

BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTES RENDUS

List of Reviewers:

SHARON BRINTNELL
University of Alberta

D. ELAINE GILLINGHAM
University of Alberta

SHARON KAHN
University of British Columbia

DENNIS LUCAS
Manitoba Department of Education

BETTY SWINDLEHURST
University of Alberta

Mayer, N. *The Male Mid-Life Crisis: Fresh Starts After 40*. New York: Doubleday, 1978.

Reviewed by:

Sharon Brintnell
Associate Professor
Department of Occupational Therapy
Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

So often, crisis has the connotation of a breakdown or the inability to cope, but Mayer's book gives a sensitive and academic view of male mid-life growth. Development is presented as a life span process which many men struggle with at certain periods of their lives.

Using brief sketches of special men who have reviewed the possibilities and who have risked an alternative life style, we are given the opportunity to view the upheavals in their lives as positive, productive and healthy. The author states that the book is not an attempt to describe what is for this development stage, but rather an attempt to explore what might be. Professional literature, popular press articles and life events are carefully intertwined, assisting the reader to explore the issues which occur during this emotionally charged period.

For the clinician and counsellor, the case picture makes for easy reading, but in some instances, the personal sketches are too long. It is difficult to keep words to a minimum and yet provide personal sharing.

The text is organized into five sections. Section I explores the events often taken to be indicative of male menopause. Section II reviews the American lifestyle (therefore applicable to Canadians), with

its male conduct and attainment. The critical issue becomes the realization that meeting these expectations is not enough and that an actualizing process is occurring within themselves. Section III attempts to conceptualize an applicable developmental frame of reference. It reviews changes in sexuality and the dynamics of the marital relationship. Here, the author takes time to present the changes occurring in women during this period, and to discuss the increased demands of family interaction. At the same time the individual is confronted with the realization of her/his "life fantasy" and suddenly becomes conscious of its inadequacies and her/his desire for new and different challenges. Section IV reviews the plight of individuals in their second starts and their search for new directions. Three areas are presented — the inner self, work and marriage. Here, the growth element of change is stressed and the reader must explore her/his own beliefs and attitudes. Section V is the metamorphosis from boy/man to man, the surmounting of the crisis. Guidelines to explore the options and to ease the passage through this turbulent, but healthy time, are simply and clearly stated. Unfortunately, few will probably benefit from this prophylactic approach because they are so caught up in the demands of living.

There has been a great deal of emphasis in the last two decades on the growth of females. With Mayer's book, and others that have appeared of late, it appears that the 80s may be the time for male actualization.