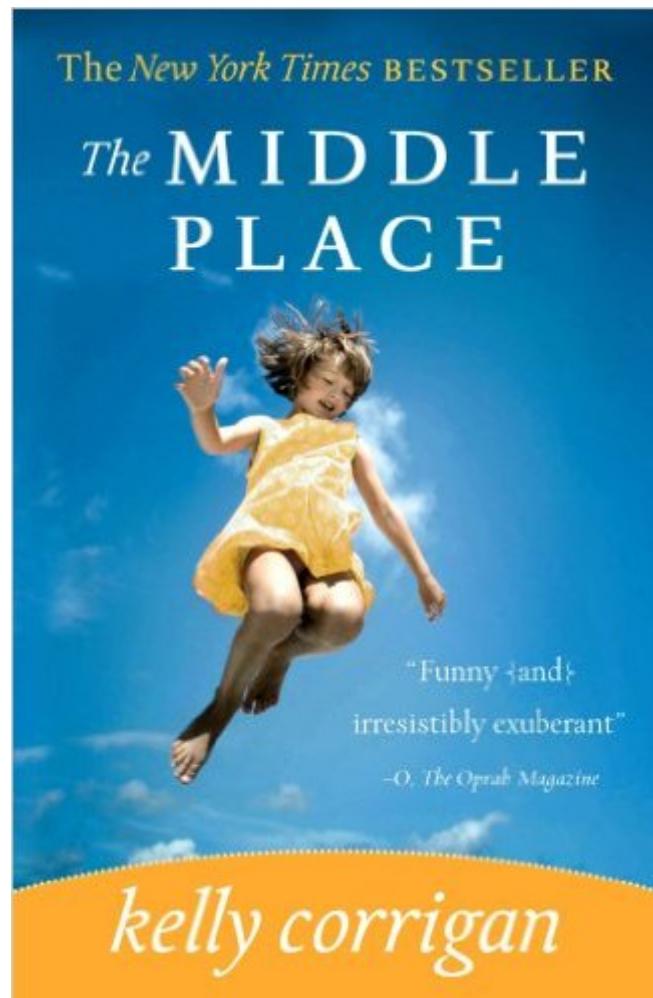


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# The Middle Place



## Synopsis

For Kelly Corrigan, family is everything. At thirty-six, she had a marriage that worked, two funny, active kids, and a weekly newspaper column. But even as a thriving adult, Kelly still saw herself as the daughter of garrulous Irish-American charmer George Corrigan. She was living deep within what she calls the Middle Place--"that sliver of time when parenthood and childhood overlap"--comfortably wedged between her adult duties and her parents' care. But Kelly is abruptly shoved into coming-of-age when she finds a lump in her breast--and gets the diagnosis no one wants to hear. When George, too, learns that he has late-stage cancer, it is Kelly's turn to take care of the man who had always taken care of her--and to show us a woman who finally takes the leap and grows up.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have struggled with the idea of whether to review this book or not because this book is a memoir about someone's actual life. But I have been mulling this book over for a few weeks since I read it, and frankly, I am mystified as to how it has garnered so many 5 star reviews. I absolutely loved the first half of the book. I truly did. It was a real, moving, lovely tribute to her dad, known as "Greenie". The anecdotes about him and her early growing up years were so funny. Her description of her family members was so detailed and she gave so many humorous accounts of them, I felt as if I knew them. I also thought how much I would love to have Kelly as a friend. She sounded funny, spunky, and real. If she had stopped the book right there, just as a wonderful reminiscence of her

life growing up with her family, I would not be writing what I am about to write. But just past the second half of the book, the writer's tone and the content becomes whiny, self indulgent, leaving the author sounding like a spoiled child who needs to grow up. She recounts several seemingly unrelated episodes in which she is either bemoaning someone's insensitivity to her needs or is patting herself on the back for how strong she is when she needs to be. Her example of her strength? When she was in the delivery room, she kept screaming "I can't do it!" when it was time to push. But in the end, she steps up to the plate and pushed, giving birth to her child! What else was she going to do, NOT have the baby?! It is the self-congratulatory way she perceives herself in this instance that is irritating. The other episodes in which she is complaining about someone's insensitivity reads like a personal diary entry - one we all may make now and then when feeling particularly sorry for ourselves, but not a diary entry we ever expect anyone else to read. She complains that she can't have any more children (she already has two). Then there is the incident at the dinner party with friends where two male friends are talking about how far they have come in getting themselves healthy and in shape. The author then throws a wet blanket on the conversation with them with a "what about poor old me" monologue about how broken she feels since her cancer, and how her body has failed her. Then there is the time she runs into an old acquaintance on the street who hasn't seen her since her cancer and makes a series of very benign remarks about one thing or the other that Kelly finds insensitive, and then states how this "friend" will blanch later when she learns Kelly has cancer and remembers what she said to Kelly. She complains about her husband and his closeness to his family (how ironic is that?), complaining about how he calls them on the weekend when she feels he should be devoting his time exclusively to her and their two children. The poor guy sounded so hen pecked based on her description of the conversation she had with him, I felt sorry for him. And he ends up agreeing, not unagreeably, to no longer phone his parents on the weekend when she is around, but when he is driving home from work! The only real conclusions I felt the author reached at the end of the book were: (a) until she experiences the death of a parent, she doesn't feel she will really be an "adult", and (b) no one will ever admire, cherish, and idolize her like her father does. The best piece of advice in the entire book comes from her mom. The advice she gives, just prior to Kelly becoming engaged, is for Kelly to not expect too much from people in life because if you don't expect a whole lot, you will never be too disappointed. Sadly, I think Kelly might come across as a happier person had she considered this advice. She seems to expect a lot from everyone throughout the book. I think the author is a talented writer, and, again, I thoroughly enjoyed the first half of the book. And I think with a bit more editing, or perhaps as a series of essays, this book could have been a better read. But not as a full length book with no

conclusions or resolutions of much depth. For a really touching memoir about parenthood and dealing with aging parents (with a twist) that was written with depth and introspection, I highly recommend "Accidentally on Purpose" by Mary Pols.

