

The background is a light pink color with several stylized, jagged lightning bolt shapes scattered across it. The lightning bolts are a darker shade of pink and have a grainy, stippled texture.

JEN MANN

Midlife Bites

BOOK CLUB KIT

A NOTE FROM JEN MANN

Dear Book Club Readers,

I sure hope y'all read *Midlife Bites* and you didn't just come to book club for the wine and food. I mean, the wine and food are great incentives, so I'll allow it, but the first person who makes small-talk gets banished. I don't mean to be rude, but the whole point of this book was to encourage real conversations about everything from finding friends to figuring out your purpose to frozen . . . ahem . . . well, if you read the book, you know.

I really appreciate that you took time from doing everyf*ckingthing to read this book. I know your free time is valuable and cannot be wasted. So thank you for reading and joining the midlife bites movement. It's amazing to have you here because I never thought so many of you would come along for the ride. A few years ago when midlife kicked me square in the lady garden, I was positive I was all alone. I was certain that no one else was feeling that unique midlife mix of rage, apathy, and loneliness, with a dash of "Are you kidding me? How did I hurt my neck sleeping?"

To be honest, I wasn't sure I wanted to write this book. I didn't feel qualified. I'm not an expert on anything except sarcasm and binge-watching Netflix. When I started *Midlife Bites*, I was still in the throes of my own midlife crisis and I was questioning if I was going to see the other side. But I knew one thing for certain: I wasn't going out to pasture quietly, so I started writing.

I'm still not an expert, but I learned a lot along the way and I hope you did too. If nothing else, I want this book to confirm to you that you're not alone, what you're feeling is normal and valid, and don't let age or fear or anything else hold you back from speaking up and embracing midlife the way you want to!

Your new best friend,
Jen

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the opening of the book Jen describes midlife as a surprise kick in “my lady garden.” Were you surprised by your own midlife experience or do you feel like you were prepared?
2. Have you had open and honest conversations with friends, family, or medical providers about the changes you’re experiencing? Why or why not?
3. Do you have car tweezers?
4. Loneliness and lack of friends in midlife is something Jen writes about a lot. How do you make friends?
5. Jen believes purpose is essential to achieving fulfillment in midlife. She also believes that one’s purpose is always evolving and changing as our circumstances change. What are you doing with your life? Do you have a purpose? Have you had to make adjustments as you’ve aged?
6. As we grow older, there is no way to deny our bodies are changing. If it’s not sagging, it’s spreading. And don’t forget all the the wrinkling or tinkling. How do you feel about the physical aging your body is going through? Are you fighting it, accepting it—something else?
7. Middle-aged women are often called “crazy” but Jen argues we’re not crazy, we’re just feeling all our feelings. Besides fantasizing about running away, screaming into the void, laughing maniacally, breaking things, or crying uncontrollably, how do you process the range of emotions you cycle through on a daily basis? Do you have any advice for the “crazy” ones?
8. After decades together, marriages can often feel boring or frustrating or unfulfilling. At some point many of us find ourselves asking, “Has he always chewed like that?” Jen writes openly about her discussion with her husband about her dissatisfaction with their relationship. Have you ever had an honest conversation with your partner about the state of your relationship? Why or why not?
9. Sex is a touchy subject for many. It can be difficult to talk to our partners about what is happening in midlife to our bodies, our libidos, and our emotions that all can impact our sex lives. Do you and your partner talk about sex and ways to keep it enjoyable for everyone?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

10. “No” is a complete sentence, but so is “Yes.” Jen realized that a lot of the things she was unhappy about could be alleviated by saying “yes.” She found new friends, uncovered more avenues to her purpose, discovered different hobbies, strengthened her bond with her husband, and experienced unique opportunities. Do you say yes or no more? Would your life benefit from doing the opposite?
11. Jen accidentally tried stand-up comedy and ended up having a fantastic time. She also tried meditation and realized it wasn’t for her. What is something new that you’ve tried lately? Would you do it again? Why or why not?
12. Self-care is a buzzword these days because we’re all becoming more aware of the benefits of recharging. What is your favorite form of self-care?
13. The book is called *Midlife Bites* and Jen does tend to focus on the “bitey” side of things, but she also showcased many women in her community who made big changes and are thriving in middle age. Aging isn’t all bad. What do you think is the best thing about the age you are now?
14. Real talk: How are you?

MIDLIFE BITES MIXED TAPE:

Lean on Me
BILL WITHERS

Thank You for Being a Friend
ANDREW GOLD

9-to-5
DOLLY PARTON

Girl on Fire
ALICIA KEYS

Push It
SALT-N-PEPA

Let's Get It On
MARVIN GAYE

Hot in Herre
NELLY

Cherry Bomb
THE RUNAWAYS

Glory Days
BRUCE SPRINGSTEIN

Landslide
FLEETWOOD MAC

She Used to Be Mine
SARA BAREILLES

Young and Beautiful
LANA DEL RAY

Up&Up
COLDPLAY

It's My Life
BONJOVI

Beautiful
CHRISTINA AGUILERA

You Don't Own Me
LESLEY GORE

Run the World (Girls)
BEYONCÉ

Let It Go
IDINA MENZEL

I Will Survive
GLORIA GAYNOR

