



# Roni Beth Tower

AUTHOR

"This is a thoughtful chronicle of taking risks and overcoming fears that offers readers hope of experiencing love later in life."

- *Publishers Weekly*

**Invite Roni Beth to your book club!**



## BOOK CLUB KIT

Discover additional material from Roni Beth inside this kit to help make your book club a success!

# Praise for *Miracle at Midlife*

"*Miracle at Midlife* is a captivating memoir of a courageous woman's physical and emotional journey from Connecticut to Paris, where a new and sometimes challenging love affair awaits. Roni Beth Tower's vividly detailed story is candid, insightful, and wise about the joys of finding love in middle age, and the resilience required to voyage down new paths to personal fulfillment. She draws on her experience as a clinical psychologist as she describes the passionate attraction that moves both lovers to crucially modify and unite their lives. Tower's gifts of lyrical language, emotional resonance, and psychological sensitivity combine to offer a memorable narrative about achieving happiness at any age."

**-Sybil Steinberg, Former Forecasts Editor, *Publishers Weekly***

"Conquering the dual challenges of parenting herself as well as her adult children, Roni Beth Tower lives her transatlantic romance with consciousness and insight, as she decides to leave the safe shore of her home in Connecticut to create a new life with a man she meets in Paris when she is in her early 50's. *Miracle at Midlife* is a classic love story set in modern times that draws on the author's background as a psychologist as well as her wisdom as a woman. It is also a wonderful and moving story that will inspire everyone who reads it."

**-Shefali Tsabary, PhD, *New York Times* bestselling author and clinical psychologist**

"REMARKABLE! Roni Beth Tower starts with that most romantic ideal - an unexpected romantic encounter in Paris - and completely rediscovers and re-creates her own life as a result. In prose both literary and analytic, she glides us through this whirlwind courtship, which upends not only her own life, but those of so many around her: her grown children, her patients, her friends, and of course David, the gentleman in question, and his own family. Throughout this remarkable life transformation, Roni Beth remains a clear-eyed observer of this phenomenal occurrence, the chance for not just love, but a bold new chapter in one's own life story. A thrilling story from beginning to end, one that reads like a beautiful novel."

**-Jack Thomas, Broadway Producer**

"A wonderful, thoughtful and inspiring story of love and courage -- the kind of tale that teaches us to take chances. And that we CAN overcome our own obstacles."

**-Betsy Stone, PhD, author of *Happily Ever After***

"Roni Beth Tower shares her journey through life with wit, warmth, and insight. *Miracle at Midlife* is written with an eye for detail and for the ability to make the reader feel like a participant in this adventure. Following a romantic meeting in Paris, the author describes events that involve two continents. Subsequently, she was able to overcome many obstacles, and to reinvent herself as someone open to love and affection."

**- Dorothy and Jerome Singer, Yale University**

"*Miracle at Midlife* is an honest, thoughtful and authentic memoir about a real love affair, in which the intimacies, conflicts, misunderstandings and resolutions of new love are explored. Roni Beth Tower writes with a compelling command of psychological process and insight, while ably injecting humor in the story of her transatlantic romance."

**- Jeanne Bodin, author of *We, the American Women and Women Who Work***

"Roni Beth Tower's *Miracle at Midlife* transports the reader across time and the Atlantic to the sights, tastes, and heady romance of Paris. Through a meeting of the minds, and with great passion, Roni rebirths herself and finds her soul mate. Her journey is at once moving, humorous, candid, and a gift."

**-Traci Stein, PhD, MPH, integrative medicine expert and award-winning author of *The Everything Guide to Integrative Pain Management***

"A wonderful story (that) needed to be told... demonstrates triumph for all of us who aspire, regardless of our age or doubts, and is a reminder ... to take life by the coat tails and fly. *Miracle at Midlife* by Roni Beth Tower is a testimonial to pursuing a passion, to doing, completing, persevering, and to embracing life."

**-Camille Mancuso, from her Chatterbox column in the *Bucks County Herald***

"Roni Beth Tower shares a remarkable story about the renewal of hope after loss, and the elegance of destiny in love. Beautifully crafted and narrated, her story will captivate the senses and awaken the reader to the power of living with courage, vulnerability and most of all integrity."

