



Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money, Even If You're Starting with Nothing

Helen Gurley Brown

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She's one of the most successful women in America, and now you can sit down and listen to her best advice, in her own voice - as if she were your best friend sharing a cup of coffee and telling all her secrets. Best-selling author and editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, Helen Gurley Brown has become a model for women who won't settle for less than the best in their lives. In this intimate, revealing audio book, she invites you to follow her personal, passionate program.

Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money, Even If You're Starting with Nothing Details

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From Reader Review Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money, Even If You're Starting with Nothing for online ebook

Amanda says

This book was brought to mind regarding women's roles as mother, wife, worker etc. I read this in my early 20s and remember thinking "you can't be all things to all people".

Kelli says

OH MY GOD stop saying mouseburger.

Renata says

ooof this has not aged well. to me it felt like being force-fed an entire chocolate cake--I like to flip through a Cosmopolitan magazine now and again but this was just.....too much, and a lot of it is very....bad (homophobic/biphobic, gender essentialist, fat shamey, classist...etc...)

there's like 10% of still-good advice buried in here but mostly gross. (and I acknowledge that HGB and Cosmopolitan were important to second-wave feminism and there's some value to her acknowledging lady horniness but that doesn't mean this book is readable in 2018.)

<http://www.frowl.org/worstbestsellers...>

Angie says

Probably little longer than it should be, 'Having It All' was good. Famous Cosmo editor, Helen Gurley Brown, writes about how to be successful in all aspects of life (note the title). Yes, it was written in 1982. Yes, by the time she wrote this book she was in her late 50s/early 60s. Yes, much of this is dated. However, I have learned from 29 years of living that good advice, is just that, good advice. I don't care if it's from Dr. Phil or Jane Goodall. Timeliness is important, but not everything, for advice to be sound. Knowing that, I actually photocopied some of the pages from this book so I would have on hand. I think my favorite part of the book discusses how most people at some point dread going to work and once they do it and work through it, possibly even accomplishing something, by the end, they feel terrific and fantastic. It's a matter of working through the dread knowing that the light at the end of the tunnel exists. It's a simple notion, but one I needed to be reminded. Descent book!!!

Oullie says

Facepalm. This book contains so much inane "advice." As a girl I grew up on a Cosmopolitan magazine

subscription that was obtained via my parents participation in "Publishers Sweepstakes." Cosmo was what American females read and I wanted to be a normal American girl. I'm glad I was able to survive my teen years with a healthy sense of self despite being bombarded with such dribble-I think I can look to my healthy love of Star Trek and nerdy sci fi as a nice contrasting anchor.

Helen Gurley Brown was the main editor for Cosmo for many years. I picked up this book as a suggestion from my library during "Gal entine' month" and although it espouses viewpoints that are highly contrary to mine I couldn't put it down because I imagined that there were some women out there that took this advice seriously and it made me sad. Brown portrays herself as a strong successful woman who has it all and dispenses advice so that we can be like her. We too can have rich husbands and it's perfectly acceptable to cheat on them because we must fulfill our sexual needs and drive.

If you are looking to snag yourself a rich husband the skills may be just as hard as learning how to understand the stock market yourself, Gurley says. If it's as difficult to snag a rich husband as it is to learn about the inner workings of the stock market why don't you advise women to learn the ins and outs of the stock market instead? Least then she will be self sufficient once she's learned the financial skills.

Granted the world Gurley lived in is different from the one we are in today so this book is to be read with that in mind. Enjoy the many, many facepalm moments.

Kate says

11/19

"As it happens, Helen Gurley Brown cries quite a lot." -- Nora Ephron, 'Helen Gurley Brown Only Wants to Help.'

The chapters on Marriage, Friends and Money are basically more of the same. They contain predominantly reasonable advice, delivered with lots of italics and a sprinkling of strange -- for instance, the section in the marriage chapter about how to cheat successfully. HGB herself was very happily married to a man named David Brown, (one of the producers of *Jaws*!), whom she mentions on nearly every page. (To balance her enthusiasm, I haven't mentioned him at all.) She writes that she would never cheat on him, because she married late and got all the wildness out of her system. David Brown, meanwhile, was reportedly too scared to cheat on HGB. His producing partner Richard Zanuck told *People* that "David is convinced that if Helen caught him having an affair, she'd kill him. I mean really kill him." He was probably right.

