

Excerpts from  
*Women I Want to Grow Old With*

Here is an excerpt from our book *Women I Want to Grow Old With*. This book is designed to forward our friendships, wherever they are and wherever they are not. Please enjoy these insights and discoveries. We hope you'll buy a copy for yourself and your friends!

CHAPTER ONE

**M**ost women spend time investing in their financial future. If we put that same level of attention into investing in our female friends, we'll protect ourselves in a different but equally powerful way. Even if today our life is filled with family, work, and pastimes, *tomorrow* may be suddenly different. We must make time for friends. Our health depends on it.

**Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow**

This book was born out of need and desire. Both of us, the authors, had deep personal experiences that made us realize how much we wanted and needed girlfriends in our lives, now and in the future.

“When my father died, after sixty years of marriage, my mother literally had no friends left. Although she boldly tried to make friends at age eighty, women in their seventies acted as though she were too old for them, and married women were afraid she'd ‘steal’ their husbands. Though she had her family, I believe not having friends whom she could share with and lean on added to her overwhelming sense of loneliness and contributed to her passing two years later.

“I also saw my younger sister become a widow at age forty-three. Because my older sister and I lived in different cities, she leaned on a few supportive friends to literally be by her side. The woman who has become her best friend is also a widow. It's not that they focus on their loss, but when my sister brings up a concern—like dreaming about her late husband even though she's happily remarried—her friend eases her fears by letting her know she has had the same experience. It doesn't make it any easier, but my sister doesn't feel so alone. She has someone who completely *gets her*.”

—Diane

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“Approaching my sixtieth birthday served as a defining moment for me. Thinking about how and with whom I wanted to spend the next decades of my life made me question ‘Do I have any real friends?’ and ‘What is a real friend?’ That, combined with the whole idea of getting older, had me wondering if I would someday be old and friendless. I knew I wanted friends who were committed to being with me, whether I was in the same trench with them or not. I started purposefully asking women I knew and liked to join me for coffee. If, in our conversations, I experienced mutual admiration and connection, I would say, ‘Let’s be friends,’ and ask them point blank, ‘Do you want to be one of the women I grow old with?’”

—Margaret

Women need friends *when* they need them—not tomorrow, not next week, but today. We can’t just fill that need on demand, like hot water from the tap. We must continually add to our relationship reservoir. But, too often, we don’t think about friendship as something to constantly nourish and grow. We just take it for granted. Or we rely on outdated friend-making or friend-keeping skills and habits. We may also be naive, not thinking about what the future might hold. Most women outlive male partners by at least five years, according to sources such as the Harvard University Gazette and WebMD.

Friends literally sustain and protect us. Shouldn’t we remove the blinders and address our feelings and behaviors around friendship? Friendship is *within* our control to create and nurture. Being intentional in creating, sustaining, and expanding our friendship circles can safeguard our emotional, physical, and spiritual health. Remember, we have a say in the matter.

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## **G**TCHA! MOMENT

### **Create a Blueprint of Your Circle of Friends**

Imagine your friendships as a circle of support, helping you not be or feel alone as you move through life. Take a moment to create a visual representation of your current circle of friends. It’s okay if the circle is small or unpopulated for now. This powerful tool will get you in touch with the reality of your existing friendships, It will also support you in expanding your friendship circle.

-  Imagine yourself in the middle of concentric circles. See your closest friends in the innermost circle next to you. These are your most intimate friends with whom you can share your deepest fears, concerns, and joys. You can turn to them *at any time*.

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- ☼ Place your other friends and acquaintances in the remaining circles based on what roles they play in your life. You might name your circles: Intention Holders, Exercise Friends, Work Friends, Book Club Friends, Parents of Kids' Friends, Vacation Friends, and New Friends. A woman may be in more than one circle. Perhaps New Friends is your outermost circle.
- ☼ Have fun with this concept. Put your friends' names on sticky notes (so you can move them later if you want to), and place them in the appropriate circle. Or cut out paper dolls and name them, use snapshots of your gal pals, or find pictures of women in magazines that resemble your friends, and arrange them in the circles. A circle mobile or collage can be fun too. Design your circle on an electronic tablet or social media site. Be creative with whatever expression excites you most. Designing a physical representation of your existing circle of friends allows you to see what support system you have in place today. With this clearer picture, you may now see areas in which you might want to strengthen your safety net.
- ☼ Evaluate the amount of energy and time you're spending with the friends in each circle. Ask yourself: "Are there any changes I want to make? Any shifts in where I spend my time? Anyone I'd like to draw into my inner circle who's not already there?"
- ☼ Take a hard look at any friendships that may have become exhausting, difficult, or draining. Decide how you want to manage these relationships to free up time and energy for more fulfilling and rewarding ones.
- ☼ We'll come back to this concept throughout the book, so keep your Friendship Circle at the ready! Our goal is to help you create a close circle of friends inside of which you will Grow Old Together With Courage, Health and Attitude—GOTCHA! Throughout the book, we'll provide examples of women who are doing just that.