

## **Book Review**

### **Life Reimagined: The Science, Art, and Opportunity of Midlife**

Barbara Bradley Hagerty; New York: Riverhead Books, 2016

*Engage with verve,  
Choose purpose over happiness,  
Your thinking is your experience.  
~ Barbara Bradley Hagerty*

Barbara Bradley Hagerty, Science journalist for [USA] National Public Radio, takes the opportunities to extend midlife into one's 80's and 90's very personally. She presents interdisciplinary longitudinal studies, brain science and psychological research on usual and optimal aging in a highly readable way – backed up by pages of well-documented footnotes describing specific work. Her most important sources are American, often decades long, including: the Harvard Longitudinal Study (Vaillant, Waldinger), the Nun Study (Snow), Rush Memory and Aging Project (Bennett), and the Seattle Longitudinal Study (Schaie & Willis).

Brain science demonstrates that loneliness (subjective social isolation) is a killer. Loneliness promotes social withdrawal, hostility, reduced pleasure in social situations, lower meaning in life, and risky behaviours. Chronic loneliness is associated with a shorter life. Social engagement with life, cultivation of friendships, and volunteering are major strategies for moving beyond loneliness.

Purpose and meaning in life, a sense of future, and curiosity are life-savers. The good news is that efforts to reach out to others stretches our minds and bodies, fosters nurturing social connections, and changes our later life. Fulfilling our need to contribute feeds our physical and mental health, extending our lives and improving quality of life.

Hagerty interprets findings through engaging interviews with key researchers mixed with reflections on challenges and lessons from her own midlife experiences. Chapters on memory, friendship, marriage, purpose, coping, altruism, and work (paid and unpaid) elaborate on the art, science and opportunities of the middle of life.