**- Jennifer Lee, PhD, Clinical Psychologist & Co-Author of *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Anxious Children***



## A Note from Roni Beth

**Dear Book Clubs,**

*Miracle at Midlife: A Transatlantic Romance* lends itself to exploration of many themes as they evolve in the book or may have occurred in your own lives. I hope that the selection below can spark a lively discussion. Do please contact me at [miracleatmidlife@gmail.com](mailto:miracleatmidlife@gmail.com) with any suggestions for improving the list, additional questions you might have, or experiences relating to reading or discussing my book that you would like to share. Be sure to leave your email address and I will get back to you, although at times it might take a little while.

Thanks,

Roni Beth

# Suggested Discussion Questions

## MIRACLE AT MIDLIFE

**SPOILER ALERT!** Some of these questions may give away certain plot elements.

### Navigating a Romantic Relationship

#### **The Book**

1. What attracted David and Roni Beth to each other? What maintained their connection after the initial hormone rush wore off? Who took what risks and why were they risks?
2. Were there points in the book when you thought the couple might not be able to stay together? What issues did you think most threatened the relationship and why?

#### **Personally....**

1. What are the greatest benefits to living life as a single person and the greatest challenges? What are ways to meet those challenges?
2. What in your perspective or in your life has changed when you created a couple, a “relationship”?
3. What concerns or issues have you seen family or friends face when you or someone close to you has created a new significant “relationship”? What are some ways in which families draw family boundaries? How do the boundaries change over time? What pushes them to change? What roles do rituals and rules play in your significant relationship? In your family?
4. We do not live in isolation. What are some consequences of third party involvement in an intimate relationship?

### Locations and Long-Distance Relationships

#### **The Book**

1. In what ways did geographic distance help the relationship and in what ways did it challenge it?
2. How did the specific locations of the romance affect what happened to it?

#### **Personally....**

1. How do settings affect you? What is it about them that affects you – and in what ways are you affected?
2. Do you have control over the impact a setting has on you?
3. How do you experience an important relationship differently when you are physically separated compared to when you are together?
4. What are some of the benefits and challenges of being geographically close? Distant?

## Transitions and transformations

### The Book

1. Over the course of the book, both Roni Beth and David are transformed. What are (or have been) key transitions in their lives and how does their romance address their impact?
2. In what ways are Roni Beth's beliefs in a soul's destiny and a guiding force (that she calls "God") helpful to her - or do they make her life more difficult?

### Personally....

1. What major transitions or shifts in identity have you confronted in your own life?
2. What was most helpful in dealing with them?
3. Have you ever felt yourself to be radically transformed? What changed and what did not?
4. Do you believe that each soul has a purpose during this lifetime? Why or why not?

## Decisions and motivation

### The Book

1. What differences in style, values, culture were most prominent in the book? How did David and Roni Beth deal with those differences?
2. How did the couple repair their relationship when they were in serious conflict? In what ways did they give to and receive from each other?

### Personally....

1. How do you know when what you desire is a "want" and when it is a "need"?
2. Have you ever imagined a "possible self" and then moved to either realize or avoid it?
3. Do you regret choices that you have made? Which ones? How did they impact your life? How do those decisions affect your comfort or ease in making decisions now?
4. Do you believe you are responsible for your own happiness – or that sources of your happiness lie outside of yourself? If so, in what do they lie? If only.... What creates feelings of disappointment and how can you minimize those feelings?

## What is the meaning of "Home"?

### The Book

1. What did "home" mean to David? To Roni Beth?
2. How did their understandings of "home" contribute to or complicate their relationship?

**Personally....**

1. What comes to mind when you think of “home”?
2. What is the role of “safety” in your life? What helps you feel safe?
3. What defines the transformation of a place into a “home” for you?
4. What does “security” mean to you? Have you ever had it challenged? By what? How did that make you feel and how did you respond?

