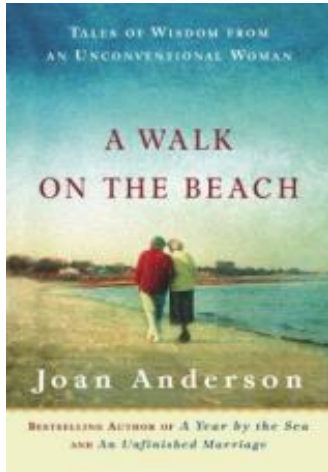


# A Walk on the Beach: Tales of Wisdom from an Unconventional Woman

by Joan Anderson

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## About the Book

Shortly after arriving on Cape Cod to spend a year by herself, Joan Anderson's chance encounter with a wise, playful, and astonishing woman helped her usher in the transformations and self-discoveries that led to her ongoing renewal. First glimpsed as a slender figure on a fogged-in beach, Joan Erikson was not only a friend and confidante when one was most needed, but also a guide as Anderson stretched and grew into her unfinished self.

Joan Erikson was perhaps best known for her collaboration with her husband, Erik, a pioneering psychoanalyst and noted author. After Erik's death, she wrote several books extending their theory of the stages of life to reflect her understanding of aging as she neared ninety-five. But her wisdom was best taught through their friendship; as she sat with Anderson, weaving tapestries of their lives with brightly colored yarn while exploring the strength gathered from their accumulated experiences, Joan Erikson's lessons took shape on their small cardboard looms as well as in her friend's revitalized life.

In writing about their extraordinary friendship, Anderson reveals a need she didn't know she had: for a mentor to help navigate the transitions she faced as she grew beyond middle age. And when Joan Erikson had to face her husband's death and the growing limitations of her own body, Anderson was able to give back some of the wisdom she had gleaned. To this poignant, joyful account, Joan Anderson brings the candor and sensitivity that have made her an acclaimed speaker and writer on midlife and its possibilities. **A Walk on the Beach** is an experience to savor and treasure, a glimpse of the exuberant spirit that can be sustained and passed on in all our friendships.

## Discussion Guide

1. Is there anyone in your life whom you would consider a personal mentor? Do you fill this role for anyone else? Do

you believe that these relationships are more important at some points in your life?

2. Do you think that age necessarily makes one wiser?

3. Joan Erikson demonstrated her ideas about life through weaving, and she remained a dancer throughout her life. Is there a craft or activity that you practice that involves your spirit as well as your body?

4. Our culture places a high premium on youth. What have you gained - and lost - throughout the years? What skills or advantages do you expect to grow in as you grow older?

5. On page 106, Anderson remarks, "There is no lost future. The life I might have lived is beginning to take hold." Is there a future that you believed you lost that you could move towards?

6. As Anderson watches a young couple's wedding, she feels a mixture of nostalgia and skepticism about her own vows. Through the years, how have your own views of marriage and partnership changed?

7. How do you anticipate that your later years will be different from those of your parents or grandparents?

8. Do you believe that a person's sense of her age, or even her outlook or behavior, can affect the length and quality of life? Can we live longer and "younger" by keeping mentally and physically active?

9. What is the best advice a friend has ever given you? What do you think is the best advice you can give based on your experience?

## Author Bio

Joan Anderson is the author of the bestsellers **A Year by the Sea** and **An Unfinished Marriage**. She has also written numerous children's novels, including **1787, The First Thanksgiving Feast**, and **The American Family Farm**, as well as a critically acclaimed adult nonfiction book **Breaking the TV Habit. A Walk on the Beach** is her third work of narrative nonfiction. A graduate of Yale University School of Drama, Anderson lives with her husband on Cape Cod.

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**Publication Date:** April 13, 2004

**Hardcover:** 240 pages

**Publisher:** Broadway

**ISBN-10:** 0767914740

**ISBN-13:** 9780767914741