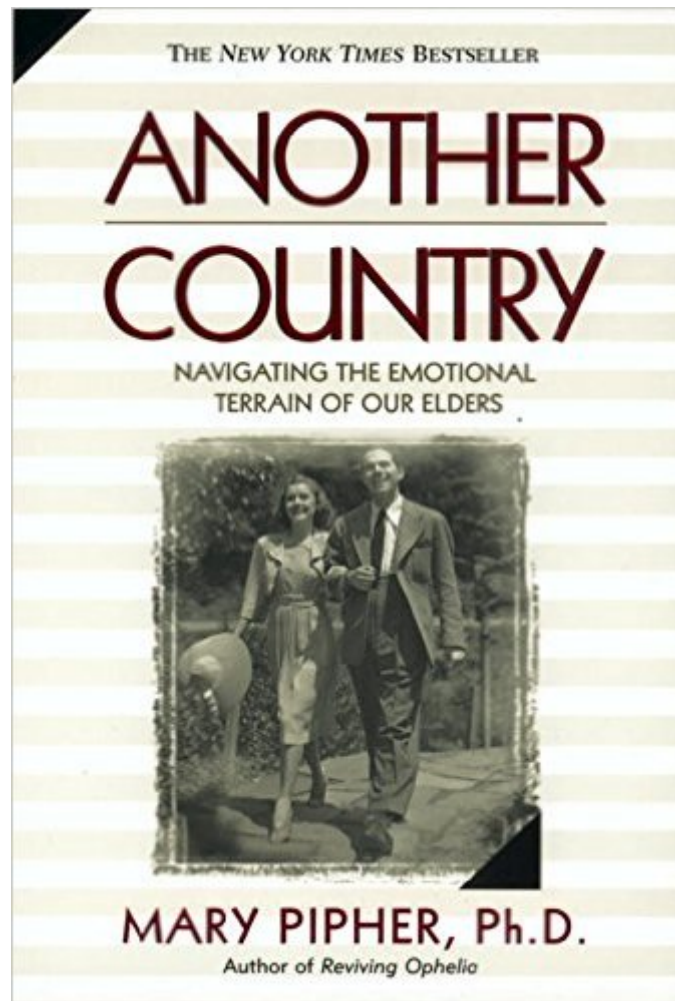


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# Another Country: Navigating The Emotional Terrain Of Our Elders



## Synopsis

A New York Times Bestseller—There are more older people in America today than ever before. They are our parents and grandparents, our aunts and uncles and in-laws. They are living longer, but in a culture that has come to worship youth—a culture in which families have dispersed, communities have broken down, and older people are isolated. Meanwhile, adults in two-career families are struggling to divide their time among their kids, their jobs, and their aging parents—searching for the right words to talk about loneliness, forgetfulness, or selling the house. *Another Country* is a field guide to this rough terrain for a generation of baby boomers who are finding themselves unprepared to care for those who have always cared for them. Psychologist and bestselling writer Mary Pipher maps out strategies that help bridge the gaps that separate us from our elders. And with her inimitable combination of respect and realism, she offers us new ways of supporting each other—new ways of sharing our time, our energy, and our love.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have just purchased 4 copies of *Another Country* to send to friends and relatives. My copy was purchased at the Des Moines Airport, as I browsed in the bookstore with my mother in law (91) in her wheelchair, returning from a nostalgic trip to Mom's family farm and a reunion with her 93 year old brother. I cried as I read the Introduction (almost poetry!) and thought, "someone understands us!" Beautifully and carefully crafted, Mary Pipher's book does a stunning job of recreating the peaks and valleys of aging, family relationships, and the growth of us all as we age, both as parents and children of aging parents. As I read it my only regret was that she didn't interview my own parents,

married 61 years, living in their own home and still mentally alert and vital aging "young-olds". She could have learned from them some valuable lessons, as I have, about aging and dignity, remarkable people who have remained flexible, loving and marvelous role models for my own aging process. The book was a catharsis for me as the child of aging parents but it was also hopeful, positive and offered new ways to think creatively about aging. I highly recommend it to all.

I cried, I laughed and I sighed at the grim truths and revelations in Mary Pipher's book on aging and the place held in our society by our elderly citizens. I folded so many page corners over for review that the book looks like a favorite old cook book. I wish I had read this book before my parents entered old-old age. I was not raised with any grandparents nearby, so had no examples for what to expect and how to deal with and care for aging parents. Growing old with dignity and dealing with declining health and eventually death is the hardest passage of our lives. None of the other passages as individuals, parents or spouses can compare to these challenges. Adolescence, puberty, child-birth, child-rearing, divorce...all seem like a walk through the park in comparison. Having said that, we all need to read the book before our parents reach the old-old phase (although who knows exactly when that might happen). If you're in your 40's or 50's, chances are you should be reading this book. Although the book doesn't provide any recipes or procedures for dealing with the issues of the aging, it does provide valuable insights and suggestions into attitudes, fears, and concerns of both the aged and their care-givers. We just assumed that mother would ask for help when she needed it, but her pride, reluctance to communicate and fierce need to be independent would not allow her to admit how needy and frail she had become. We finally discovered how badly she had deteriorated (although she still wouldn't admit it), and are still regretting that we didn't intervene sooner. She's now in a convalescent hospital, sometimes stoically accepting her condition, but sometimes angry, depressed and resentful. I'm sure I'll pick up the book and read it again as we find our way through this passage. And then when I become a young-old and finally an old-old, hopefully I'll be able to remember the valuable life lessons I'm acquiring now.

I read this book wanting to have a better understanding of what my parents might be feeling as they enter old age. Their health is starting to decline, yet they want desperately to maintain their independence. It seems irrational. Why not enjoy prepared meals and cleaning services of assisted living when you can afford it? Pipher's book answered my questions. It isn't fun to reach what she calls old-old age when health declines and one needs assistance with some of the daily routines. Yet our culture makes it difficult to ask for help and even harder to accept it. Pipher shows how the

baby-boomer generation and their depression-survivor parents differ, and the "great divide" is psychology not technology as one might expect. She addresses the realities of care for our elders and encourages family communication and geographical closeness. In the last chapters, she seems unrealistically optimistic about families caring for each other and a bit preachy on that idea. But she does give much useful information on understanding our elders and some good advice on communicating with them.

This is a vital guide-book for those of us with aging parents. As the middle-aged child of an often difficult mother, I came to understand that the reasons for nitpicking or explosive criticism often are that a parent feels unneeded and by-passed. Since I am not one who easily picks up on these types of non-verbal clues but, rather, expects a direct request or expression of what's on someone's mind, I was having a hard time understanding this anger and bitterness. Basically, we and our parents speak entirely different languages. I am grateful for this book to help me translate. All of my family, young and old, will be the healthier for it.

Mary Pipher's books are a whole cut above the self help genre, because they look perceptively at the whole social context of problems, so that we recognize the massive currents around us. Like *Silent Spring*, *Children First* (Penelope Leach), and other epochal books, they answer the big questions of a generation. *Another Country* is painful, honest, gutsy and real, yet it offers real direction and tools for this issue that is so important to those of us with ageing parents. Which of course, is everyone. One of the three or four really original voices in American social sciences, with a knack for matching the personal and the bigger picture.

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