

How to handle later life

24 July, 2018 By Ibadete Fetahu

'Everyone should read this book either to benefit ourselves as we age, or to help those around us.'

Title: How to handle later life

Author: Marion Shoard

Publisher: Amaranth Books

Reviewer: Liz Charalambous, staff nurse and PhD student

What was it like?

Written as a result of personal experience and realisation there is insufficient information and guidance for those involved in challenges associated with ageing, this thorough and informative book refers to national policies and regulatory frameworks throughout to provide detailed advice. I welcome this book as a valuable addition to the literature on empowering people to tackle the challenges, which often accompany ageing. The book covers an entire range of circumstances beginning with an overview of the ageing process itself, and how people are affected. It follows through with information and guidance on socialising, what to think about when considering future living arrangements, legal issues, finance, hospital admissions, and considerations around the end of life.

I was immediately drawn to the section on hospitals which helpfully covers everything from hand washing to legal rights, the personal anecdotes held my interest throughout. It suggests ways to cope without simply accepting the dictations of often monolithic and impenetrable organisations such as hospitals, legal, and state institutions. It offers practical advice and reassuring messages on how to safeguard your rights, empowering the reader to deal with a host of potential events. One example is the mention of John's Campaign, which advocates the rights of carers to visit their loved ones when admitted to hospital; a campaign some may not be aware of unless suddenly placed in the position of having to organise busy lives around the expectations of organisations.

What were the highlights?

The author takes commonly taboo subjects such as the ageing process itself, issues around sex, meeting new people to begin dating in later life, and how to deal with abuse. It takes an inclusive approach with a recognition of diversity within the older demographic of society to address issues around ethnicity and LGBT. It is extremely well written, informative, well thought through, and the writing style makes it easily accessible to a wide range of readers.

Strengths & weaknesses:

Strengths include the author's position as she takes a positive and empowering approach to offering advice around handling later life. There were no pictures but I felt this was not a concern as the text stands alone without the need for pictorial representation of the information.

The information is mainly relevant for a UK setting, and has the potential to date as legislation changes. However this is unavoidable and easy enough to remedy by updating via online searching, the book stands alone as an excellent starting point.

Readers may appreciate further practical details on taboo issues such as dealing with sex and incontinence but the contact list at the end provides a useful follow up to access extra information, and such detail may be outside the remit of this book.

Who should read it?

Everyone should read this book either to benefit ourselves as we age, or to help those around us. Nurses may wish to leave this book in communal patient areas for patients and relatives to access, as it is written from the perspectives of those who use services and so a valuable addition to the body of knowledge around ageing.

<https://www.nursingtimes.net/opinion/book-reviews/how-to-handle-later-life/7025142.article>