

New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time



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From Library Journal The author's previous blockbuster, *Passages* (LJ 5/15/76), introduced us all to the term "midlife crisis." In this sequel, Sheehy takes us beyond the midlife crisis to examine later life stages, with a short update on young adulthood in the 1990s. In a few ways, this is a better book than its predecessor. Sheehy pays closer attention to the influence of history on the life course of individuals. She also addresses the main criticism that social scientists have made of her work—that large-scale studies have shown no evidence that most people go through the life stages that she describes—by explaining that people should go through these "passages" and that everyone who doesn't is "walking dead." These improvements aside, her prose still sounds like that of a second-rate astrologer, her advice is often contradictory, and her adulation of famous personalities verges on embarrassing.

Nevertheless, this is a "critic-proof" book?if you haven't already done so, order multiple copies to satisfy reader demand.-?Mary Ann Hughes, Neill P.L., Pullman, Wash.Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Sheehy's Passages (1976), in which she counseled thirtysomethings about the onset of midlife, went straight to the top of most best-seller lists, and her last book, The Silent Passage (1992), in which she schlepped women through menopause, did almost as well, despite the fact that females had been navigating the change of life for a millennium or so without Sheehy's help. Rapidly running out of passages, Sheehy now takes the obvious next step: edging her loyal readers, now entrenched in midlife, to the precipice and helping them face their mortality. Arguing that middle life is the "most unrevealed portion of adult life" (not once the Boomers dig in), Sheehy is here to tell you that the years from 45 to 65 are "not the stagnant, depressing downward slide we have always assumed they would be." Although she intends this book to be a "gift" to her anxious readers, it mostly fails. Before hearing about middle age's upside, we must wend our way through seemingly endless pages about women losing their spouses, men losing their jobs (to say nothing of their hair), and both men and women contracting enough diseases to make even the hardiest souls hurry in for a checkup. There is some good news. Women who make it to 65 can expect to live to 85, and if they've survived divorce or widowhood in midlife, they come to enjoy their own independence. Still, the overriding sense of this book, whether Sheehy admits it or not, is that everybody gets hit, everybody gets hurt. You don't need passage counseling to know that, and if you don't have the inner strength to endure, you might not even get to enjoy those upbeat nuggets Sheehy has gleaned from her surveys. Expect the usual demand; for whatever reason, this passage gambit sells Ilene Cooper See all Editorial Reviews

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