**What are issues to consider in parenting adult children?****The Book**

1. In the book, David and Roni Beth address their roles as parents of adult children. How did they each see those roles? What did David want or expect from his adult children? Roni Beth?
2. In the book, what roles did the adult children play in their parents’ lives? Why? Do you think the outcome of the story might have been different if the adult children had responded differently? In what ways?

**Personally....**

1. What do you believe adult children need from their parents?
2. What do adult children actually want? When do their wants and needs change?
3. How do relationships with grown children change? What can you or they do (or have done) to cause change?
4. What might parents need from their adult children?

**Aging****The Book**

1. How did the ages of Roni Beth and David affect them? Affect their relationship?
2. How do you think future aging might affect them? Their relationship?

**Personally....**

1. Do you see people having different developmental tasks as they age?
2. What issues seem unique to mid-life?
3. Can you think of examples of meeting mid-life challenges that have been adaptive – or non-adaptive?
4. In what ways do you believe romantic love is different at mid-life than during youth?

## **And a few questions about the book itself**

1. To what extent did you find the structure of the book helpful?
2. What was your experience of the two voices expressed through their own words in multiple media?
3. In the book, most of the narrative tension is within the characters and their relationships. What would you have preferred to be different about the way the story was told? What did you appreciate about the style?
4. Did the book affect your perception of Paris? If so, in what way(s)?
5. At the end of the book, what expectations do you have for David? For Roni Beth? Are there questions that leave you curious?

# A Bonus for Bakers

BON APPETITI

## For Francophiles, Madeleines:

1. Melt and cool 2/3 cup unsalted butter
2. Whisk together:
  - 1 ¼ cup flour
  - ¾ teaspoons baking powder
3. Whisk together:
  - ½ cup sugar
  - 2 eggs at room temperature
4. Add flour mixture to butter-egg mixture. Do not overmix.
5. Add:
  - 3 tablespoons milk
  - the melted butter (above)
  - 1 teaspoon vanilla (or 2 teaspoons lemon rind or chocolate chips)
6. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
7. In morning, preheat oven to 445 degrees Fahrenheit.
8. While oven is heating, chill Madeleine pan in the freezer
9. Butter and lightly flour the Madeleine pan
10. Spoon one Tablespoon of the batter into each depression of the Madeleine pan
11. Bake for 3 minutes. You should see a bump rising in the middle of each cookie. Lower the oven temperature to 395 degrees Fahrenheit and cook for 8 more minutes.
12. When they are beginning to have color, remove the pan and, using a spoon, gently remove each Madeleine from its depression.
13. When they have cooled slightly, sprinkle with powdered sugar. If desired, you can add a bit of cinnamon.
14. They are terrific warm with coffee or tea or milk and can also be frozen.

## For Roni Beth's American fans, Lemon Squares

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 9" x 13" pan.
2. Combine:
  - ½ pound unsalted butter (2 sticks)
  - 1 cup confectioner's sugar
  - 2 cups flour
3. Pat this mixture into the pan and bake for 20 minutes.
4. Beat or whisk together:
  - 4 eggs
  - 6 tablespoons lemon juice
  - 2 cups regular sugar
  - 4 tablespoons flour
  - 1 teaspoon baking powder
5. Pour the lemon mixture over the bottom crust. Bake another 30 to 35 minutes. Remove from oven. When cool, sprinkle confectioner's sugar on top.



# Roni Beth Tower

AUTHOR



Roni Beth Tower grew up in Akron, Ohio, majored in religion at Barnard College, earned her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from Yale University, and did postdoctoral work in epidemiology and public health at Yale Medical School. In addition to doing clinical work, she taught and did research at Yale and at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her speciality was close relationships. She and David, her husband, live in Tarrytown, New York, within easy visiting distance of their six grandchildren. They return to Paris as often as possible. In addition to David, their family and friends, she loves yoga, dance, quilting, and bringing comfort and joy to people. Learn more at [www.miracleatmidlife.com](http://www.miracleatmidlife.com).

Roni Beth would love to join your book club! Invite Roni Beth at [ronibtower@miracleatmidlife.com](mailto:ronibtower@miracleatmidlife.com)

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