

Be Brave. Lose the Beige! Finding Your Sass after Sixty

Liz Kitchens

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Be Brave. Lose the Beige! is a cheerful guidebook for women in their sixties and seventies who are looking to unlock their creativity.

Written for women of the baby boomer generation, Liz Kitchens's encouraging self-help book *Be Brave. Lose the Beige!* celebrates creativity, passion, and color.

For many women who are now in their sixties and seventies, Kitchen writes, the 1960s were a vibrant time—perfect for rule-breakers, hippies, and antiestablishment war-resisters. But social expectations and pressures dampened the same women's spirits in the decades after, she laments. Caught between the needs of their children and the expectations of their aging parents, many set aside their passions and settled for “education, work, babies, minivans, college tuition, parental caretaking, and grandparenting” over creative living.

With color as its evocative organizing principle (here, beige is “the antithesis of creative living”), this lively book encourages women to color “outside the prescribed lines”—or, to reclaim their creativity. Its recommendations are practical and include changes like rearranging the furniture, buying and wearing clothes in bright colors, and learning a new skill. It suggests easy exercises like doodling and telling a story in six words, and implies that such small steps can morph into big discoveries of new passions. Maxims are used to encapsulate the advice given in each chapter, like “Breaking little rules is empowering” and “Try wasting a day.” Further, each chapter closes with a reiteration of its salient points for easy retention.

Supportive, if often familiar, recommendations arise throughout the course of the book, all standing to enrich people's lives. These include exhortations to build and maintain strong friendships, to set personal boundaries, and to prioritize intimacy with loved ones. And the book handles fraught topics (including aging, caregiving, and end-of-life issues) with respect. Levity individuates some of Kitchens's advice: in acknowledging that retirement frees up time in the day, she notes that time makes space for reminders that one's days are numbered; she warns of the perils of “Retired Spouse Syndrome”; and she gives suggestions for those who had once been “outtasight” and are now coping with being invisible. Still, while its references to accepted psychology are encouraging, many of the book's viewpoints, stories, examples, and suggestions are too particular to the issues of middle- and upper-class women who could afford nannies and college educations for their children.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (March 23, 2023)

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