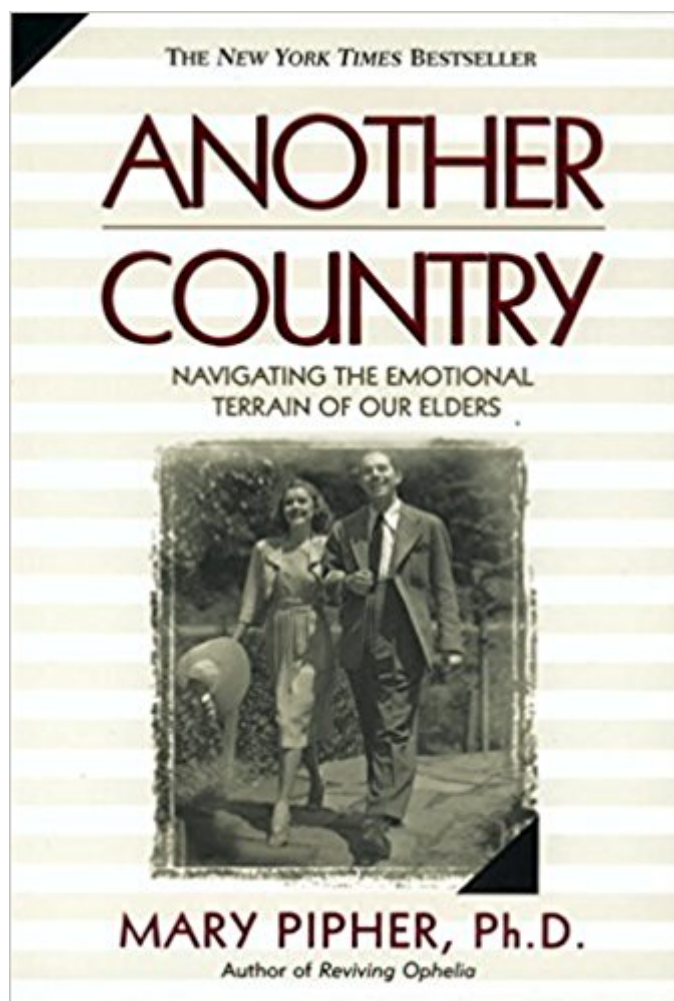


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Another Country: Navigating The Emotional Terrain Of Our Elders



Synopsis

A New York Times Bestseller— There are more older people in America today than ever before. They are our parents and grandparents, our aunts and uncles and in-laws. They are living longer, but in a culture that has come to worship youth—a culture in which families have dispersed, communities have broken down, and older people are isolated. Meanwhile, adults in two-career families are struggling to divide their time among their kids, their jobs, and their aging parents—searching for the right words to talk about loneliness, forgetfulness, or selling the house. *Another Country* is a field guide to this rough terrain for a generation of baby boomers who are finding themselves unprepared to care for those who have always cared for them. Psychologist and bestselling writer Mary Pipher maps out strategies that help bridge the gaps that separate us from our elders. And with her inimitable combination of respect and realism, she offers us new ways of supporting each other—new ways of sharing our time, our energy, and our love.

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Customer Reviews

Mary Pipher, author of the bestselling and groundbreaking *Reviving Ophelia*, which charts the troubled passage of girls into adolescence, has nimbly covered yet another psychological passage: that into old age, which May Sarton called "a foreign country." Pipher reveals that the greatest shame for today's elders—most of whom survived the Depression—is not being self-sufficient. The majority of them stoically prefer to keep their feelings to themselves, and this is why it's so difficult to convince older parents to accept or even discuss such issues as physical and mental health, finances, eldercare, or living wills. This directly conflicts with the openness of their children, who

