



# OUR BODIES OURSELVES TODAY AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

## Growing Older, Finding Our Power January 2025

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### A Note from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

The ageism in our society paints elders as fragile and irrelevant; it's become normal to think of the aging process as one of loss upon loss. But it's worth remembering that previous generations didn't see things this way. To the contrary, when up to 50% of children died before their fifth birthdays, babies and small children were seen as weak and vulnerable. Elders were naturally seen as hardy survivors. Similarly, the patriarchy stereotypes women as weak and needing protection (as our new president said, "whether [women] want it or not"). Yet girls and women outlive men at every age. Or, as people in public health sometimes quip, "The older you get, the more female you are."



Women have so many strengths to draw on as we age. Women have more intimate friendships as well as more types of casual relationships (e.g. neighbors, religious groups). Women become more assertive as we age, until we surpass men in assertiveness. Our self-confidence is high. We are wiser and have more perspective; we're less buffeted by everything that happens. We find greater meaning in our lives. As one woman put it, "My give-a-damn is broken." Gender-expansive people share many if not all of these strengths—we'll know more when we have better research.

Yet we are also subject to real losses as we age—of health and capacity, of loved ones, of roles that once provided much meaning in our lives. Institutional and habitat losses can also be huge. As I write this, I'm grieving the loss of even minimal federal support for women and the LGBTQIA+ community, non-billionaires, and the ecosystems I love (parts of California) as well as the future of the planet and its inhabitants. I'm also feeling the loss of specific institutions, such as the National Women's Health Network, Breast Cancer Action, and [reproductiverights.gov](http://reproductiverights.gov). Whatever age we are, we deserve the space to grieve, rage, rest, and do whatever we need to do to shore up our spirits and those of our people.

This newsletter focuses on women telling our own stories about growing older, and finding our power. For one, Our Bodies Ourselves co-founder Vilunya Diskin's recent discoveries about her family have added to her story of Holocaust survival. You can watch the video of our fabulous Sex and Aging program. We interview Growing Older content expert Mindy Fried, and highlight the Next Chapters podcast she's developing with the OBOS Today panel that she chairs. We feature content from our website about aging, along with some exciting upcoming events.

Let's all draw on our many strengths, lean into our communities, hold our loved ones close, and fight like hell.

Onward!  
Amy

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Support Our Bodies Ourselves Today!

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## Featured Content on Growing Older

How can we navigate aging – and confront ageism – as women and gender-expansive people? The **Growing Older** section of the Our Bodies Ourselves Today website collects materials help us to understand our changing bodies and circumstances, and to celebrate our diverse identities as we grow older.



Our Bodies Ourselves Today Growing Older content expert **Taura Taylor** talks about the culture of caregiving in her family, and how that influenced her choices. Taylor speaks candidly and with humor about the challenges of supporting her mother growing older.

[□ Listen to the episode](#)



LGBTQ+ older adults need housing options that are affordable and welcoming. SAGE's National LGBTQ+ Elder Housing Initiative shares a resource library for housing for LGBTQ+ older adults and access to various reports on LGBTQ+ aging.

[□ Read the article](#)

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## Sex and Aging: An Our Bodies Ourselves Conversation

On Tuesday, December 10, 2024, Our Bodies Ourselves founder Judy Norsigian, organizer and trauma-informed therapist Aida Manduley (virtually), and author, educator, and activist Heather Corinna hosted a frank and lively conversation about sex, sexuality, and getting older.

□ [Watch the recording](#)

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**[E□ Explore the Our Bodies Ourselves Today website!](#)**

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### Interview with a Content Expert

This month, we asked Growing Older content expert panel chair **Mindy Fried** about her work with Our Bodies Ourselves Today. Mindy is an applied sociologist who works collaboratively with nonprofits and foundations. Executive director of Hoopla Productions, she created and co-produced the award-winning podcast, "The Shape of Care." Her published books include "Taking Time: Parental Leave Policy and Corporate Culture" (1998) and "Caring for Red: A Daughter's Memoir" (2016).



### What brought you to Our Bodies Ourselves Today?

As a second-wave feminist who pored over Our Bodies Ourselves back in the 1970s, I've been a long-time fan; so I was thrilled to be invited to chair the Growing Older section of Our Bodies Ourselves Today. I have taught sociology courses about aging, written a caregiving memoir and launched a podcast that explores caregiving issues more universally. It's an honor to join such a pivotal organization, particularly in these dangerous political times where many of issues we care about are under attack.

What's a crucial issue related to growing older that we need to understand better?

One crucial issue is age discrimination in accessing quality health care. That's when older people are treated differently or "talked down to" by a health care professional or even denied care because of their age. I recently experienced this form of ageism when a specialist told me harshly to stop talking when I asked him questions about a surgical procedure. I was first confused and angry, and then realized I needed to report him to the powers-that-be. I was able to change practitioners, but not everyone will speak up when treated poorly by a health care professional, nor will they get a positive response as I did.

What gives you hope?

