Clarion Review

Self-Help

Dance until the Music Stops: An Inspiring Guide to Extended Life
Esther C. Gropper
iUniverse
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Five Stars (out of Five)

"Elders may move more slowly and with less energy, but…they are capable of clear and profound thinking…fate doles out predictions for our golden years. We have to blindside the handicaps, albeit temporarily, and find sunshine." Whether you are on the upside or the downside of life's curve, Esther C. Gropper's *Dance until the Music Stops* has something to tell you about how senior citizens feel and what they want and need.

Gropper, a teacher and guidance counselor turned writer and seniors adviser, has devoted much of her own later life to assisting others in dealing with this prickly but predictable predicament: how to enjoy old age without feeling depressed or nervous about being old. She believes that life for older people should continue to fulfill and enrich; it is not a time to shut down, avoid, or deny, but to embrace and be spontaneous. As at any time in life's journey, one should be mindful of the pitfalls and prepare for them.

Loneliness is one major drawback for many seasoned folks; a spouse passes away and suddenly one's house—and one's life—feels empty. Some people attempt to tough it out, live alone, and rebuff the help and comfort that comes with companionship. Gropper is an advocate of seniors living with seniors, gathering with others who have had many common experiences and who can offer a certain perspective—often surprisingly lighthearted – about the unique sufferings of old age. "A strong network is also associated with longer life," she writes. Gropper confesses her own grief and fear when she was losing her mate in her late eighties: "You feel that everyone is thinking, how long does she expect to live?" So the strategies she advises are ones she herself has tested. Dress nicely, accept compliments graciously and give them tactfully. There's nothing wrong with a little makeup, a short nap, or some Internet surfing, especially if you look for jokes and upbeat material to share with your Facebook friends. Move around. Exercise your mental capacities as well as your body. Don't close your mind off to possibilities,

especially the possibility of love. Sometimes people find a true mate in their last years of life, making that time vibrant and meaningful.

Gropper gives examples of seniors who have lived through circumstances that to their grandchildren are stories from a textbook: one room schoolhouses, the Great Depression, two world wars. Those who survived into ripe old age should formulate routines to keep themselves healthy, she believes. A good sense of humor helps, too, she notes, supplying an anecdote: When a senior citizen is asked how he stays so youthful, he responds, “Listen carefully: I’m good in bed.”

Gropper’s charming *Dance until the Music Stops* is both down to earth and educational. Spiced with life stories and recollections from the many seniors that Gropper has counseled and been counseled by, the book moves along at a jaunty pace. While not as tightly organized as some may wish, its wisdom, wit, and sound suggestions should appeal to seniors, as well as those who are trying to help or understand an aging parent or friend. Without denying that there will be cloudy days, ninety-something Esther Gropper has found a way, through networking, writing, and walking the walk, to share her personal “sunshine.”

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