

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Elderhood

By Louise Aronson

Publication date: June 11, 2019

Hardback | \$30.00

Ebook | \$21.00

“Aronson writes like a memoirist while giving us scientific insight, philosophical wisdom, and wise counsel for a journey and destination we all share.” —**Abraham Verghese**, author of *Cutting for Stone*

“[A] penetrating meditation on geriatrics ... Aronson’s deep empathy, hard-won knowledge, and vivid reportage makes for one of the best accounts around of the medical mistreatment of the old.”

—**Publishers Weekly**, starred review

“Empathetic, probing, and often emotionally moving narratives on appreciating the power and the pain of aging.” —**Kirkus Reviews**, starred review

Physician and award-winning author **Louise Aronson**, a noted Harvard-trained geriatrician, introduces a revolutionary perspective on growing old in her new book, **ELDERHOOD: Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, Reimagining Life** (On-sale: June 11, 2019 | ISBN: 9781620405468 | \$30). Sharing stories from her personal and professional life, and drawing from history, science, literature, and popular culture, Aronson offers a powerful roadmap for how we approach old age. Full of joy, wonder, frustration, and outrage, Aronson’s moving book offers hope about aging, medicine, and humanity itself.

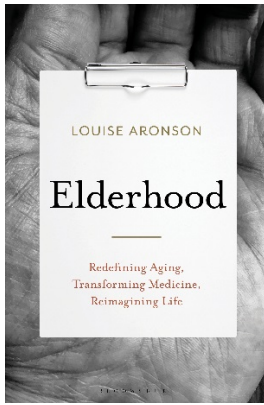
With modern increases in human lifespans, the period of elderhood—what Aronson calls the third and final stage of life, after childhood and adulthood—may now span forty years of our lives or more. But in American society, at the very moment that we are living longer than ever before, we have turned old age into a disease, a condition to be dreaded, disparaged, neglected, and denied, as we try to avoid the signs of our own aging and mortality. Throughout **ELDERHOOD**, Aronson shares anecdotes from her twenty-five years of caring for patients, and from her personal experiences of getting older and watching her parents age. From what these experiences have taught her, she envisions a large-scale shift in society’s—and medicine’s—attitude toward aging, made up of crucial adjustments in how we see the changes in each other’s and our own bodies, how we care for older people, how we set doctors’ salaries and bill patients, and ultimately, how we conceive of the final third of life. Not as an ending or decline, but as yet another stage of life with its hardships and challenges, opportunities and joys.

With **ELDERHOOD**, Aronson urges us to re-examine the meaning of aging and to reframe our later decades to better prepare for and thrive in those final years. In vivid and evocative writing, she speaks to doctors and laypeople, the aged and aging, their children and their children—anyone who will be old one day, which in theory, is all of us.

Louise Aronson, MD, is the author of the story collection *A History of the Present Illness* and a geriatrician, educator, and professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where she directs UCSF Medical Humanities. A graduate of Harvard Medical School and the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College, Dr. Aronson has received numerous awards for her medical work, teaching, educational research, and writing. She is the recipient of a MacDowell fellowship and four Pushcart nominations for her fiction, and her articles and stories have appeared in many publications, including *The New York Times*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Lancet*, and *Bellevue Literary Review*. She lives in San Francisco.

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In ***ELDERHOOD***, physician Louise Aronson breaks down our pre-conceived ideas about aging and old age, diving deep into the counterproductive ways our medical system and societal attitudes shape life from age sixty forward. *Elderhood* offers a clear path toward changing the realities of the last third of our lives, on both the individual and systemic levels.

Here are some of the components Aronson invokes in her powerful roadmap to elderhood:

Symptoms of the System

Old age is too often blamed for the realities created by policies and decisions in medicine and society. The experiences of older people in the American health care system are indicative of how current medical care—and indeed, elderhood overall—is broken for all of us.

- Aronson tells the story of Patricia Gabow, CEO and chief medical officer of Denver Health, who refused surgery for her elderly mother, instead opting for treatment that was more effective and ultimately cheaper—yet not favored by doctors or insurance plans and therefore not an option for most Americans.
- Aronson shares her personal story of burnout in her career as a geriatrician in a medical system that devalues important aspects of her work, such as time spent for vital conversations with patients and their families.
- She explains why medical studies often fail to consider old age and describes the incredible damage this gap can cause when study findings are applied to treatment and medication for older patients.
- She reveals how medical students are taught to see the conditions of old age as abnormalities. She uses lessons from her decades in geriatrics to highlight the important considerations that must be made when treating older people.