Anyway, on to my points. I do have points. They are of little consequence, but whatever.

Point 1: Did you know the editrix of Cosmo was hella depressed? She was. She soooo was. She doesn't try to hide it. At first I was reading like some kind of detective, putting together the little clues. "No matter how yucky I feel on getting up in the morning -- and sometimes I am mildly depressed then -- an hour of exercise miraculously lifts the gloom." Oh, I thought. "Some mornings I'm actually euphoric," HGB says, in another section. "There are still the *other* mornings, of course, when I wonder if I could do it with an overdose of Pyribenzamine, the only drug in my medicine cabinet (it calms down hives), but those mornings are *few*!" Oh, wow, I thought.

And another, this one painfully honest, which as we know by now is her style.

There are Saturday twilights *still* when I lie on the couch in David's den covered with my woolly blanket and watch the sun go down...David is in California...and I am that kind of lonely that has *not* to do with calling a friend up and dragging him/her over to babysit me but gut-loneliness from not feeling beautiful enough, strong enough, smart enough or "capable" enough to just get *by*.

Of course, knowing her calorie intake, she might have just been faint with hunger here.

A few pages later she actually offers sections on depression -- types of depression, strategies for depression, etc. So my sleuthing was unnecessary. Want to guess what HGB's tips for managing (mild-to-moderate) depression are? Exercise and self discipline.

Which brings me to point 2: Whatever sad spells she may have had, I think Helen Gurley Brown could still take Brene Brown in a fight. I have not paid equal attention to these similarly named self-help gurus, although comparing the two is what launched me on this particular odyssey. But the difference, to me, is as follows.

Here's Helen on self esteem: "I think unconditional love is what a mother feels for her baby, and not what you should feel for yourself...Yes, of *course* you should feel pleased at the day's job well done, the face and body exercised and well-groomed, but heavy self-love must be *earned*."

Here's Brene: "The most important thing to know about worthiness is that it doesn't have prerequisites."

Basically, Brene says that you are good enough and smart enough and doggone it, people like you. HGB says you're probably not good enough or smart enough (and certainly not attractive enough), but don't worry -- it's never too late to fix that. They both, in their own ways, just want you to give it your all, but the reasons why are pretty different. Brene says you deserve to feel comfortable being daring and taking chances; HGB thinks if you don't work hard and take chances, you won't deserve much of anything.

So why do I so obviously prefer the throwback hard-ass to the warm, unconditional embrace of the Ted talker? Because with HGB, I don't feel like I'm being bamboozled, that's why. Sure, she's strange, but I know what I'm getting. She tells me all her crap. That she had 17 secretarial jobs. All her plastic surgeries. Her abortions. Her crazy behavior during breakups. Bizarre things she used to do to make her hair look thicker. Meanwhile Brene Brown's idea of illustrating her advice is to write three pages about the time when she hit 'reply' instead of 'forward' and then had to talk herself down from some kind of shame spiral.

HGB gives me details from her life or her friend's lives, while Brene keeps hitting me in the face with pages of mind-numbing psych speak, stuffed with focus group anecdotes, testimonials from fans, and perpetual references to her "data." If we're curious about this all-powerful data, we're invited to check the appendix, where Brene explains Grounded Theory qualitative research methodology. I know, it's fine, I'm sure it's fine, but it inspires no confidence when she writes that one of the "most difficult challenges" of becoming a grounded theory researcher is "acknowledging that it is virtually impossible to understand grounded theory methodology prior to using it."

O, rly?

Anyway. Not trying to be hater. I just learned something about myself, is all: I prefer my advice books a little more down and dirty, a la HGB. More like memoir, less slick. You can pick and choose what you want to take when you can see what's really on offer. With some of this other stuff, I feel like a dog being given an

advice pill that's been cleverly concealed in a cheese slice of bullshit.

Signing off with HGB's last words to us, which are: "Always leave for the airport fifteen minutes earlier than you *could*. It will save your valves wearing out."

11/11

And now we come to the heart of the matter, the core of the weirdness, the chapter that could hardly fail to be juicy, the chapter called "Love."

Aka, "How to keep your man."

Compliment him a *lot*. You almost *can't* overdo it...Snapshots of him at tennis, squash, salmon fishing, in bathrobe and in tails are scotch taped to your mirror to the point you can hardly get your mascara on.

