

## Reclaim Your Right to Grow Old: How to Immerse Yourself In, Be Curious About, and Celebrate Life's Most Important Stage

**Kathleen O'Brien**

Outskirts Press (Mar 13, 2021)

Softcover \$18.95 (282pp)

978-1-977231-52-9

*Reclaim Your Right to Grow Old is an inspiring and insightful self-help text that builds on an extensive survey of positive thoughts on aging.*

Kathleen O'Brien's self-help book *Reclaim Your Right to Grow Old* encourages accepting, even celebrating, one's maturation.

Contrasting fearful Western attitudes toward aging with the celebrations of aging that are found in other cultures, especially Eastern and ancient cultures, O'Brien's self-help book explores the many ways in which people try to hide from the fact, or avoid signs, that they are growing older. It tours different philosophical and spiritual traditions to do so, showing their various takes on aging; some Eastern systems, for example, equate age with wisdom and experience. A number of medical doctors and psychologists are also consulted; all describe the positive aspects of growing older. Throughout, the book questions the wisdom of those who become "enamored with wrinkle creams, fighting old age with all their might."

But in the midst of sharing a diversity of perspectives, the book avoids developing a central guiding principle, beyond the perception that aging is a positive, and that denying one's age is detrimental. Indeed, quotes from a variety of sources appear on almost every page, usually without being pulled together. This lack of synthesis also means that the book's original insights are buried, and that it less promotes healthy attitudes toward aging than it does share an accumulated onslaught of examples, drawing on centuries of wisdom literature.

Also problematic is the book's refusal to attend to the negatives of aging, such as losses; it evades addressing diminishing physical abilities, too. While positivity reigns, some aspects of acceptance, and fair grieving, are thus ignored in favor of developing a compendium of positive responses to aging.

The book's chapters function independently of one another; they do not build on each other substantively. Still, this is a straightforward, conversational work that roots itself in the university class that inspired it; its flavor is like that of an enthusiastic lecture series. Its motivational tone enhances its messages about reclaiming the aging process, though it also leads to repetition. More practical and useful are the exercises and guided meditations that the book suggests, as well as its thorough bibliography, which makes following up on individual concepts easy.

*Reclaim Your Right to Grow Old* is an inspiring and insightful self-help text that builds on an extensive survey of positive thoughts on aging.

MATT BENZING (November 27, 2021)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*