An Attitude Shift

A different perspective on old age can transform how we feel about it and lead us to make different choices for ourselves and in policy, ones that improve the experience of elderhood.

- Aronson explains the biological aging process in humans and our current theories—evolutionary, biological, and psychosocial—on the reasons for aging.
- She invokes the words of great thinkers and philosophers throughout history and across cultures to contextualize our modern attitudes toward elders and aging.
- She shares her own struggle with whether or not to continue dyeing her graying hair, complicated by society's expectations of aging and treatment of older-looking people and her own guilt around giving in to these systemic biases.
- She describes her grandfather's and her mother's rewarding and fulfilling elder years as examples of how getting older doesn't just mean a loss or lessening but gaining new perspectives, interests, and opportunities.

KIRKUS



"A noted geriatrician illuminates the facets of old age through a compassionate, philosophical, and humanistic lens. For Aronson (Medicine/Univ. of California, San Francisco; *A History of the Present Illness: Stories*, 2013), what began as a relatively rudimentary 'old age book' soon morphed into **an examination of aging and the human condition encompassing poignant stories and the viewpoints of medical experts, writers, historians, and scientists.** Most of the author's patients are 60 and above, and she approaches their care not just from a wellness angle, but from humanitarian, social, and personal ones as well. She shares harrowing case studies of elderly people who have been misdiagnosed or mistreated by medical professionals. She also examines the ways an ageist modern society and the medical community and its depersonalized treatment protocols continue to fail elderly patients. Aronson rightly believes that these failures must be brought forward as learning tools for the global medical community. The author modestly inserts herself into the narrative, frequently sharing stories about her youth and her medical rotations, as well as her father's struggles with dementia and her mother's battle with cancer. She also addresses worrisome (and potentially disabling) physical changes and medical issues that appeared much earlier in her life than she'd expected. The narrative is comprehensive, sprawling, and often depressing and somber, featuring sad histories of elder maltreatment and neglect as well as clear examples of ageist ignorance. Nonetheless, the book is beautifully written and offers countless moments of keen insight. Some observances are even startling, as when Aronson pauses to reflect on the societal obsession with anti-aging and accidentally observes the disturbing hairline of a woman with a facelift, her 'surgical residua pulling one way and gravity another.' By collectively observing age from diverse perspectives, the author hopes readers (and caregivers) will discover a new appreciation for growing old that is positive, fruitful, and rewarding. **Empathetic, probing, and often emotionally moving narratives on appreciating the power and the pain of aging."**

Publishers Weekly



"Growing old could be much more graceful if doctors would give it some attention, according to this penetrating meditation on geriatrics. UC San Francisco medical professor Aronson (*A History of the Present Illness*) mines her experience as a geriatrician for insights into the ways society excludes and fails old people. **The book's heart is her gripping insider's critique of modern medicine and the invasive, agonizing, and often 'futile or harmful' treatments with which it battles disease while ignoring overall well-being.** Drawing on intimate, often harrowing case studies of patients and the mistakes made by their doctors (including, painfully, her own missteps), Aronson sleuths out how a callous, clueless medical-industrial complex makes things harder for oldsters in ways small—pill bottles that can't be opened by arthritic hands—and large. (Aronson discovered that a patient seemingly dying of Parkinson's disease was actually suffering from a 'drug cascade' of medications prescribed to treat the side effects of other medications.) Less cogent in the sprawling text are her musings on the consolations of 'elderhood,' which don't convince when placed against the generally grim picture she paints. Still, **Aronson's deep empathy, hard-won knowledge, and vivid reportage makes for one of the best accounts around of the medical mistreatment of the old."**

Advance praise for *Elderhood*

"In the latter years there are possibilities for joy, transcendence, and meaning, but also for just the opposite. **Aronson writes like a memoirist while giving us scientific insight, philosophical wisdom, and wise counsel** for a journey and destination we all share.

Elderhood is a lovely and thoughtful exploration of this voyage."

