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The Wild Oats Project: One Woman's Midlife Quest For Passion At Any Cost



Synopsis

What if for just one year you let desire call the shots? The project was simple: Robin Rinaldi, a successful magazine journalist, would move into a San Francisco apartment, join a dating site, and get laid. Never mind that she already owned a beautiful flat a few blocks away, that she was forty-four, or that she was married to a man she'd been in love with for eighteen years. What followedâ "a year of abandon, heartbreak, and unexpected revelationâ "is the topic of this riveting memoir, *The Wild Oats Project*. Monogamous and sexually cautious her entire adult life, Rinaldi never planned on an open marriageâ "her priority as she approached midlife was to start a family. But when her husband insisted on a vasectomy, something snapped. If I'm not going to have children, she told herself, then I'm going to have lovers. During the week, she would live alone, seduce men (and women), attend erotic workshops, and have wall-banging sex. On the weekends, she would go home and be a wife. Her marriage provided safety and love, but she also needed passion, and she was willing to go outside her marriage to find it. At a time when the bestseller lists are topped by books about eroticism and the shifting roles of women, this brave, brutally honest memoir explores how our sexuality defines us, how it relates to maternal longing, and how we must walk the line between loving others and staying true to ourselves. Like the most searing memoirs, *The Wild Oats Project* challenges our sensibilities, yielding truths that we all can recognize but that few would dare write down.

Book Information

File Size: 773 KB

Print Length: 305 pages

Publisher: Sarah Crichton Books; Reprint edition (March 17, 2015)

Publication Date: March 17, 2015

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00N051UMO

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #74,835 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #23 inÂ Books

> Self-Help > Mid-Life #45 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Counseling & Psychology > Sexuality #102 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Sexuality

Customer Reviews

Should have been subtitled "One Woman's Midlife Quest for Revenge and Its Foreseeable Fallout." It's hard to dislike Rinaldi. In fact, I empathized with her hurt, and anger, and disappointment after her husband Scott announces during a couples therapy session that he's having a vasectomy in the wake of a false-positive pregnancy test - a textbook example of a passive-aggressive strike. Despite his protestations as the story progresses that all he wants is for them to get back together and make the marriage work, his absolute refusal to consider the one thing she says will complete their relationship speaks louder than his words. He doesn't say much; she wears her heart on her sleeve. Their life prior to her adventure is, by her description, loving and respectful, fraught with the usual disagreements and compromises endemic to long-term relationships, but overall caring and stable. Her seemingly impulsive reaction to his announcement - "if I can't have a baby, then I'll have lovers" appears way out of proportion, not to mention a non-sequitur. It implies deeper divisions not explicit in her narrative, though they are hinted at in her recollection of a moment when she thought Scott was about to explain his steadfast refusal to consider having a family. Just as she thinks he is going to open up to her, he trails off, and she is left with no answers and no baby. A reasonable response would have been to assess whether starting a family was non-negotiable and, if so, gracefully exit the marriage in the hope of finding someone of like mind. That she went for the nuclear option of serial adultery suggests that she was motivated by a desire to hurt and humiliate him, rather than by finding herself.

Rinaldi's story, while an interesting read I finished in a couple hours, has been experienced by countless middle-aged men and women. Her feelings and experiences aren't as special as she imagines them. While most men and women will not launch into a sexual all-you-can-eat in the way in which she did, it's entirely commonplace to feel unhappy in marriage, to feel unfulfilled in life, to feel sexually frustrated by our mates at different stages of life. Nothing in life is perfect, and this includes our mates and our marriages. I'm a 40 year-old woman whose own 21-year marriage has taught me things about myself, life and marriage in general. The central thing I've learned is that none of us are perfect. And none of us can meet every single need our spouses have, without fail. For me there is grace in allowing my husband to be human - to fail. I don't require that he be all things and do all things perfectly. He cannot fill all voids. His failures don't give me license to cheat,

to allow myself to become embittered or poisoned with self pity. Was Scott selfish? Yes. But predictably, as water seeks its own level, so, too, is Robin. I don't dislike Robin. She's simply immature and self-involved to a degree I hope to never be. I wonder how much time Robin spent pondering whether she was meeting every single need and desire her husband had? Was she the perfect wife? Was she physically resplendent? Did her body defy aging such that she remained the perfect object of desire for her husband? Was she blessed with a system of ethics, morality, principles and integrity that make men proud? Was she intellectually challenging? Did she engage her husband in heated debate or long discussion(s) about an array of thought-provoking subjects? Was she the perfect cook?

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