



# 60 on Up: The Truth About Aging in America

*Lillian B. Rubin*

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The Golden Years? You've got to be kidding. Part serious, part comic, these words reflect our ambivalence about aging in the twenty-first century. Is it a blessing or a curse? With refreshing candor and characteristic wit, best-selling author Lillian Rubin looks deeply into the issues of our graying nation, into the triumph of our new longevity, and the pain, both emotional and physical, that lies right alongside it.

Through thought-provoking interviews, research, and unflinching analysis of her own life experience, Dr. Rubin offers us a much needed roadmap for the uncharted territory that lies ahead. In a country where seventy-eight million Baby Boomers are moving into their sixties and economists worry that they're "the monster at the door" who will break the Social Security bank and trash the economy, where forty percent of sixty-five-year-olds are in the "sandwich generation" taking care of their parents while often still supporting their children, and where Americans eighty-five and older represent the fastest growing segment of the population, we cannot afford to pretend that our expanded old age is just a walk on the sunny side of the street, that "sixty is the new forty," "eighty the new sixty," and that we'll all live happily ever after.

In this wide-ranging book, Dr. Rubin examines how the new longevity ricochets around our social and emotional lives, affecting us all for good and ill from adolescence into senescence. How, she asks, do sixty-somethings fill another twenty, thirty, or more years, post retirement, without a "useful" identity or obvious purpose? What happens to sex as we move through the decades after sixty? What happens to long-cherished friendships as life takes unexpected turns? What happens when at seventy, instead of living the life of freedom we dreamed about, we find ourselves having to take care of Mom and Dad? What happens to the inheritances boomers have come to expect when their parents routinely live into their eighties and beyond and the cost for their care soars?

In tackling the subject of aging over a broad swath of the population, cutting across race, class, gender, and ability, Lillian Rubin gives us a powerful and long-overdue reminder that all of us will be touched by the problems arising from our new longevity. The best hope is to understand the realities we face thoroughly and to prepare—as individuals and as a society—for a long life from sixty on up.

"In eleven books spanning more than three decades, Lillian Rubin has eloquently described the hopes, fears, and sometimes the anguish that people feel as they negotiate their way through major social changes, such as the revolution in gender roles and sexuality and the destabilization of work-life by globalization. Now she tackles the personal and social consequences of our extended life spans. Perceptive, compassionate, and painfully honest, this book will enthrall readers of any age."

—Stephanie Coontz, author of *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*

"The thing about Lillian Rubin—and this book is no exception—is that you can depend on her, as a writer and thinker, to tell the truth. If you want the real, insightful, unvarnished, necessary, truth on aging, it's right here in *60 On Up*. And, as always, it's a treasure."

—Peggy Orenstein, author of *Waiting for Daisy*

"Once upon a time we had rites of passage to ease our way from adulthood into old age. Now we have Lillian Rubin. *60 on Up* is everything most books on aging are not. It is not sentimental, not filled with stale advice to keep busy, avoid calories, and think young. Instead, it offers authentic wisdom about the

complexities of aging. Its fiercely realistic but tender explorations are strangely comforting because they relieve us of the burden of denial and give us a vision of facing our later years with dignity and courage. It is a wonderful book, filled with the poignant beauty of all transient life."

—Sam Keen

"Fiercely honest, bracing yet compassionate, *60 on Up* begins a national conversation that has been waiting to happen. We Baby Boomers NEED this book!"

—Michael Kimmel, Professor of Sociology, SUNY, author of *Manhood in America*

"For anyone in their fifties, sixties, or beyond, a new way to think about the rest of your life."

—Alix Kates Shulman

"Rubin's masterful account of growing old in the United States is as insightful as it is troubling. She explores topics we would rather not think about with the unflinching honesty that is her trademark. From the loss of beauty to the development of social invisibility, nothing escapes her analytic eye."

—Katherine Newman, author of *The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America*

"A desperately needed antidote to our ever-growing cultural aversion to aging."

—Rick Taylor for *Feminist Review*

"Once you get past media-fed fantasies about aging, you see that in our society, getting old means turning invisible. And Rubin, 83, should know. Author of 11 books on an array of human predicaments, she's now written a sharp, brazenly honest exposé for the 78 million baby boomers who will grow old over the next two decades and can reasonably expect to survive into their 90s."

—Cathleen Medwick, *O Magazine*, September 1, 2007

"Rubin, in her early 80s and a very good writer, explores the good news/bad news about greater longevity of today's Americans."

—David Mehegan, *Boston Globe*, September 4, 2007

"A skillful writer, Rubin writes of herself and her husband in an honest, sympathetic way, keeping her humanity and a sense of humor but at the same time maintaining her psychological and research-oriented focus."

—Story Circle Book Reviews

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