

Still 25 inside

Lindsey Agness celebrates the power of women in midlife and beyond...
Interview by Caitlin Collins

It's said we attract what we wish for: well, in the very same week that I'd found myself agreeing with some female friends about a need for energising inspiration in our, oh dear, 50-ish lives, into the letterbox popped Lindsey Agness's fabulous book on how there's lots more to life after midlife. In fact Lindsey demonstrates how, rather than resigning ourselves to being over the hill and doddering down the slope to senility, we can welcome greater than ever opportunities for fulfilment and contribution.

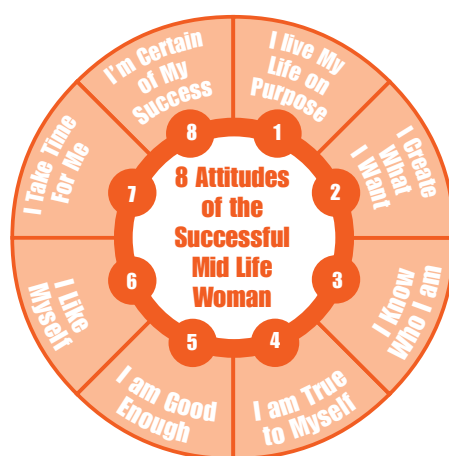
Having had the pleasure of interviewing Lindsey for Rapport two years ago on the publication of her first book, *Change Your Life with NLP*, I'd been looking forward to talking with her again about her second book, and here it was – a cracker. Lindsey can identify the specific incident that prompted her to write it.

'It was an exhibition aimed at midlife women: I'd been booked to give a talk on how to change your life at 50. I turned up at the event full of enthusiasm – to find the other exhibitors and speakers focusing almost entirely on dire medical matters, stair lifts, pension plans, retirement villages, and the thrills of ballroom dancing and cooking! I was shocked! I came away from the day determined to challenge such grim myths about midlife. We're not dead yet!'

Eight attitudes and six goddesses

Passion and hope are major themes for Lindsey. 'When we allow ourselves to discover what we are passionate about, we experience the triumph of love and hope over fear,' she says. She has structured the book around eight key attitudes, each of which headlines a chapter containing concepts, information, advice, exploratory questionnaires and exercises. Each chapter is liberally illustrated with real-life examples, many of them anecdotes from Lindsey's own life: having made several major life-changes in her forties and being an experienced NLP trainer and successful author, she's well-qualified to serve as a role model as she guides her readers on their own journeys.

“Be prepared to disappoint others to be true to your dreams”



In addition to the eight attitudes, Lindsey offers an innovative presentation of six female archetypes, based on Greek goddesses, to help us to identify those aspects of ourselves we habitually express and to uncover those we are neglecting. I find I'm not alone

in neglecting Aphrodite, the 'beautiful, outgoing lover'. 'Many women shut down this archetype,' agrees Lindsey, adding: 'Just imagine how much energy you'd have access to if you released her!' The goddess archetype exercises encourage creative thinking: it would take more than new knickers for me to revitalise my dormant Aphrodite, and I'm happy to be reminded of the importance of finding my own ways to honour the principles of connectedness, bonding and passionate commitment!

A bigger picture

I remark to Lindsey how it seems to me that her book spans several interlinked issues. At first sight it's about women like my friends and me, at a transitional stage in our lives and facing the challenges of aging, for whom the book offers not only fresh ideas but also many practical exercises to enable us to look forward to the future. However this is not only a matter of personal fulfilment for individual readers; it raises the possibility of releasing the tremendous potential of women of maturity to contribute to the world – a potential that may be underrated and

THE SIX GODDESS ARCHETYPES

ATHENA

The ambitious career woman, she faces problems head on and defends the boundaries of her family and community. Highly disciplined, she sets and sticks to goals and develops plans to reach them.

DEMETER

The nurturing caregiver, she creates a safe environment through empathy and commitment. She encourages community spirit and nurturing relationships among others.

APHRODITE

The beautiful, outgoing lover who enjoys connectedness, bonding and passionate commitment, she loves life and enjoys it as an intense and seductive experience. She loves to be in love.

ARTEMIS

Introverted and independent, she is practical, adventurous and prefers solitude. She represents the goddess of nature and is concerned with animals, environmental protection and women's communities.

