

★ **Winter's Graces: The Surprising Gifts of Later Life****Susan Avery Stewart**

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In cultures where elders are valued, the greeting “You look old today” is seen as a compliment. This is not the case in the United States, where aging is often seen as an embarrassing decline into misery, especially for women. In *Winter's Graces*, retired psychotherapist and psychology professor Susan Avery Stewart tells a new story of aging that celebrates the many gifts and graces it bears.

To tell this story, Stewart had to confront her own deep aversion to growing old. Despite having the example of a wonderful grandmother and reveling in folklore depicting courageous and vital crones, she faced a common dilemma: while she'd absorbed the culture's negative stereotypes of aging and didn't want to think of herself as “old,” pretending to be younger than her years would deprive her of authenticity and haunt her with the fear of being found out. In her sixties, she despaired at beginning to feel “invisible” until she realized that this cultural invisibility gave her the delicious freedom to be fully and audaciously herself.

Acknowledging that the winter of life can bring losses that shake us to our core, Stewart reveals eleven gifts that only reach their fullest expression when we become elders: agelessness, authenticity, compassion, contentment, courage, creativity, necessary fierceness, remembrance, self-transcending generosity, simplicity, and wisdom—all characteristic of a fully developed human being. This is the good news about aging, together with decades of scientific research showing that the devastating physical and mental decline we've come to see as inevitable is not the norm but the exception.

Written primarily for women in their fifties and sixties who may be dreading what later life might bring, the book gives tips and tools for cultivating positive attitudes and health-promoting behaviors that can lead to elder years marked by engagement, adventure, service—and yes, passion.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November/December 2018)

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