grew up in the era of "free love" and were influenced by society (and the advent of psychology in the 1950s and popularization of therapy) to talk frankly about emotions. While a boomer can easily talk with a friend about marriage difficulties or even surgery, an elder is likely to find admitting such "weaknesses" abhorrent. *Another Country* includes excerpts of sessions with dozens of Pipher's psychology patients, interspersed with not-so-obvious advice for sensitively communicating with the elderly. Some interviews are grim: one woman hallucinated that rodents were running through her house; she was so desperate for company from her family, but too proud to ask them to stop by, that she invented her own visitors. But the breakthroughs in communication Pipher is able to accomplish, sometimes with the help of grandchildren as intermediaries, are startling and thoroughly encouraging. (For example, the animals the woman was imagining disappeared after she received company regularly.) Pipher cared for her dying mother for a "horrid," guilt-filled year while this book was being written and says that she wanted "to help others in my situation feel less alone." She also aims to help each generation understand the other. In these goals she's succeeded brilliantly. Any adult struggling with issues with their parents, especially mortality, will find *Another Country* an indispensable source of suggestions and support. --Erica Jorgensen --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Older men and women, as well as their children and grandchildren, will find this well-written and sensitive investigation of aging both enlightening and engrossing. Because the death of her mother was so traumatic, Pipher, a psychologist and the author of *Reviving Ophelia*, was motivated to study the aging process in order to promote meaningful connections between the generations and more cultural support for pursuing them. She provides a wealth of anecdotal information about the problems of growing older, drawing on interviews and her own therapeutic work with predominately middle-class white and black Midwestern Americans in their 70s, 80s and 90s, as well as their children. Pipher contends that a variety of cultural trends are responsible for there being so many isolated old people today: a movement away from communal to individualistic ideals; the generation gap between baby boomers and their aging parents; the lack of organized support for the care of the elderly. As she relates the stories of those she has met and counseled, Pipher describes strategies for dealing with illness, physical decline, the death of a husband or wife and the emotional problems that arise for both the elderly and their families. She emphasizes the importance of intergenerational contacts, the benefit of giving older people freedom to make their own choices and her resolute belief that families can fortify the honesty and love they share through involvement in a dying parent's final months. One of the strengths of this excellent study is that Pipher includes

examples of troubled as well as rewarding marital and parent/child relationships. Agent, Susan Lee Cohen at Riverside Literary Agency. Author tour. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.
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I read this book wanting to have a better understanding of what my parents might be feeling as they enter old age. Their health is starting to decline, yet they want desperately to maintain their independence. It seems irrational. Why not enjoy prepared meals and cleaning services of assisted living when you can afford it? Pipher's book answered my questions. It isn't fun to reach what she calls old-old age when health declines and one needs assistance with some of the daily routines. Yet our culture makes it difficult to ask for help and even harder to accept it. Pipher shows how the baby-boomer generation and their depression-survivor parents differ, and the "great divide" is psychology not technology as one might expect. She addresses the realities of care for our elders and encourages family communication and geographical closeness. In the last chapters, she seems unrealistically optimistic about families caring for each other and a bit preachy on that idea. But she does give much useful information on understanding our elders and some good advice on communicating with them.

Another Country is an outstanding, valuable book for anyone who is concerned about parents or grandparents who are aging and need help. The book is beautifully written - it's a New York Times best seller. Pipher, a clinical psychologist, is knowledgeable about seniors and researched this subject extensively. She comments on the fact that our culture has changed dramatically - people are living longer yet our culture worships youth; families live at great distances from each other leaving grandparents isolated and alone. Pipher offers many vignettes of adult children and their aging parents. Some of these stories demonstrate the helpfulness of a counselor in thinking through tough family decisions and in solving contentious family relationships. Pipher invites us to overcome our aversion to thinking and talking about death and helps us understand elders. She says adult children live in "different time zones" from their parents and this causes difficulty understanding each other. Throughout the book she emphasizes the need for intergenerational community and offers ways to implement this. There is a wealth of information here for all generations to learn from and put to use in their relationships with each other. It is also a delightful book to read.

I am a big fan of this author from the book she wrote, *Reviving Ophelia*. Was expecting more of the same. Turned out to be much less scholarly and more anecdotal than I was expecting. Adequate

read for the work I do supporting older persons in their home environments. Would have appreciated more research findings.

Everyone should read this. If you are getting ready to possibly care for an elder, or you are a thirty something who would appreciate some guidance on what to expect with your parents who are probably entering the early stages of being elderly. It will make you cry and laugh. I absolutely loved her writing style. It had clinical evaluations but read like a novel.

This book is for anyone who is curious about how different cultures age. More importantly, it opens our eyes to why certain habits and beliefs are products of when we were born and what is going on in the world as we grow up. This book allows one to take a step back from the entangled relationships we sometimes have with our parents, siblings, and people of cultures different from our own. It delves into why "The old don't want to be dependent in our dependent phobic culture." vs other cultures which embrace and respect the wisdom of the elderly. America has become a fast-paced, technologically-focused culture. It is for the youth of today who become the elderly of tomorrow. A well-written book that will open your eyes and your hearts to being more appreciative for the wealth of experiences and accumulative knowledge our aging society has lived.

I have long made this book mandatory reading for the medical practices that I managed. It is a wonderful way for young receptionists and medical assistants to understand in a small way what our patients are experiencing. Highly recommend.

Real concerns of elderly people are described and addressed, based on clinical experience. Shortage of real studies of aging issues is noted, not many solutions proposed. Therapists are useless to elderly folks unless they have had experience and training---which is lacking in all venues. Amazing and callous that no org., not even AARP, is trying to bring counselors for elders up to speed.

This book was a requirement for my class "Working With The Elders." As a child growing up in the south I could relate to many of the author's writing and experiences. Mary Pipher interviewed many of the persons she mention in her book. This is a must read book.

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