



## Growing Old With Grace

**Ramakrishna Michaels**

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*Through one man's struggle and redemption, this memoir shows the restorative power of the quest for spiritual truth.*

*Growing Old with Grace: How a Shakti Guru Transformed My Life* by Ramakrishna Michaels is a memoir of a life transformed by Eastern thought and religious practice.

Michaels's youth seemed full of promise, but his darkly complicated parental relationships started him on the path of drug abuse and promiscuity, which escalated for nearly two decades until he was left in dire physical, emotional, and mental anguish. From there, Michaels began a path of rebirth through spiritual practice.

Now, looking back, he sees all of the tumult in his life as a search for God. From his family of origin and years of destructive living, the story follows the events of his life along with the spiritual truths he learned. Slowly, he began to see healing and wholeness emerge in his life through meditation, spiritual reading, the teachings of gurus and spiritual leaders, and living in contemplative community.

Michaels showcases his new life in both practical and intangible ways, from being cured of hepatitis C to developing a more transcendent consciousness. He also tackles the overall nebulosity of life transformations: "There is a point in growth where we are no longer what we were, but have not yet a clue as to who we are to become."

While *Growing Old with Grace* is solely Michaels's story, it also presents a path that others can follow. Michaels is open and vulnerable throughout the book, not sugarcoating anything and seeking positive meaning even in the more difficult moments. The text is honest about his past and does not assign blame or seek pity; instead, it demonstrates a conscious turning away from the denial shown to have characterized Michaels's childhood and early adulthood.

Sections are titled in a way that conveys the book's overall theme of growth: "The Seed," "Germination," "The Sprout," "The Bud," and "The Blossom." Each section's introduction describes the progress of a lotus flower, setting a positive tone and a logical progression for the book. The text is certain to be of particular interest to those who themselves have suffered trauma and are seeking to live anew, and it will be most useful to those at the beginning of the healing process. Familiarity with Hinduism and Eastern thought is a plus, though both are given context, and key terms within these spiritual disciplines are defined.

Through one man's struggle and redemption, *Growing Old with Grace* shows the restorative power of the quest for spiritual truth.

MELISSA WUSKE (August 29, 2016)

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