

Are You Ready? The Gay Man's Guide to Thriving at Midlife

Rik Isensee

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Near the end of Isensee's comprehensive examination of how gay men adapt best to midlife, the "pre" question is posed: How do you know you've arrived? Sassy but perceptive answers are proposed: "People call you 'Sir'"; "Everyone under 30 is cute" and the like. Though it could be argued that this question should really begin the book, the reader has been conducted through explorations of the most significant aspects of the subject, such as "Into the Dark Wood" (reaching closure with a youthful identity) and "physical and sexual changes" by a San Francisco psychotherapist who knows the territory first hand and uses the experiences and thoughtful commentary of a diverse group of middle-aging gay men to reveal more and help point the way to balanced conclusions and thoughtful behavioral recommendations.

In addition to his psychotherapeutic practice and community college teaching, Isensee brings to this book previous works in fiction (*We're Not Alone*), drama (*Honky-Tonk Parade*) and "how-to" books (*Reclaiming Your Life: A Gay Man's Guide to Love, Self-Acceptance and Trust*).

Isensee's major resource throughout the work is the testimony of a kind of cadre of ten men from a variety of backgrounds, whose ages range from thirty-seven to fifty. Typical is Sicilian-American Tony, forty-four, whose lover of fourteen years died of AIDS four years ago and who went back to school at forty-one to become a physician's assistant.

Isensee, also, has researched the existing writing on the subject of gay male aging—for example, *Gay and Gray* by Raymond Berger. For the most part non-prescriptive, Isensee's exploration is still fulsome enough to be powerfully suggestive. His well-managed interplay between his own analysis and the candid reasoned responses of his chosen group accomplish a great deal.

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