After reading "The Middle Place", I too was stuck in the middle. My heart goes out to anyone diagnosed with cancer. I expected a story of courage and hope; though there was some offered (hence two stars). My primary feeling was one of dismay, sure I too was impressed by her honesty; however, it is soon overshadowed by her selfishness, she is so brazen, she fails to realize she should be embarrassed. This accompanied by "it's just not fair" and other whining was less than appealing. Of course, if the book was more aptly titled, "IT REALLY is All about ME!" or "Kelly Does Cancer" copies wouldn't have flown off the shelves. With over 200 reviews, I'll go light on the synopsis. As others point out, the first half is devoted to Ms. Corrigan's childhood with great focus on her charismatic, popular father. It then segue ways into recounting her adult life as she faces breast cancer, her concern at leaving behind two young girls, and the added burden of dealing with her father's diagnosis of cancer and treatment. There is no question that this would be overwhelming. I was intrigued by the story having lost three dear friends to cancer. Two died in their early 30's leaving behind very young children. Shortly following the loss of my 32 yr. old neighbor, I watched the struggle and eventual loss a year later, of my woman I befriend, whom I nursed and stepped into the role of: preparing meals; laundry; cleaning; running errands; taking to doctor appointments; middle of the night calls; financial support; taking her children on excursions and even started a Christmas fund for her four (4) young children. She died a long, agonizing death at only 34 weighing 67 pounds having lost more than 150 pounds (this is what happens when you have no health insurance). I never once heard her complain even at the very worst. My third friend to die, battled cancer three times over a ten year period! Her body was riddled with tumors throughout her body leaving her paralyzed and eventually unable to breathe (they too had no insurance and sold everything even their home, only to move to the worst area of town so they could attempt to pay medical bills). Yet, never once did she ever complain! In fact, she often thanked me for being there for her (which of course was heart breaking); she was one of the kindest person's I've ever had the pleasure to know. All handled their diagnosis quite differently than Ms. Corrigan. To be honest, none had the support system that Kelly did nor did they demand such attention and coddling. Yes, I realize my comparisons sound ugly, do I get points for being honest like others give Kelly? I am not saying anyone doesn't have the right to be frustrated and fearful but she demonstrates no compassion for others but her father. I was appalled at her rudeness to certain

fellow sufferers saying they were too negative or scary (my thought -they probably appreciated not needing to interact with her, an immature, whiner). I think her husband should be canonized by the Catholic Church for his tolerance. There is a scene when they are out to dinner with friends and she shouts down her friends for talking about their workout routine because she has cancer and can't take part. Later, she wonders aloud to her husband if her behavior was inappropriate to which he states that her friends need a taste of reality. So, everyone must stop enjoying life or talking only about her during her illness? I'm puzzled, why people walk on eggs for her? More importantly, why do people hang around someone so self-centered? Should society admire such behavior? This is simply a reflection of American society today; we've become a nation of self-centered and demanding jerks. We've earned our reputation of being rude, demanding and arrogant. Frankly, I'd be embarrassed and ashamed to act out in such fashion. Please consider that beyond the death's of my friends, I too face multiple, serious health issues, some of which I can't afford to treat; I have had 7 surgeries and I'm facing 4 more (most doctors refuse to operate due to heart and other health challenges; furthermore, I have had a brain tumor for 10 years). I've only told two friends that I even have these health issues. I don't need to use my health challenges to manipulate others for attention or sympathy. Everyone faces challenges, some have much bigger ones than others. The reality is few people want to be around you, if you are sick (subconsciously, I think they believe they will be stricken). In third world nations, this is daily life among the poor. I challenge you to query people with long-term health problems; most will say good friends become scarce, particularly during a crisis. This isn't all that usual. All three of my friends, I have mentioned earlier, spent their last days very lonely having gotten little or no support even from their church body (the last one was a Pastor's wife!). If Ms. Corrigan didn't have a great sense of humor and a way to spin her misbehavior or already been published author; it is doubtful this would have published let alone made it to the best seller list. There was no mention of any personal epiphany's or promises to live life differently; nor was there mention of how Kelly's views or behavior improved. To my knowledge, she isn't concerned about others who face this terrible scourge. As she has gained notoriety, it is doubtful she has donated even a portion of her book proceeds to a worthy cause. What about using her spotlight to focus on being a spokesperson? How about starting an outreach programs to people to treatment? Or, starting a charity offering respite to caregivers, financial grants to those uninsured; but that would be totally out of character for her. When I read a biography, I want to conclude that my time was well invested by learning insights to improve personally; all I learned here is that narcissists never change.

As so many have written, the author is a whiny self-indulgent adult who needs to grow up. The world appears to revolve around her and she appears to be the only one who knows what should take place, who to contact etc and how people should act or believe. I am just grateful my 30 some children don't feel the need to come in my house and rearrange things and replace valued items as she did with her parents home without their knowledge. I was sickened by her take-over of her father when he was ill. She had no compunction about asking her mother for a loan for their house while admitting that she was Daddy's girl and everything was about Daddy or Greenie as he was called and not her mom. To me the real hero of the book is her husband who tolerates this childish, child-like immature behavior and still appears to love her. I just wanted to shake her and say grow-up. I don't understand all the five star reviews for this book and all the hype surrounding it. I finished it just to see what happened not because I was enjoying the book. I just kept shaking my head unreal the more I read of her personality.

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