HGB's plan for the professional world basically boils down to "work harder than anyone else," so I should not have been surprised if some of her romantic advice seemed a little intense.

As soon as the friendship ripens, you must begin to give him presents.

But I happen to think all of these suggested practices, if done in combination, could get you put on a 5150 hold.

The cassette of his speech...could you listen to it one more time and play it for your father?

Especially this one.

You wear the T-shirt he gave you eight straight days on vacation.

It's not all crazy, of course. Be nice to his friends, she says. Be on time. Don't badmouth other women. And she also has some pretty realistic things to say about when it's time to break up and how you'll feel after you do. But the most bracing part of this chapter for me was the introduction, where she explains why it's (allegedly) necessary for a woman to act around her man like a lunatic who a) needs to borrow money or b) is planning to ask for a kidney later.

Deep breath: There's a man shortage, HGB says. (Nooooo, I thought. Not anymore there isn't. And then I saw this. How can there be more women than men in Alaska? There's at least one Debbie Macomber series that's fraudulent now.)

After spitting some 1980 Census data at us, HGB breaks it down: "There are too many of us, too few of them, and of the possibles, only a few will really interest you." Because, she says, "Men can be like apartments. When you go out to rent or buy an apartment or house, you know that what you like *always* exceeds what you expected to pay, no matter *what* you've budgeted." What she's saying, she explains, is that you'll wind up with a taste for men who are richer, smarter, or better looking than you, and this is why you have to jump through all these hoops to attract them, from learning how to mix his favorite drink to pretending you don't care about his other girlfriends.

So really, it's not about a man shortage. It's about the Helen Gurley Brown-ish concept that your value can be measured. Your worth in the world, your attractiveness, it can all be evaluated. This book came out just a

few years after Bo Derek's *10* and I'm seriously surprised not to see number ratings in here. "Are you a 6.5 with the hots for a 9? Never fear! Start stocking up on doilies for his breakfast tray the morning after. And don't forget to compliment his rock collection."

But if HGB does not believe you have inherent value, she at least thinks you can improve the value you have, and it's hard not to find that energetic earnestness charming. This is generally how she manages to be demoralizing and empowering at the same time.

At least she doesn't advance any illusions that you should cast your elaborate net over every guy who crosses your path. "You will have dozens of encounters with men -- dates we call them -- and little romances and affairs. No big deal. But once in a while...*once* in a while *love* comes." And she doesn't even propose that you cut out your less meaningful dates while you're busy bowing and scraping for your chosen one. This bit here is actually my favorite part of the chapter:

"Learn how to light his cigar -- like Gigi. It's a precise little routine and takes practice. A man, not necessarily this one, will show you."

Nice to think our Cosmo girls are finding someone to liven up their cigar-lighting practice sessions.

11/2

The chapter on clothing is surprisingly boring and we are going to skip it.

The chapter on sex is not boring, and we are not going to skip it.

True to form, HGB extolls the virtues of sex while simultaneously making it sound like a lot of work. She's made a big point throughout of how much she loves sex, wants sex, etc, but many of the sections in this chapter feel like she's reminding me to clean my room.

She sez: Do it when you don't feel like it. If a man takes you away on a luxury weekend, but you don't really feel like doing it with him, do it anyway. If you're not horny enough, you should work out more. Don't "slack off" sexually after 35 or you will get "brittle, prissy, gray and defeminized." (And thank you for that terrifying string of adjectives, HGB.) Don't let him get out of bed without an orgasm. Don't let him get out of your apartment the next morning without breakfast on a tray, with a doily AND fresh flowers, thank you very much. Also a cloth napkin.

She's got at least one section (sextion?) that could use a little more elaboration. It's titled "Doing What You *Don't* Like During Sex." Near the top, she says "Every sexual encounter should be soul-lifting and exquisite, yes, but sex, like life, my dear, is *not* perfect, and *you*, Miss Faintheart, may not always be able to squirm out of a sexual situation just because it's making you feel a little *queasy*!"

Really? That's, uh...that's a pretty disturbing lead-off, HGB.

Then she goes on to give an example involving excessive nipple attention, which doesn't sound like such a big deal, and I'm not sure that's the caliber of situation she's really referring to. And she finishes with "We're not talking about whips and chains or anything really ugly, just 'normal' sex." So...like 16 different reasons

this section would never get published today.

