

## Book Review

### **Living the Life Unexpected – 12 Weeks to your plan B for a meaning and fulfilling future without children by Jody Day**

This book is not like any other book on childlessness that I have read. It isn't a personal journey story but a self-help book on power with *'Feel the Fear and do it Anyway'* or *'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People'* but for 'us'. Jody Day, founder of the Gateway women's group, has taken sound psychological knowledge and developed a series of 12 chapters built around acceptance and personal development of childlessness.

This is a revised edition of her earlier book – Jody says it is... *"A fully revised and expanded edition of my self-published (2013) book, almost 100 pages longer and fully updated with everything I've learned myself and from others whilst navigating the life unexpected. Whilst the first book felt like 'my' book, this new edition, with extracts from case studies from 24 women and 2 men from around the world, feels like 'our' book"*.

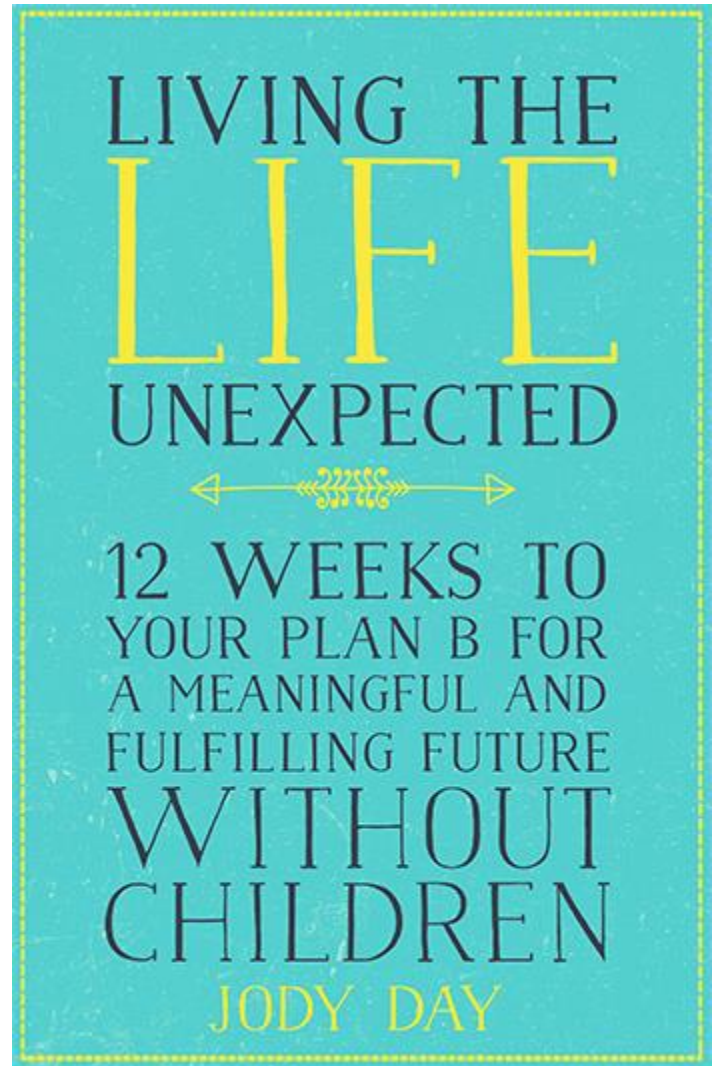
I would very much agree that this book feels inclusive. Rather than a story about one person's experience of childlessness, it feels more like a 'group workshop' that includes you. It asks YOU questions and challenges, YOU to think about your circumstances, but with the support of Jody and her contributors.

Depending on where you are on your journey with childlessness, this book may be challenging – it asks you to self-examine your feelings now, in the past and to picture a new future. These are not simple things, and it may be easier to think of it as: 12 Steps to your Plan B, rather than 12 weeks which I found ambitious. Each of the 12 chapters discusses different topics in quite an academic way and then sets an exercise for you to work or think through.

Chapters include subjects such as statistics of childlessness past and future and around the world, bringing together personal comments and reminding us that "you're not alone". There is analysis of the "current adulation of motherhood" and discusses pro-natalism and how that can affect our sense of self. The chapters on grief and caring for the mother within were especially insightful and beneficial, but the chapter called 'Who moved my Mojo' about recreating a life of meaning and the following chapters on letting go of old dreams and reconnecting to yourself, could be life changing. However the chapter I would download to my phone to have with me everywhere was chapter 10: 'Creating a Life for yourself as a childless woman' that reminds us the "giving birth is not the only act of creation." That there are other ways your legacy and spirit can make an impact.

Although she remarks that in writing this book, it was not her intention to make an impact. I believe Jody has certainly made a lasting one. I would recommend this book if you fancy just dipping into some interesting articles about childlessness, but especially if you are ready to challenge yourself to a new life without children. Take it at your own pace and be surprised what might happen.

**T R Parkes**  
**Belfast MTL group**



## **What's different about this book to the old edition?**

Everything fully revised and updated and extensive new material in:

- Chapter 1 (Our Stories)
- Chapter 2 (You're Not Alone)
- Chapter 4 (Working Through the Grief of Childlessness)
- Chapter 12 (Taking off the Invisibility Cloak)

**Extracts from case studies** with 24 women and 2 men around the world including:

**Global Resources & Further Reading:** fully revised and updated global resource list and extensive suggested reading in the following categories:

- Social and cultural aspects of childlessness
- The solo childless experience
- Midlife and growing older without children
- Doing your grief work
- Understanding and embracing your Inner Bitch
- Forgiving your body
- Meaning, purpose, happiness and choices
- Developing your creativity (and dealing with your resistance)
- Connecting and reconnecting to source and self-care
- Thinking about changing your work/career as part of your Plan B
- Other women's stories