and how her experiences have shaped her thinking about ageing add a depth to the essay, a personal element that makes her message all the stronger. This book is a wake up call for a long overdue change in our approach to ageing. It is thought provoking, insightful and a "must read", not only for younger people who have yet to experience ageing but also for those who have accepted the general opinion that their lives are of lesser value because they are old. Highly recommended.

I'm in my fifties and have read some of Liz Byrski's novels so I downloaded this and read it straight away. I particularly identified with the parts about the invisibility of older women, and how political this is. But I hadn't expected the deeply personal part on grief and regret. She writes about her father having Alzheimer's disease and I found it really moving and thought provoking. The idea of regret as something valuable really challenged me, not sure if I agree with that but it certainly has me thinking about it. I really liked her voice coming through and the fact that she was willing to talk about her own "unacceptable" feelings about becoming her parent's carer at a time when her children had left home. People don't talk enough about this. I strongly recommend this to anyone who is considering what they want and what matters as one ages.

Getting on: some thoughts on women and aging. This is a powerful yet beautifully written argument

for the right of women to age. For women to become old and to be accepted as such is at the heart of Liz Byrski's passionate plea. It was a great relief to hear of a woman who not only embraces being older, but cherishes every moment of it! I loved this novella and look forward to reading more by Liz Byrski on this subject.

This topical essay is something I wouldn't normally read, but I'm glad I did. Liz challenges concepts about ageing that many people take for granted, like the idea that ageing is something we need to 'fight'. Central to this essay are two themes, that women become 'invisible' as they grow older and that ageing is something to celebrate rather than fight or view as a burden. I really liked the chapter about the public conversation on ageing, which is where Liz makes some of her most cogent points. Plus Liz Byrski is a great writer and argues very convincingly in this essay. It's hard to argue with her point that there aren't realistic representations of older women in the media. This essay is a good place to start changing the conversation.

Having read a couple of Liz's books and loved them, I was very interested in her thoughts on women and ageing. In the last few years, I have experienced some major changes in my life. I have also for the first time begun to become more aware of ageing both in myself, friends and family and its many implications. Turning 60 recently has also further focussed my thoughts and heightened my feelings. I really related to and agreed with, on both a personal and societal level, so many of the themes raised by Liz. It was comforting to see my concerns addressed so well and the negatives of ageing so well countered by the positives. I would highly recommend men and women of all ages to read this. Men to gain a better understanding of women and also because much of what is raised by Liz relates to challenges ageing men also face. Younger men and women to better understand ageing, an appreciation for seniors plus a brighter outlook on the future. Most importantly other women my age, especially if they are struggling with life as a senior, feeling invisible or alone. Thank you Liz.

Liz Byrski writes from personal experience about the positives and negatives of ageing. She draws on extensive personal experience and wide reading to provide a life-affirming exploration of this stage of life so neglected by the media.

It is interesting reading the thoughts and opinions of someone who is obviously intelligent and experienced in communicating with people/women and is obviously at peace with her life and close

family and friends. I would recommend it to anyone, but I do not know if younger people would be interested.

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