And, of course, there's the numbered, step by step "how-to" section on giving a blow job, with an extra graf about how both of his balls will fit in your mouth, so not to worry -- "they just sort of all mush in *together*." Too graphic? Is this no longer a family-friendly goodreads feed? Ha ha. Happy Halloween. All of her advice is in graphic detail so you should have taken a warning when you saw the section subject.

The whole thing is a bizarre combination of permission and marching orders. Have one night stands if you want! Try being a kept woman, you might like it! It's okay if you just like missionary best! But you must get to fucking at any cost, and to that end you should press your boobs and pelvis into guys when you hug, pet a man's penis "as you feel moved to do so, sort of like you cuddle and caress a puppy or kitty-cat," and stock up on nice china for when you feed him breakfast the morning after.

Is this owning and enjoying your sexuality? Sort of...but not really. It's much farther in that direction that advice HGB received growing up, but it's basically a deeply insecure philosophy of "you're allowed to enjoy yourself while you're pleasing him." I'm not mad at her, though. She told us we could "have it all," but the subtitle only specifies love, success, sex and money. Technically, she's fulfilling her promise. And I actually think a credulous reader would have a decent time on the HGB sexual meal plan, especially if she grew out of it eventually and shed some of the nonsense.

10/28

Hi. Hi there. Hi you guys. From a section where HGB recommends faking an enthusiasm for sports if necessary to lure your man:

A young friend of mine tightened her vaginal muscles throughout two entire football and three basketball seasons. 'It was the only muscle tone I *had* during that period,' said Millie, 'but all that contracting got me through the games and I think it helps you have an orgasm; it *certainly* keeps your insides from getting flabby.'

I have so much to say about this that I'm just not going to say any of it, I think.

10/26

On to the 'Exercise' and 'Your Face and Body' chapters.

Every morning, rain or shine, without fail -- even during an eight-day bout of food poisoning, even the day her mother died, and even the days she has had "D and Cs", Helen Gurley Brown gets out of bed and climbs onto a "big pink terry mat made by stitching four bath towels together." She then proceeds to do some combination of calisthenics, sometimes involving three pound weights.

On days when she has a big meeting of event, she will then fill a bowl with cold water and bags of ice cubes, wait for it to get nice and frigid, and then stick her face in it. She has purchased a snorkel so she can stay submerged up to twenty minutes at a time.

As for perfume, she recommends buying your favorite scent in all forms. Use bath gels and oils, then dust yourself with talc, and dab cologne under your arms and all over. Then start applying the perfume, pretty much all over again, and refresh all day long from a vial you hide in your purse. (Some workplaces these days would consider this chemical warfare.)

Anyway. Most of her advice is actually fairly sound. She has an interesting take on make-up as being a way to signal that you are approachable. "I want to attract you so I have tried to perfect myself," make-up says, according to Helen. "I am wearing my badge." I don't know. Every time I put on eyeliner it drifts halfway down my face. I look like I just rubbed faces with a clown. So does that say, as HGB theorizes, that "I am ready for a grown up, exciting, full fledged romantic man/woman relationship"?

A note on the "D and C" issue. I assume she's referring to abortions, and Brown has casually mentioned them a couple of times now. One of those came during the (very interesting) chronicle of an eyelift procedure. She was out for a while recovering, nursing bruising and swelling, and then "went back to the office, covered with makeup, hoping people would think I'd only been out for a D and C."

....wtf kind of workplace was Cosmo????

10/22

HGB does not believe it is All About That Bass. "It is unthinkable that a woman bent on 'having it all' would want to be fat, or even plump."

Her general attitude would be unsuitable in a high school guidance counselor.

"They say you can carry around the most fantastic amounts, like one hundred twenty-eight pounds when you're five feet three inches!"

[I looked up that BMI and it is right in the middle of normal. Her hero, meanwhile, is 5'9" 102-pound Cheryl Tiegs, who HGB says would just stop eating if she saw 105 on the scale. I feel some feelings about this, because I AM ALSO 5'9" YOU GUYS SHOULD I STOP EATING RIGHT NOW no wait stop take a breath.]

The problem, obviously, is that I can't pretend I don't know what she's talking about. Some of her advice either makes sense on its own, or has come back in vogue. Some of it, like a 36-hour fast after a slip-up, is just punishingly neurotic. But my biggest learning from this section, and the thing that we should all keep in mind, is that Helen Gurley Brown was a) insane and b) not easy to take out in public. Her daily struggle to keep herself between 1200 and 1500 calories seems to have led to some pretty antisocial behavior.

