

Discussion Guide

*Disrupt Aging: A bold new path
to living your best life at every age*

By Jo Ann Jenkins

#DisruptAging
Real Possibilities from 

About the book

SUMMARY

We've all seen the ads on TV and in magazines: "50 is the new 30!" or "60 is the new 40!"

50 is the new 50, and CEO of AARP Jo Ann Jenkins, for one, likes the look of it.

Disrupt Aging is a guide to living your best life at every age through the lens of health, wealth, and self. It's a book for all the makers and doers who have a desire to continue exploring possibilities, to celebrate discovery over decline, and to seek out opportunities to live the best life there is—at every age.

ABOUT JO ANN JENKINS

Jo Ann Jenkins is the CEO of AARP, the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to social change and helping people 50 and over to improve the quality of their lives. Prior to her current role, Jenkins served as served as the COO of AARP, and before that she was president of AARP Foundation. She is a Malcolm Baldrige fellow, recipient of the 2013 Black Women's Agenda Economic Development Award for spearheading investments undergirding innovative social impact programs, and one of the NonProfit Times' Power and Influence Top 50 for 2013 and 2014.

REVIEWS

"Jo Ann's Disrupt Aging is spot on: every single year is a gift. By confronting the most common stereotypes about aging, this book will help us all live each year to the fullest."

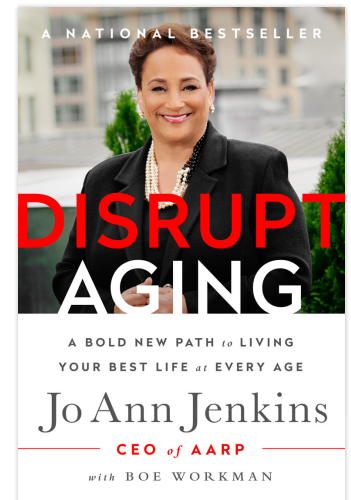
—**Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and founder of LeanIn.Org**

"Jo Ann Jenkins believes that age and experience can expand life's possibilities for all of us. In this personal and thought-provoking book, she inspires us to seize the opportunities that longer lives give us and to embrace aging as something to look forward to, not something to fear."

—**Jeff Gordon, Four-time NASCAR Cup Series Champion**

"Jo Ann Jenkins doesn't just challenge the stereotypes of aging, she reduces them to rubble, showing that our later years can be just as productive, meaningful and purposeful as our primary working years. With its inspiring stories of people redefining what it means to grow older, Disrupt Aging is for anyone who insists on living a life of connection, engagement, expansion and possibility—at any age."

—**Arianna Huffington, co-founder, president, and editor-in-chief of the Huffington Post Media Group**



How to approach the discussion

1. KICK OFF THE DISCUSSION BY PLAYING ONE OF THREE SHORT VIDEOS:

- **Change What It Means to Age**

The way we think about aging is outdated. Let's change the stories we tell. Let's change what it means to age. Let's #DisruptAging.

<https://vimeo.com/156715429>

- **No Donuts For You! Fake Age Limit Targets Ageism**

Everyday age discrimination happens behind closed doors. What would happen if we brought it out into the open?

<http://bit.ly/1SoNB39>

- **Millennials Show Us What 'Old' Looks Like**

What age do you consider to be old? We posed that question to millennials and asked them to show us what "old" looks like

<http://bit.ly/1SbUzZG>

2. FOCUS THE DISCUSSION AROUND A SPECIFIC THEME:

- To get started on a conversation about the experience of aging and our desire to live our best life at any age, focus on **chapters 1-3**.
- To dig deeper into a more practical conversation about the choices we make with our health, money, work, and home, focus on **chapters 4-9**.

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INTRODUCTION: WHY DISRUPT AGING

When Jo Ann Jenkins turned 50, she was excited about a future filled with possibility. But there was a disconnect between her excitement and the messages filling her well-intentioned birthday cards: “Happy 50th! You are now officially over the hill!” In ways both big and small, we are inadvertently limiting ourselves as we age. It’s time to tackle these limits head on and challenge the outdated beliefs we hold about aging.

- 1. What’s the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word “aging”? Are they mainly negative or positive words?**
- 2. How is aging portrayed in the world—on TV, in movies, in advertising? Do these portrayals accurately reflect your personal experience of aging?**

CHAPTER 1: THE NEW REALITY OF AGING

By 2040 there will be more people aged 60 and over than there are children – for the first time in the history of the world. Not only is our world getting older, but the experience of aging is radically different from what our parents experienced. As we age, we find ourselves staying healthy longer, contributing to our communities, pursuing new opportunities, and more. We’re living a new reality of aging, and yet our perceptions about aging don’t reflect that new reality.

