

READING GUIDE for Men Navigating Midlife

I have enjoyed creating this reading guide for you to share with your friends/loved ones/reading group. I hope you enjoy exploring *Men Navigating Midlife* together while also sharing some of yourselves with each other.

Happy reading and with all my blessings for your journey Robyn Vickers-Willis

1. A man's crisis or turning point at midlife is often initially around his work. Why do you think this might be so? Can you see how this might apply to you or to men in your life?
2. In chapter 3 it is suggested that midlife transition can be compared to Joseph Campbell's description of the hero's journey? In what ways do we need to be heroic to go on this journey at midlife?
3. *Journeying the River of your Life* is used throughout the book as a metaphor for midlife transition. Study the map (page 37) titled *The River is there for the Rest of Your Life* and consider where you are at the moment on your midlife journey? Discuss.
4. It is stated in Chapter 10 that men can feel very isolated at midlife as they don't easily share with others how they are feeling. Do you agree with this statement? Chapter 5 encourages men to 'befriend themselves' as an initial step to then connecting with others. Do you find this a useful understanding?
5. What are some of the suggestions made in the book to assist men in opening up to their feelings? Can you imagine you or men in your life using these suggestions? Would you try one?
6. Chapter 16 discusses how and why a man connects differently with his sexuality as he navigates midlife transition. What are some of the changes suggested? Have you found this to be so?
7. Memories from childhood can come flooding back at midlife. Memories of lost opportunities, difficult times and even child abuse can rise up from the unconscious. Why is this so? Has this happened to you?
8. I first found the concept of the inner child a slightly whacky one, whereas now I find it has profound meaning for me as my 'little girl' is a presence in my life as she leads me to repressed parts of myself. Are you aware of your little boy? How could you strengthen your connection with him?
9. As we expand into a greater awareness of who we are and what we want to bring in to our life we learn to sit with difficult feelings such as deep grief, frustration, fear and anger as these feelings are normal at midlife and a sign that something inside us, such as an acquired belief, or something in our outer world needs to change. Can you think of a personal example of when you have experienced this at midlife?

10. Assertiveness allows us to express our thoughts, feelings and needs in a way that leaves others free to do the same, a skill not many baby boomers saw modelled when they were young, and thus one many of us have to learn as adults. Are you assertive? Would you consider asking a friend/partner/ work colleague for their feedback about this?
11. I have noted some typical differences between men and women and how they experience their midlife journey are: a man's crisis tends to be around work while a woman's is around her commitments to others at the expense of time for herself; a man's midlife challenge is to connect with his inner feeling world while a woman's is to feel personally empowered in her outer world; men have to move on from their conditioning for action while a woman needs to move on from conditioning to do things quietly and not rock the boat. Discuss.
12. There are many other concepts explored in the book such as projection, meaningful simplicity, challenging self-limiting thoughts. Consider each of you in the group choosing one of these concepts and give a five minute presentation to the group drawing on a personal example to explain the concept.

Now that you have completed the reading guide together I encourage each of you to commit to bringing in to your life 3 things over the next 6 months (whether they are daily practices, shifts in attitudes etc). Write them down on a piece of paper, read them out to each other, (this step is voluntary) collect them in a box and put them away somewhere safe, and make a date to meet in 6 months time to review how well you have gone in honouring your intentions.