What gives me hope is the power of community to provide a "home" where we can transform our rage into action. I have found that community in a number of places, including among researchers and activists from Our Bodies Ourselves Today. I believe that together, we will be on the right side of history, in the face of threats to our well-being and, more broadly, to our democracy.

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## NEWS AND EVENTS



### SAVE THE DATE!

We have much to celebrate this International Women's Day!

Please mark your calendars for 5–7:30pm on **March 8, 2025** -- and stay tuned for a **big announcement** about the future of Our Bodies Ourselves at Suffolk University.



## Menstrual Equity Summit

**January 25, 2025**

**9 AM to 3 PM**

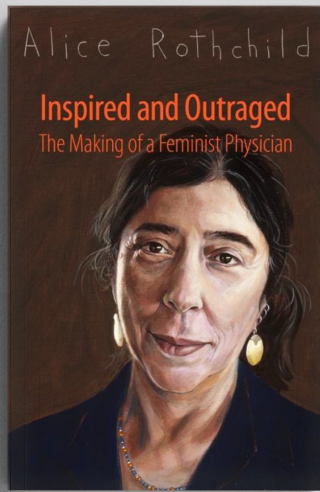
Join us to hear from activists about the movement to end period poverty statewide and take action for menstrual equity in Massachusetts.



Our Bodies Ourselves Today is co-hosting the Massachusetts Menstrual Equity Summit with Massachusetts NOW and the Massachusetts Menstrual Equity Coalition. Join us on January 25th at Sargent Hall, Suffolk University, Boston, for panels and workshops throughout the day!

□ [RSVP for the summit](#)

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## Book Talk: Alice Rothchild

February 19, 2025

5pm EST reception (in person only)

5:30–7pm EST book talk (hybrid)

Suffolk University Poetry Center

Boston, MA

Our Bodies Ourselves Today is hosting a talk by Alice Rothchild about her intimate memoir, "Inspired and Outraged" and the experiences that contributed to her passion and power as a doctor, an activist, and a woman. The program will take place both in person and remotely (via Zoom webinar).

□ [Registration link and more info here](#)

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## Our Bodies Ourselves co-founder Vilunya Diskin featured in the "Boston Globe"

At age 83, Our Bodies Ourselves co-founder **Vilunya Diskin** has finally found out what happened to the family she lost in the Holocaust. Her Jewish birth parents placed baby Vilunya in the care of a Catholic neighbor to hide her from the authorities. Their act saved her life, but Vilunya never saw her birth parents again. After the end of World War II, a local rabbi took her and other orphaned children from Lviv (in current-day Ukraine) to the United States, to escape continued antisemitism under the Soviet regime. A Jewish couple adopted Vilunya, who grew up in California.

For her whole life, Vilunya sought traces of the loved ones she had been separated from. Her experience of oppression moved her to join the civil rights movement, and later to become part of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective. But her personal past remained mysterious to her.

She uncovered nothing until the Holocaust Recovery Project reconstructed Vilunya's family tree from her DNA. "The women's movement has always said that knowledge is power," she reflects. "And that's exactly right." Vilunya found it deeply moving to finally learn her birth parents' full names, the identities of her grandparents, and the fate of her twin sister, who had died in infancy. She now has photos of them, and a feeling of power from knowing more about her own family history.

"In many ways, it's like a rebirth," she told [the Boston Globe](#). "Here I am in my 80s and it's a whole new chapter."

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**Coming soon!**

**NEXT CHAPTERS:  
An Our Bodies Ourselves Today  
Podcast about Women Growing Older**

We don't talk openly enough or often enough about what it feels like to grow older, especially as women. How our sexuality, our bodies, and our relationships change later in life. How ageism makes everyday necessities like housing, work, and health care more challenging. How growing older intersects with other forms of discrimination — and community — for BIPOC women and LGBTQIA+ women.



Sharing our experiences is essential to busting the myths that surround aging. Hosted by award-winning podcaster, sociologist, and OBOS Today content expert Chair Mindy Fried, NEXT CHAPTERS will bring us the frank conversations we need — with diverse experts, activists, and everyday people, *and* a feminist perspective, just as Our Bodies Ourselves always has. Each episode's dynamic stories reveal the real joys and struggles of growing older, as we journey through the ever-changing social, economic, and political landscape.

[Want to donate to this project? Just click the box next to "This gift supports our Next Chapters Podcast" here](#)

## Organizing for Change

### Raging Grannies International

Raging Grannies International is a network of local "gaggles" of women who organize raucous public protests. They use homemade costumes, music, and humor as a way to raise awareness of social and political concerns. They speak (and sing) out about reproductive rights, social justice, climate change, fair housing, health care for all, and LGBTQ+ issues.



Photo: Las Abuelitas Enojadas, singing | CC 2.0 attribution Shmooth

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**Your accurate *and* inclusive  
guide to health, sexuality, *and*  
reproductive justice**



Our Bodies Ourselves Today | 73 Tremont Street | Boston, MA 02108 US

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