

## A TIME OF LIVING GRACIOUSLY

REFLECTIONS ON GROWING OLDER

BRIGID LOWRY

### ABOUT THE BOOK

This is a thoughtful and uplifting collection of contemplative, wry, sometimes funny essays about the inevitability of growing older, and how one might do so graciously and with gratitude. Informed by contemporary psychology and Buddhist philosophy, Brigid's warm and wise essays offer reflections on everything from bung knees to the afterlife.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

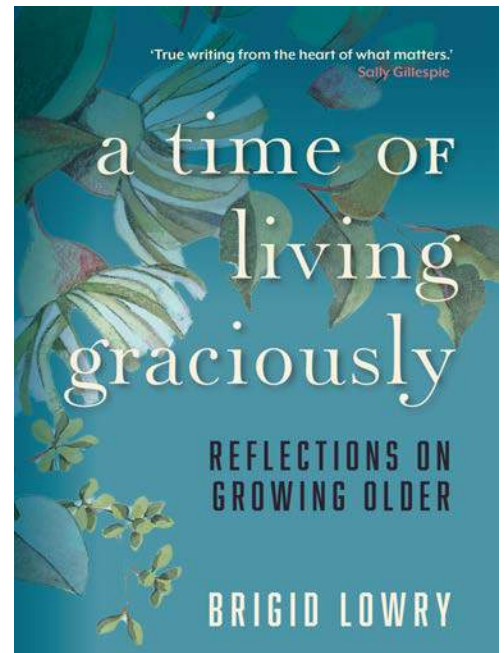
Brigid Lowry was born in New Zealand to a bohemian family where she learned to value books and writing. She hopes her work will inspire people to think, laugh and enjoy being alive. Brigid has an MA in Creative Writing and is the award-winning author of eight young adult titles, including the bestseller *Guitar Highway Rose*. Her recent titles are *Still Life with Teapot: On Zen, Writing and Creativity* (2016), and *A Year of Loving Kindness to Myself & Other Essays* (2021), both with Fremantle Press. She is in favour of kindness, vegetables and living simply.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are you comfortable talking and thinking about your own mortality? Or is it a subject you choose to not to engage in?
2. Read from the chapter titled 'Writing and Death' (p. 29). What books and/or films would you add to this list?
3. What kinds of creative play do you engage in? (p. 35)
4. Answer at least five of the discussion questions on pp. 53–54. Have a conversation with a friend about your answers.
5. What do you need to find courage for (p. 111)?
6. What brings you solace?
7. Who is your favourite older person right now? What have you learned from them?
8. What is the best funeral you have ever attended?
9. Have you thought about your own funeral? What will it be like? Include any songs, photos and rituals you would like included. Discuss with a friend.
10. What are three things you are grateful for today?
11. Do you think your mind is less sharp than it used to be? If so, how do you accommodate it?
12. Are there any ways ageism affects you?
13. Has this book made you think about the ageing process in a different way?

### CREATIVE WRITING QUESTIONS

1. Choose one title (or two or three) from the table of contents and write your own short essay or poem with the same title.
2. Create your own list of Helpful Things (pp. 141 and 157). Swap a copy of your list with a friend.
3. Write a portrait (or two or three) of some of your own dear friends or family who have died. Focus on details that encapsulate them.
4. Make a list of things you have lost in growing older. Make a list of things you have gained.



5. Write a story / poem / essay about being in the moment. Where are you exactly *right now*? What is it exactly about *this* moment you want to observe / grasp / convey?
6. Write your own Life Review (p.15).
7. Write a complaining poem addressed to / about your body.
8. Write a celebratory poem addressed to / about your body.
9. Make a list of things you like (or that you would like) to do with your time.
10. Describe your perfect day.
11. Write a brief history of your life by describing something across time: haircuts / shoes / clothes / houses / spouses / songs /artworks (p. 38).
12. Do some creative writing in a cemetery.
13. Write your own epitaph (p. 129). Write one for a friend.
14. Make a list of things you could let go of right now.
15. Write about a time you laughed a lot.
16. Create your own Alphabet of Ghosts (p. 120).

## INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

***How did you go about the process of writing about mortality, ageing and dying? Did you sometimes wish you weren't?***

This topic really interests me – as a Buddhist, as an aging person and as a human being. There were moments when I felt heavy but mainly I enjoyed writing this book. I felt I had things to say, so I said them. In the process I learnt a lot about myself, and also the wider scope old age, sickness and death, which are part of the human existence.

***How important is it to maintain a sense of humour as one grows older?***

Absolutely crucial.

***Do you have any thoughts about growing older and relying on others more?***

Acceptance is all. It is humbling to be the older person. It is also part of the cycle of life. I trust my son to take care of what he must take care of regarding my ageing. I hope I will be gone before it becomes too hard and burdensome for him, and I try not to ring him too often with computer hassles. 😊

***Do you see reflections of your parents in different stages as you age?***

My father died in his fifties, and my mother died in her early sixties, so no. Their journeys were very different to mine.

***What gives you solace?***

Buddhism. Granddaughters. Family. Friends. Cosy rugs. Chai. Toast. Walking. Music. The ocean. Flowers. Trees.



@FremantlePress



Sign up for enews



fremantlepress.com.au