

Reading Guide for *Navigating Midlife: women becoming themselves*

I have enjoyed creating this reading guide for you to share with your friends/loved ones/reading group. I hope you enjoy exploring *Navigating Midlife: women becoming themselves* together, while also sharing some of yourselves with each other. You will need some paper, a pen, and coloured crayons/pastels for the activities.

Happy reading Robyn

1. Women need to complete two developmental tasks for a successful midlife transition. First they need to connect with their authentic Self, and second, they need to create a personal world where they can express and experience that Self. I suggest that it is the second developmental task that women find most difficult. Discuss.
2. I believe that one of a midlife woman's greatest challenges is to learn to express her thoughts, feelings and needs, even those they know others may not want to hear. Consider whether you still unconsciously hold the attitude that your world will fall apart if you rock the boat. Discuss.
3. In Chapter 2 I suggest that Julie is typical of a woman at the point of midlife transition in that her world is full of contradictions and bewildering thoughts and feelings. Have you felt or do you feel like Julie?
4. Our psyche speaks to us through symbols and they can open us up to new ways of understanding. I use the metaphor of the migrant's journey to explore midlife transition. Considering this journey metaphorically, where do you think you are on it at the moment? Explain.
5. Spend 10 minutes doing an intuitive (symbolic) drawing of your life now. Share with one other or in the whole group. I encourage you to keep it in front of you as continue to share with the group.
6. Connecting with my story as I wrote this book was like a meditation for me. It was only in the middle of writing it that I discovered that connecting with our story at midlife is a very healing thing to do. Have you found a way to connect with your story? Is there something you could do right now – perhaps using one of the suggestions in the book such as turning points, poetry, intuitive drawing, to do so?
7. I have noted some typical differences between men and women and how they experience their midlife journey. 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.
8. To ensure we can create time for ourselves we all need to learn to express our needs, wants and desires assertively. Do you understand the steps to

assertiveness? Can you think of a time recently when you asserted yourself? What aspect of assertiveness do you have most difficulty with - tone of voice, believing it is OK to express, the actual words, body language?

9. 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.
10. Have you moved beyond your conditioned beliefs about what is possible for you and to take risks to pursue your dreams? Have you found ways to make time for just yourself and truly accept that it is not selfish to do so? Have you pursued something you have always dreamed of doing or something you know you love eg writing/art/mosaic course, further study, standing for local government, or becoming prime minister!
11. Each of us benefit from reaching out for and learning how to accept support when we are going through significant transformation. How do you support yourself during these times?
12. I have found keeping a journal an invaluable support at midlife. It is not something I necessarily do daily but rather whenever I have the desire to express inner thoughts and feelings. Do you keep a journal? If you do, what benefits come to you from doing so? Discuss.

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.