HERA

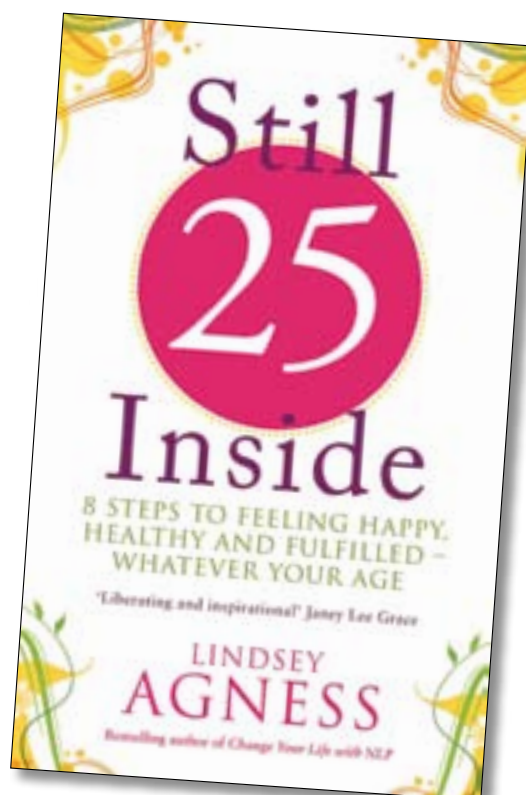
Taking charge of the kingdom around her, she can rule with vision and empower others in the process. She represents the goddess of marriage and is concerned with her relationship as a woman to a man.

PSYCH

A teacher and healer, she is a catalyst for change whose power is to transform her own reality as well as that of others. She can get the best out of others, often through her own suffering and healing.



“Midlife women have so much to offer”



blocked by limiting beliefs that marginalise older women.

'Absolutely,' agrees Lindsey; 'if you can galvanise midlife women, they have a huge amount to offer. Many women do not have a strong sense of their own identity, or recognise their own potential, as they've often spent years focussing on others. Now is the time for them to find out what's really important to them to create something new for themselves.'

Identity and authenticity are key issues throughout the book. I'm especially struck by Attitude Four, 'I am true to myself', which is expanded by the statement: 'You know what you want, you respect yourself and you are prepared to disappoint others to be true to your own dreams.' This highlights for me my own timidity about disappointing other people and not only letting them down but also incurring their disapproval. 'This is a big issue for many women,' says Lindsey. 'You find women stuck in unhappy relationships, making sacrifices to stay with someone they don't love, afraid to leave; they need help to find the courage to liberate not only themselves but the other person too.'

If such liberation is to be understood not as mere indulgence but as empowering and enabling, perhaps we need to look at some of the contributions midlife women might be empowered and enabled to make for the wider world. I'm personally interested in what mature women might offer in terms of radically different kinds of leadership in diverse areas including politics, education, ecology, and economics. Lindsey's approach throughout her book comes across as collaborative and constructive, and there seems to be an underlying assumption of women's willingness to support and help each other. 'I think it's true,' she says, 'that women tend towards co-operative approaches rather than competitive and confrontational ones. We have a lot to offer in that area. It's such a male dominated world that it's quite hard to come up with female role models who don't take on a macho role and who are not playing the same games as the men. It's even difficult to find words for an empowered woman in her maturity. "Crone" doesn't work! Aging, especially regarding women, tends to be not so much respected as dismissed. I think much of women's power

lies in sharing.'

With this thought in mind, Lindsey is offering a combined personal development and coaching program to complement the book. 'It's called Age with Attitude,' she explains. 'It's a 10 month program in which each student is allocated her own coach in the first of four modules who then works with her throughout the program to help her to make lasting changes. I've also created the "Goddess Council", whose role is to review the goals set by fellow students and to give them extra stretches if necessary. The women demonstrate great commitment to the group – they really support each other – and the results are amazing.'

And while Lindsey is already hard at work on her next two publications – Change your Business with NLP is out in September, while Lose Weight with NLP is planned for early next year – I'm going to suggest to my friends that we find the energising inspiration we need for our, hurray, 50-ish lives by getting together and going through this book. We can prove to ourselves and the world that we have more to offer now than ever before. ■