On exercising self control in food paradise: "I had turbot and plain spinach three times a day four days in a row in Italy last year...and the restaurants were very nice about it."

On suffering through dessert without eating anything: "I must say say restaurants are sometimes hateful about the Sanka-instead-of-dessert business...I'm (nearly!) always screaming at them to at least fill the cup to the *brim!*"

On combating food pushers: "At a restaurant one day, the host kept piling raspberries on my plate...when he left to make a phone call, I put all the raspberries in a napkin and left it on the banquette seat. How did I know he would sit down on the napkin in his beige gabardine suit? He had it coming, right?"

"One aggravated hostess put chocolate chips in my Sanka out in the kitchen one day, then gleefully told me what she'd done after I drank. Bitch!" [lol lol lol lol]

And on occasionally eating like a maniac: "On the pretense of helping the hostess, a slipper will take guests'

plates from the table, rush them to the sink and gobble what's left on each before anybody else makes it to the kitchen. A binge has to be gone *through*, like a fit!"

Like any trashy piece of writing, this one comes with recipes. Want to try Helen's Chocolate Mousse of Despair?

1 envelope D-Zerta chocolate pudding
2 envelopes Sweet'n Low, Sugar Twin or other artificial sweetener
1 rounded tablespoon instant Sanka, Brim, or regular coffee
2 cups skim milk
2 tablespoons Hershey chocolate syrup
2 tablespoons brandy

Hold the chocolate chips, you bitches.

Sissi says

Funny and wise

Madeleine says

Lena Dunham said this book inspired her to write her own memoir, "Not That Kind of Girl," which I didn't love but found highly entertaining. I had the same reaction to this book. It's pretty outrageous, and quite dated, but I did underline lines in here that stuck with me after I finished it. ("My dear, nobody wants you to waste your time, but you can soul-search your self to pieces and it isn't necessary," "Discipline!" "I always found everything that went into my job I got back -- with interest. Putting everything into a man -- that particular man anyway -- one might not get back one's original investment, not that you don't continue to invest anyway.")

Her tone of voice is firm but affectionate and very funny:

- On kissing: "There are three kinds of kissers: the fire extinguisher, the mummy and the vacuum cleaner"
- On sex: "If I had to choose between sex and food, I would choose food, but I'd choose sex over nearly everything else."
- In a list of instructions on "How To Be A Delight The Morning After, When He Stays Over," #2 says you should get up and move around. "Try not to look like a dead octopus," she adds.
- On make-up: "Lots of people think you shouldn't do much, that natural is best. Good god, nature can destroy you!"

Didn't care for the sections on how to cheat/have affairs, which she speaks very highly of, and there were dark undercurrents that unsettled me. She breezily describes her thin hair falling out, oblivious to the

possibility that her extreme dieting left her malnourished... the tragic death of her father when she was 10 and her sister being struck with polio. Her constant striving for perfection, success and beauty, even if it took working weekends and expensive batches of plastic surgery, led me to believe she was deeply unhappy with herself in many ways (though proud of her work ethic and accomplishments). Stylistically, her use of italics was excessive.

You have to admire a woman, though, who could speak so openly about her sex life in 1982. (And her better-known book, "Sex and the Single Girl," appeared twenty years before that!)

Jessica says

Okay, so, some of her advice is very questionable, ranging from outdated to unhealthy. But, the bad advice is easy to spot because it's things like "workplace sexual harassment isn't that bad," "don't eat for a day or two if you go over 105 lbs," and "date married men." The majority of Having It All is insightful and very entertaining. Her straightforwardness and confidence mixed with self-deprecation clicked with me immediately, plus most of the advice makes sense and inspired a lot of self-reflection. I'm feeling motivated and ready to mouseburger my way to the top. WWHGBD?

Also, my inner monologue has a ton more italic emphasis now.

Holly says

I thought this book was so hilarious by today's standards! I howled with laughter through it! I thoroughly enjoyed the audio book, as I listened to the author's purrs, conspiratory whispers and "dirty" nuances. LOL! I lived through the days of which she wrote and enjoyed the walk down memory lane. Terrific!