—**Abraham Verghese**, author of *Cutting for Stone*

"Aronson's *Elderhood* is dazzling, rich with knowledge gleaned from her professional work as a geriatrician, her personal experience as a daughter, her common sense, and her thorough analysis of our social supports and cultural messaging. Her arguments are powerful, and her conclusions are revolutionary. **I hope everyone who has a stake in older people, which is ultimately all of us, will read this book.**"

—**Mary Pipher**, author of *Reviving Ophelia* and *Women Rowing North*

"A noted geriatrician illuminates the facets of old age through a compassionate, philosophical, and humanistic lens.... **Empathetic, probing, and often emotionally moving** narratives on appreciating the power and the pain of aging." —**Kirkus Reviews**, starred review

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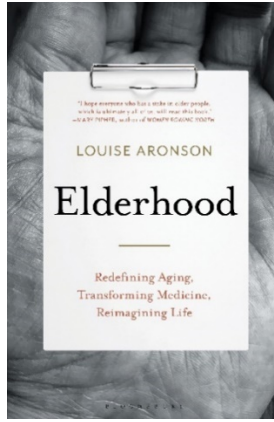
"In *Elderhood*, the physician-writer Louise Aronson provides an **honest and humane** analysis of what it means to grow old in America. Her book—part memoir, history, and social critique—is deeply sympathetic to elders and sharply critical of the 'anti-aging industry' that has tried to turn being elderly into some sort of disease. **I highly recommend this wonderful book to anyone who plans on growing old in this country.**"

—**Sandeep Jauhar**, author of *Heart: A History*

"As Louise Aronson says, 'Life offers just two possibilities: die young or grow old.' This **searing, luminous** book is for everyone who hopes to accomplish the latter and remain fully human as they do. **It will challenge your assumptions and open your mind—and it just might change your life.**" —**Lucy Kalanithi**, editor of *When Breath Becomes Air*

"A wise and beautiful book, **to be cherished by anyone who hopes to keep on growing, aging, and learning.**" —**Perri Klass, MD**, author of *The Mercy Rule* and *Treatment Kind and Fair*

"The book that every one of us has been or will be looking for—a **passionate, illuminating, brilliant, and beautifully written** meditation on aging and caring for elders, *Elderhood* is a godsend." —**Pauline Chen, MD**, author of *Final Exam*



Louise Aronson – Book Tour

ELDERHOOD

Tuesday, June 11th at 7:30pm

Kepler's Books

“This is Now” Premier Event with Angie Coiro

1010 El Camino Real

Menlo Park, CA

www.keplers.com

Wednesday, June 12th at 7:00pm

Book Passage

51 Tamal Vista Blvd

Corte Madera, CA

www.bookpassage.com

Thursday, June 13th at 7:30pm

Mrs Dalloway's

2904 College Ave

Berkeley, CA

www.mrsdalloways.com

Wednesday, June 19th at 7:30pm

Powell's City of Books

1005 W Burnside St

Portland, OR

www.powells.com

Thursday, June 20th at 7:30pm

Town Hall Seattle

1119 8th Ave

Seattle, WA

townhallseattle.org

-over-

Monday, June 24th at 7:00pm

Point Reyes Books

Emporium Building, 11315 CA-1

Point Reyes Station, CA

www.ptreyesbooks.com

Wednesday, June 26th at 7:00pm

City Lights Bookstore

261 Columbus Ave

San Francisco, CA

www.citylights.com

Thursday, June 27th at 7:00pm

A Great Good Place for Books

6120 Lasalle Ave

Oakland, CA

www.ggpbooks.com

Thursday, July 18th at 7:00pm

Bookshop West Portal

80 W Portal Ave

San Francisco, CA

www.bookshopwestportal.com

Wednesday, July 31st at 5:15-6:30pm

Commonwealth Club

Grownups Forum Talk, in conversation with Jenara Nerenberg

Toni Rembe Rock Auditorium

110 The Embarcadero

San Francisco, CA

www.commonwealthclub.org

August 31st-September 1st

Decatur Book Festival

Decatur, GA

Details tk

Friday, September 20th at 1:00-3:00pm (exact time tba)

Vintage House Senior Center

264 1st St E

Sonoma, CA

vintagehouse.org

Monday, October 7th at 7:00pm

Napa County Library

580 Coombs St

Napa, CA

In partnership with Napa Bookmine

www.napabookmine.com

Monday, October 28th at 2:00-5:00pm (exact time tba)
Calistoga Community Center
1307 Washington St
Calistoga, CA
In partnership with Collabria Care
collabriacare.org

Please check louisearonson.com for additional events and updates.

