



Harley and Me: Embracing Risk On the Road to a More Authentic Life

Bernadette Murphy

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What happens when women in midlife step out of what's predictable? For Bernadette Murphy, learning to ride a motorcycle at forty-eight becomes the catalyst that transforms her from a settled wife and professor with three teenage children into a woman on her own. The confidence she gained from mastering a new skill and conquering her fears gave her the courage to face deeper issues in her own life and start taking risks. It is a fact that men and women alike become more risk averse in our later years—which according to psychologists and neuroscience is exactly what we should not do. And Murphy stresses that while hers is a story of transformation using a physical risk, emotional and educational risks can serve the same beneficial purpose for other women.

Murphy uses her own story to explore the larger idea of how risk changes our brain chemistry, how certain personality types embrace dangerous behavior and why it energizes them, and why women's expectations change once estrogen levels drop after the childbearing years. She also explores the idea of women and risk in pop culture—why there are so few stories of the conquering heroine (instead of hero). Surely Thelma and Louise driving off the cliff should not be our only pop culture reference for women finding true freedom.

With scientific research and journalistic interviews weaving through a page-turning, road trip narrative, *Look Lean Roll* is a compelling look at how one woman changed her life and found deeper meaning out on the open road.

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