Angie Fehl says

Helen Gurley Brown was the founder of Cosmopolitan magazine in the format we know today. There was a version of the magazine in existence, owned by Hearst Corporation, prior to Brown coming on board, but she explains here that the content and layout of the publication was notably different. When the magazine in its original form started financially failing, Brown was hired on to turn things around and revamped it into the format recognizable in grocery store aisles to this day (Chapter 2... man, all I could think of was the movie Working Girl lol). *Well, actually... let's give credit where credit is due --- HGB points out that it was her husband who often wrote the cover blurbs, designed the layout, and more often than not, it was the stories HE liked that ended up being the ones they ran with.

Brown never bothered with college, instead starting her professional life in her 20s, working her way up the ranks first as a secretary and later script girl for the Abbott & Costello radio show. She also wrote script copy for radio commercials of the day. Raised by a mother threatened by a prettier sister, Helen Gurley Brown rarely ever heard the word "pretty" tossed in her direction. As a young woman, she becomes obsessive about her looks so later heading up a women's beauty magazine seemed like a natural fit. Some may be shocked to read just how honest HGB is about the work she had done to attain that "pretty" so often withheld from her in her early years: eye lifts, rhinoplasty, dermabrasion, years-long treatments of silicone injections around her nose and mouth.. just to name a bit of it... but at least she also does advocate the regular use of sunscreen! She also describes details on lax post-op care, at one point opting to sneak out to see Frank Sinatra at Carnegie Hall.

Also not surprising, HGB was clearly consumed with designer labels and makes sly knocks on those with more tomboy style. Additionally, there was one little two page section where she talks about brains being more important than looks but then later goes on to further knock "non-pretties" in a rather patronizing tone, stating that thoughts and deeds do absolutely nothing for a forgettable face... but a little helping out, ie. makeup or plastic surgery, can." WOW.

Her discussions on sex get a little weird, y'all. She gets into some probably better left unsaid details of her bed life with husband David Brown (David Brown co-operated a production company with Richard Zanuck, son of Daryl Zanuck, once-president of 20th Century Fox. Brown/Zanuck's company produced films such as Jaws 1 & 2 and The Sting. Apparently, life with David taught her that "men don't want to know about you masturbating." K... noted... WTF. She also spends many pages frequently rhapsodizing about mens' down belows and even offers readers a step by step instructional on fellatio. NOT. EVEN. KIDDING. (Here we go, now this book -- originally published in 1982 -- will now show an odd resurgence in sales LOL). She closes with a quaint "swallowing is a sign of affection." Que one of those Bob Belcher OMGs.

Then there's the recommendation about occasionally murmuring "would you mind" during sex. LOL. No. Just no. Oh, the laughs this section provides though!

Except, not a laughing matter... what is this bit about nonchalantly referencing incest with her uncle when she was 9?! Seriously, some parts in this book had me wondering if this woman had a wire or four loose the casual way she brought up certain topics.

Her advice on finding men and later marriage success is perhaps questionable though. Where to find men? HGB suggests maybe checking out Alcoholics Anonymous or Tiffany's at Christmas. Already married? HGB totally cool with extra-marital affairs, because, in her mind, people only remain faithful if they don't require romance. Furthermore, she says to not tell others if you are involved in an affair because "you owe it to your husband's honor." JFC. But actually... about on par for Cosmo advice, I guess!

If you get through all that, there are portions of actual advice scattered throughout.... much of it dated, most of it laughable, but a small percentage of it still remains surprisingly helpful. Some of the ones that stood out to me (good or bad):

Re: Love

* On finding men: HGB says women need to aspire to amazing high-level jobs with lots of pay and power, because really hot men won't find you if you're just the entry-level or even SAH sort.

* keeping a man: a woman stands a better chance "if you love something other than him"

* HGB also offers some tips on married life -- how to navigate hurdles such as a spouse losing a job -- that are not entirely unhelpful.

Re: Career

* Hone in on what your specialty skills are and pursue work in that direction, make your overall personality open and welcoming and be sure to have or develop a sense of humor about the journey!

* Learn to be "quietly aggressive" -- keep eagle eyes on what needs to be done and just get it done

* Make confident, solid decisions, learn not to dwell on rejection. Remember that powerful people can still be vulnerable but use moments of hurt to fuel you further in your work.

* Problems don't magically disappear once you're at the top, you just have better resources to handle them. Also, once you reach the top, don't forget to help people behind you still trying to get there.

