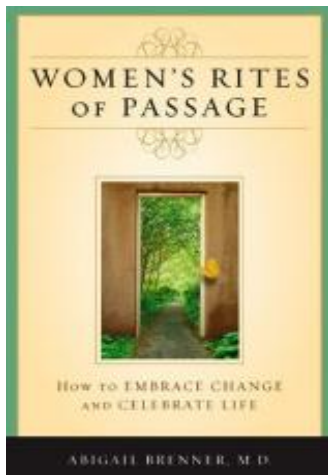


# Women's Rites of Passage: How to Embrace Change and Celebrate Life

by Abigail Brenner, MD



## About the Book

What is it that enables some people to cope with the big changes in their lives while others seem undone by them? For psychiatrist Abigail Brenner, the answer lies in the act of consciously and ritualistically marking those changes. Rite and ritual, bringing the unconscious to consciousness, can help in the process of sorting through and making sense of life themes. In doing so, we realize the goal of our rites of passage, which is to create a roadmap that gives tangibility, meaning, and full expression to the structure of our lives.

In this provocative and lucid book, Dr. Brenner describes how rites of passage have changed over time. Traditionally, society had a strong hand in marking passages, insuring that its members always knew their identity, their place, and what was expected of them. **Women's Rites of Passage** grew out of Abigail Brenner's desire to answer some fundamental questions about the role of rites of passage in contemporary women's lives. Relying on a research study involving over 50 women, the author shows how women today understand the need to take responsibility for their lives and for directing their own paths, and are beginning to do so by creating their own very personal rites of passage.

Distilling the best of the scholarly material, made accessible and interesting to a mainstream audience, combining this with inspiring personal stories, and completing the perspective with Dr. Brenner's expertise and guidance, **Women's Rites of Passage** is a richly rewarding book that will help reconnect women to their important life transitions, while giving them the tools to honor those transitions and to understand their significance in the broader scheme of their lives.

## Discussion Guide

1. In today's world, many rituals and rites have lost their meaning, their authenticity, and power to touch us. We want to connect to our roots and traditions, but many of the women in *Women's Rites of Passage* needed to revise or reinvent

what their parents had bequeathed to them. Discuss how these women negated, negotiated, or re-created meaningful rites and rituals.

2. The past has such a hold on our futures: It grounds us, stabilizes us, haunts us, and can even immobilize us. Discuss how many of the women needed to revisit or reinhabit their personal pasts in order to reach closure and move on.

3. What rites of passage discussed through the women's stories did you most resonate with? Why? Did these mirror events familiar to you from your own life? Was it more about a specific woman's voice or perspective that made that particular rite resonate with you?

4. Were your beliefs or attitudes changed by any or many of those represented by the different women?

5. Our society is experiencing great flux. Religion has often become an occasional practice or a cult way of life. There is definitely a void that needs to be filled with meaningful spirituality. Discuss women's need for such spirituality at crisis times in their lives, and how they resolve this need or quest.

6. Did the book make you question the way you celebrate and perform rites of passage? Have you marked several of these in your life, a few, or have you neglected to perform any of them?

7. What transitions in your life stand out for you as milestones of special personal significance that were marked with rites of passage you created? Discuss the accompanying shifts in consciousness and sense of self that took place as a result of marking, honoring, and celebrating these passages.

8. What passages, or major milestone events in your life, would you honor and celebrate retroactively if you could?

9. Did the book influence how you intend to mark, create, and perform rites of passage as you move forward through your life?

10. Were you aware of life themes before reading the last chapter of the book? Were you able to identify your own? If so, what are they? Discuss how the knowledge you've acquired about these will help you as you move forward in your life.

11. Overall, what main message did you come away with after having read the book?

## **Author Bio**

Abigail Brenner, M.D. is a board certified psychiatrist in private practice in New York City. She attended New York Medical College, becoming a physician in 1977. Her internship and residency in psychiatry were completed at New York University- Bellevue Medical Center in 1981. In full-time practice for 25 years, she combined her interest in clinical work (the Bellevue adult outpatient clinic) with a private psychotherapy practice.

## Critical Praise

?Women's Rites of Passage by Abigail Brenner is a helpful and handy resource.?

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