

Midlife Happy Hour: Our Reward for Surviving Careers, Kids, and Chaos

Elaine Ambrose

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Ambrose's work is funny, irreverent, and refreshing, and her advice is spot-on.

Elaine Ambrose's *Midlife Happy Hour* is a humorous look at the life of a small-town farmer's daughter who did not conform to the expectations of society or her family. Ambrose shares her story without apologies or regrets. In between the book's funniest moments, she relates life lessons learned along the way.

The joys and perils of midlife are equally celebrated in this very funny book, whose author laughs her way through a wide variety of topics—from growing up in an age when women were expected to fill a very narrow role to fighting for career successes in the male-dominated corporate world. Ambrose recalls raising kids, growing older, and staying passionate about life.

Each chapter covers a different topic and can easily be read as a stand-alone essay. This makes the book very easy to enjoy in small sips, each as rich and enjoyable as the Cabernet the author is so fond of. It's filled with laugh-out-loud moments and insights that can only come from someone who has lived a full life with plenty of ups and downs along the way.

The author has a wonderful sense of humor that makes even dark subjects, like the death of her mother, read lightly. She does not flinch from sharing her own embarrassments, such as a particularly harrowing experience trying to use the toilet in a fringe-covered dress. Each story is genuine and relatable.

In addition to its humor, the book is full of insights on how to get through life, advising women to take risks, avoid negativity, and enjoy relationships. Its best advice: "Keep laughing ... That's how we survive."

At times, Ambrose's viewpoint does narrow, such as when she discusses grown children moving back home. She sees this as a problem, and doesn't seem to consider the difficult circumstances that may contribute. Such moments are momentarily off-putting, but the tone of the work is not generally judgmental, and Ambrose aims her occasionally sharp pen at herself far more than at anyone else. Her views are her own, and, true to the message of the book, she is unafraid of expressing them.

Midlife Happy Hour is intended for audiences of sympathetic middle-aged women, those who are done raising families and struggling in their careers, by whom the author's authentic voice stands to be embraced. Ambrose's work is funny, irreverent, and refreshing, and her advice is spot-on.

CATHERINE THURESON (April 27, 2017)

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