Re: Personal Growth

* HGB encourages readers to take up charity / volunteer work. Not only is it good to help but it develops useful multi-tasking skills

* Embracing alone time plays a key factor in personal emotional growth.

* HGB gives you some ideas on how to strengthen friendships and / or how to handle frenemies

* This woman is going to harp on and on about this term she came up with called "mouseburgering": when you start out feeling low about yourself but quietly gain confidence over time until you eventually rise to the top. Brace yourself. She's gonna bring it up A. LOT. It's not the concept I have an issue with. It's just a stupid f-in word.

In addition to all that, Brown also dishes out some hilariously (though sometimes borderline dangerous) 1980s style health tips. She promotes the idea of semi-starvation to keep a trim figure -- her personal plan being starvation for breakfast up until dinner where one is allowed one big meal and then later a pre-bed snack. At least she admits to the dangers of bulimia (she doesn't actually use the term but that is essentially what she describes). She also encourages 36 hour fasts after binges and notes that the use of saccharine (aka Equal) is her "guilty cheat food".

"As I write this, a new artificial sweetener, aspartame, is being test-marketed. I've used it and it's sensational. Put out by G.D. Searle & Co under the brand name Equal, it should be available for all of us soon."

Brown continues on to offer her stance on the whole "are models too thin?" argument, to which she firmly replies, "Models are not cadaverous, they look great." Remember, this was in the 80s and this debate is STILL going on in the fashion industry. There's also a story here where she knocks singer Peggy Lee for struggling with dieting, "zooming back up to 150".

So, yeah, take HGB's diet advice with a HARDCORE grain of salt. This woman clearly had issues with unhealthy body image that she foisted onto vulnerable young readers. Her sex advice, have a good laugh with it like you would any Cosmo issue today. The tone is definitely geared towards a female audience, but there is still plenty of take-away advice for the men as well. But again, use your own discretion as to what you would actually take to heart.

Also keep in mind that this will read dated as hell -- eg. "We'll see how Princess Diana makes it (as far as her HEA as a princess)..." eeehhh --- but the dated references are actually part of what still make this thing readable in today's world... the historical look back, the ridiculousness of some of the passages. The actual advice, not so much. Also, the continuous unnecessary transitions will drive you batty: "More in a moment", "more on that later", "now let's talk about" ... c'mon girl, you were the head honcho at a major magazine!

Ruta Sevo says

Timeless wisdom on most aspects of life as a woman. I am her generation so the parts that are anachronistic don't bother me. She is great on politics at work, friends, taking care of yourself. She endorses sex, with respect for marriage, and believes that experience is a good thing. Lots of permissions to break with traditional molds, including defensiveness about looks. Much of the junk is still current. Her own humble beginnings give her examples and credibility as someone who struggled with all the junk of growing up. The best life advice I've read in one place. Goes way beyond Oprah.

Julie Witte says

I read this book in fits and starts. I enjoy the narrative of Helen Gurley Brown! I did take a grain of salt with some of the dated ideas, but a lot of her advice is still valid. I am looking for the other 2 books by this author.

Elinor says

I picked up this book at a flea market and have spent the last week engrossed in 462 pages of advice from the original Cosmo girl herself, Helen Gurley Brown. I have always been fascinated with this woman -- she was such a blend of drive and insecurity, and she holds nothing back in this tell-all book about how a "mooseburger" like herself made it to the top.

It must be noted that the common understanding of "having it all" didn't apply, since Helen never had children nor wanted any. But she did achieve professional success as the long-time editor of Cosmopolitan, celebrity status, wealth, and a 50-year marriage to a well-known movie producer David Brown. This book has so many witticisms I don't know where to begin. She wrote with clever, self-deprecating humour, offering advice on everything from money to makeup to dieting to fellatio (yep).

Some of her advice hasn't really stood the test of time, since she wrote the book in 1982, but much of it is still valid. Her key message was that even "mouseburgers" can have it all with passion, hard work, and self-discipline. Helen died at the age of 90 in 2012, but she never gave up trying.

Stacia says

GAWD I LOVE THIS BOOK!!!! Even the insane diet advice seems reasonable with her charming italics and "darlings" dropped in all the right spots. HGB = total inspirational force in my life right now. If only it was as easy to get scooped up by an attractive, wealthy, married man in Austin as it seems to be in New York. Sigh.