- 1. Think about how your parents were living when they were your age. How is the way you are living—and aging—similar or different?**
- 2. How might the label “old” or “young” be limiting?**
- 3. What might influence how a person ages? What’s in our control? What’s not?**

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CHAPTER 2: OWN YOUR AGE

Outdated beliefs about aging show up in our language every day: “She’s a little too young to lead the team” or “Are you sure you’re going to remember that?” “He’s running a marathon?” The assumptions we make based solely on someone’s age affect how we all show up. Let’s start challenging those assumptions, big and small.

- 1. When was a time that you experienced ageism, accidental or otherwise?**
- 2. Do you make assumptions about what you can or can’t do based on your own age? In what situations?**
- 3. What does “owning your age” mean to you?**

CHAPTER 3: DESIGNING YOUR LIFE

Many of the goals we set for ourselves are about what we want to do, not about who we want to be. That’s why we can reach a level of success only to discover it hasn’t brought the happiness we desired. But it’s never too late to start designing a life fit for you. With a growth mindset, new skills, and – most of all – courage, you will be liberated to design your future around what matters most.

- 1. What kind of advice would your younger self give to you today? What about your older self?**
- 2. What’s the biggest risk you have taken—and what did you learn about yourself from that?**
- 3. What do you feel when you ask yourself, “what’s next?” Why?**

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CHAPTER 4: TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR HEALTH

The majority of our health outcomes depend on social, behavioral, and environmental factors under our control. Less than half is based on genetics and medical care. Let's take control and get the information and access to care we all need for health and longevity.

- 1. What's one everyday choice or health habit that you are proud of?**
- 2. What's one thing you'd like to change about your health or your healthcare?**

CHAPTER 5: CHOOSE WHERE YOU LIVE

Our communities and homes shape our lives—from who we spend time with, to our daily routines, to our mental wellbeing. And yet, as we age, our homes and communities can become roadblocks that prevent us from living the full, independent life that many want to live. It's time to identify these roadblocks—or, better yet, stop creating them in the first place.

- 1. How well does where you live suit you today? Is it where you want to be as you get older?**
- 2. What are important qualities that you look for in a neighborhood? Why do they matter to you?**
- 3. What about your current home makes it age-friendly — or not?**

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CHAPTER 6: FINANCE YOUR FUTURE

Traditional ways of thinking about and managing finances don't reflect the changing realities of how we live and age. New times require a more holistic approach, one in which we save for life (not just retirement) and plan for the future that we want to live.

- 1. How did your parents save for the future? How is that similar to or different from your approach?**
- 2. What's one thing you could do to make yourself more financially ready for the future?**

CHAPTER 7: PUT YOUR EXPERIENCE TO WORK

Employees 65 and older now outnumber teenagers in the workforce for the first time since 1948. But outdated beliefs about aging prevent us from taking full advantage of an aging workforce. It's time to adopt new ways of working for an intergenerational workplace full of experience and expertise.

- 1. Have you ever felt “too young” or “too old” to learn or do something at work?**
- 2. How do you think about work and purpose as you age? What is your definition of retirement?**

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CHAPTER 8: LET'S CHANGE THE RULES

Many of us are already changing our personal beliefs about aging. But that's not enough—we also need to change the systems that surround us. This change requires that we update the programs, policies, and institutions around health, wealth, and self.

- 1. What current programs and policies are essential to helping people live and age as they choose?**
- 2. Think about our cities, policies, products, and institutions. What's working well for people as they age? What most needs to change?**

CHAPTER 9: A NEW VISION FOR LIVING AND AGING IN AMERICA

Disrupt Aging is a rallying cry to create a bold new vision of living and aging—a vision in which aging is not about decline, but about growth. About not only challenges, but new opportunities. That older people are not burdens, but contributors.

- 1. Who is someone you'd like the message of Disrupt Aging to reach? What do you hope would change for them?**
- 2. What is one change around aging that you would like to see happen in your lifetime?**

Explore more

MORE BOOKS TO CHECK OUT

- ***This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism***
by Ashton Applewhite
- ***Second Wind: Navigating the Passage to a Slower, Deeper, and More Connected Life***
by Bill Thomas
- ***The Longevity Book: The Science of Aging, the Biology of Strength, and the Privilege of Time***
by Cameron Diaz
- ***New Aging: Live Smarter Now to Live Better Forever***
by Matthias Hollwich and Bruce Mau Design

MORE RESOURCES ON AGING

- **“Older Really Can Mean Wiser,” *The New York Times***
The science of why many of our mental faculties improve with age.
<http://nyti.ms/1CrdALT>
- **“The Real Roots of Midlife Crisis,” *The Atlantic***
What a growing body of research reveals about happiness—and how to navigate the (temporary) slump in middle age that many of us face.
<http://theatlantic.com/1EZCJlb>
- **Disruptive Demographics, *Big Think***
Articles, interviews, and videos about the state of global aging, technology, and innovation.
<http://bit.ly/1lyJewW>
- **Life Reimagined, AARP**
A multifaceted program that includes an interactive website, in-person seminars, and personalized coaching for adults who want to find new purpose and challenges in life.
<https://lifereimagined.aarp.org/>