



Free Range Mama

Kizzi

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Free Range Mama is a holistic self-help book for mothers facing their newly empty nests; it serves as a tribute to the enduring value of motherhood.

Kizzi's *Free Range Mama* is a mind, body, and spirit guide for women whose children have grown up and left home.

With the understanding that mothers' identities as such are made strong in the very first moments of their children's lives, especially given the overpowering forces of hormones after birth, this book begins by examining the post-birth moment before it speeds forward to another overwhelming identity shift for mothers: when their children leave home. Kizzi's own story about facing her empty nest propels the text, but the wisdom it provides transcends her single story, giving all kinds of mothers space to find, define, and nurture themselves in their new seasons.

The book takes a balanced approach, acknowledging the whole-person consequences of its central identity shift. It offers insights into how the physical, mental, and spiritual elements of change and sense-of-self work in conjunction and opposition to each other, resulting in a holistic picture of health that allows women to pursue peace and completeness even in the face of the very real loss and grief of their children leaving home.

Addressing chakras and other energy healing concepts that are unseen yet powerful forces in well-being, the text features clear, visually appealing sketches to illustrate its key concepts. It embraces the benefits of many kinds of practices, including faith in God and yoga, but also acknowledges the life-changing value of practicality, with to-do lists presented to help mothers move forward right away. These include easy-to-complete tasks like buying a journal.

The pace balances the contemplative nature of the content with the urgency of an empty nester's need for change. However, the book is also heavy with inspirational quotations that are oddly male-dominated for the topic, making some of its sections feel choppy.

For mothers who have not pondered their own identities for some time, what this book asks of them may be intimidating. Still, the tone is empathetic, encouraging, and graceful out of necessity; it sells its investment in self-awareness and self-care well. Firm and kind writing assures the audience that they are worth the effort implied, and that their work to discover or rediscover themselves will pay off.

A tribute to the enduring value of motherhood, but also a call to embrace a broader definition of what it means to be a woman, *Free Range Mama* is a holistic self-help book for mothers facing their newly empty nests.

MELISSA WUSKE (March 29, 2019)

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