

SQUINT: RE-VISIONING THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE

BOOK CLUB KIT

My goal is to create a positive perspective about getting older, not to sugarcoat reality, but to combat pervasive stereotypes about aging and to share the potential for growth and possibility. Squint is about topics that matter and issues that touch all of us. It's perfect for book clubs.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margit (rhymes with target) Novack is an entrepreneur, thought leader in aging and industry founder in Senior Move Management. She loves serving clients, managing her team and sharing with colleagues. After decades in the field of aging, she moved away from her life of work and title, to a new role — author, speaker, and champion of a re-visioned picture of aging. Squint: Re-visioning the Second Half of Life, is her first book.

Margit grew up in Philadelphia, went to the Philadelphia High School for Girls and has graduate and undergraduate degrees from the University of Pennsylvania. She is a great gardener, terrible cook, and an enthusiastic walker. Margit lives with her husband and three dogs (a retired Greyhound racer and two puppy mill rescues). She divides her time between Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the Maryland's eastern shore, where she loves kayaking upwind.

To learn more about Margit and Squint, please visit www.margitnovack.com.



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Discussion Questions

1. Bubbie was a mentally competent adult. Did Bill have a right to force his mother off Valium? Taking away someone's keys is different, because driving puts others at risk. Medication abuse or lack of medication compliance seems like a victimless crime. What would you do if someone you loved was unsafe, or worse, harming themselves? How do you help someone you care about if they don't want help?
2. A small change in medication routine made a big change in Bubbie's life. Have you had a small change in routine that created a big change in your life? Another way to look at this is the cost of perfection. Bubbie's adherence to the medication schedule was perfect, but it negatively impacted her life. How has the need for perfection impacted your life?
3. Because of the pandemic, many older adults are using technology to obtain products and services and to stay connected with family members. Did older adults in your family adopt new technology as a result of the pandemic? Did they embrace it easily or was it a challenge? How has it changed their lives post-pandemic?
4. Have you had "the conversation" with family members? If so, was the experience what you expected? How did your family determine who would initiate the conversation?
5. White lies and geriatric fiblets are a common theme of this book. Do you approve of deceiving people under certain conditions or situations? When do you draw the line?
6. Do you remember the last time you were mothered, or fathered? How does it make you feel?

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7. Margit says her drive and stubbornness at age 7 were predictors of her grown up self, and that they are her best and worst qualities. How can the same attributes be both best and worst qualities?

8. Throughout the book, Margit finds parts of her past that she has forgotten or misremembered. Have you misremembered parts of your life? How did it make you feel?

9. Margit paints the second half of life as resplendent with opportunity. She also describes the high suicide rate among older adults, and says that for some people, depression may be a rational response to a future of unacceptable options. How do you reconcile these two opinions? Are they contradictory, or both true?

10. Experts say grieving for someone with whom you had a strained relationship is often more intense than when the relationship is close, because you also grieve for loss of the relationship that might have been. Have you had this experience?

11. Although sibling estrangement can be triggered by life events, experts say this usually occurs when tensions have been building for years. If there is estrangement in your family, was it triggered by life events, were relationships already strained, or both?

12. Margit has many things she has done as a parent that she is proud of, but also has a wall of shame as well. Do you think every parent has regrets about things they did as parents?

13. Do you think people should dress “age appropriately?” Who determines what is age appropriate? Have you ever asked yourself if you were ‘too old to wear something?’

14. When Margit finds her purse in the freezer, she wonders if it is a sign of something serious. When you have a mental hiccup, do you do the same thing?

15. Have you reread things written by yourself from years or decades earlier? What was your reaction?

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16. Are you surprised by the finding that older people are generally happier than young people? Would you want to be young again? Why, or why not?

17. Katherine Graham compares childbirth to moving because they are both hard. What are some things in your life that were very hard to accomplish but worth doing?

18. Have you ever avoided someone who was ill or recently bereaved because you didn't know what to say? If you did finally reach out to them, what did it feel like for you? If a family member or close friend were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, how do you think you would respond?

19. Margit contrasts how we think of aging family members with how we think of aging pets. How do you feel about your aging pets?

20. We sometimes get involved in battles that have a high price. Have you ever had a Pyrrhic victory, where the cost of winning was so high it was tantamount to a loss? Has that experience influenced how you tackle obstacles today?

21. Have you ever received a gift with strings? Was the obligation openly stated, implied or simply assumed by you? How did that make you feel about the item? Have you ever given gifts with strings? How would you feel if your children sold or discarded items you have given them?

22. Margit would not misrepresent her fees to her client, but had no problem asking the leasing agent to do this for her grandmother. How are the situations different? Have you ever told fiblets to help someone preserve their dignity? Is lying an absolute, or nuanced based on circumstances? Where do you draw the line?

23. Should older adults be allowed to live in situations where they are at risk for falling, poor medication compliance, etc.? We all take risks and make bad decisions at times. Do people lose the right to make bad decisions when they get old?

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24. Was there an event in your life that went from perfect timing to horrible timing? What happened?

25. Do you know older adults who are creating legacy through the way they live their lives?

26. Margit suggests that the biggest determinant of how family members deal with disposition of items after a death is their pre-existing relationship. What has been your experience?

27. If you already have a tattoo, did you get it as a form of self-expression, or to create/share an experience? If you don't already have a tattoo, do you think you may get one someday? Why or why not?

28. Which was your favorite story? Why?

