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*Deborah Collins Stephens , Jackie Speier , Michealene Cristini Risley , Jan Yanehiro*

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If you've ever felt overworked, overwhelmed, or just plain unlucky, this book is for you. Through this collection of stories, wisdom, and practical advice, you'll meet four ordinary women who have faced extraordinary life challenges. Together, they have a history of 6 marriages, 10 children, 4 stepchildren, 6 dogs, 2 miscarriages, 2 cats, a failed adoption, widowhood, and foster parenthood. One of them was shot and left for dead on a tarmac in South America and two lived through the deaths of spouses.

Over a decade, the power and strength of their collective friendship enabled these women not only to survive, but to thrive. Join them to learn how you too can turn misfortunate events into joy-filled.

## **This Is Not the Life I Ordered: 50 Ways to Keep Your Head Above Water When Life Keeps Dragging You Down Details**

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# **From Reader Review *This Is Not the Life I Ordered*: 50 Ways to Keep Your Head Above Water When Life Keeps Dragging You Down for online ebook**

## **Black Elephants says**

A friend passed along *This Is Not the Life I Ordered*, an inspirational self-help book by four very competent, entrepreneurial women. They present this fact: Because the four women made time to seek out, find and get together weekly/monthly/whatever-ly with each other to discuss their life deeply, they've been able to survive the ups and downs in their lives. These ups and downs include divorces, financial bankruptcies, the death of spouses, disease and so forth and on and on. To help the reader get control of her own life, they've ended each chapter with questions and tools for a WIT kit.

I'm sorry if I sound flippant because the book was put together quite badly. It was written like a business manual (If you do A, then B and C will happen. How do you know it will work? It worked for me and Susan from accounting! She was transformed by it, too). It reads like something they would pass out at a seminar rather than something you'd buy in a bookstore.

I also kept getting distracted by all the clutter. The chapters were spliced into sub-chapters that had no rhyme or reason. There were a gazillion inspirational quotes that I ignored. The transitions were clunky. The stories were shallow. They hinted at emotional success but focused on material success. The narrations were never complete, AND I couldn't tell you how these four women got together or why they started these "Kitchen Talks" that strengthened their resolve to face challenges.

Basically, this book follows the alarming trend of *He's Just Not that Into You*-like books. The authors admit in the first pages that they're a) not writers, b) did no research for the project and c) are only pulling from their own lives and that of their friends. What a sloppy way to write a book and waste a consumer's money. You're basically telling the reader point blank not to bother with your laziness either.

However, what I will say is that I think this book's foundation is sound. It's true that life is crazy, and it's useful to have friends for the ride. The book just fails to take it anywhere not cliché or deep. I think it also tries to verbalize the most secret desire of women: that more than a man, women need and want a community of female friends who will love them unconditionally. I think this is the real secret behind *Sex and the City*'s success.

As to Conari Press, if this is the stuff they put out, then I'll avoid them from here on out.

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## **Frances says**

If you are having a hard time remembering or living out your dream read this book for information, support and ideas on how to make something of your life.

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## **Brittany says**

Every female should read this book.

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## **Nicole says**

Some good stuff here, mostly little gems of quotes. Written from the perspectives of four different, highly successful women, it's billed as an inspirational book. I found it a bit tedious. The extreme examples used are not "everywoman's" journey, so it made it difficult to relate to everyday life. Lots of name-dropping, too, which bugged me. Like I said, some good quotes, but it also broke up the flow of the actual read for me, so it was more distracting than complimentary. A quick read, nonetheless, and some things in there that I think we need to be reminded of more often than not. Just wasn't all that profound for me.

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## **Tami says**

This is Not the Life I Ordered. I think at some point in each of our lives we all say or think some version of this phrase. It may be that something traumatic has occurred in our lives (a death, infidelity, the end of a marriage, the loss of a job, a major illness, etc) or simply that the daily chaos of life has suddenly become overwhelming. In any case, life happens to us all and every so often we all need a little pep talk.

This is Not the Life I Ordered is a multifunctional book. The sections connect together with quotes and thoughts about various aspects of the process of living. A good number of these entries, I wrote down in my journal to remind me of the possibilities, the practical, and my own potential.

The main portion of the book contains real life stories. In these excerpts, the four authors illustrate that they have seen their share of life challenges, changes, reevaluations, and growth. I really appreciated the openness and honesty of these narratives.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, each major section of the book included information and exercises to build a WIT Kit. WIT stands for Women in Transition. Essentially, it is a group of women who are willing to support each other through the good and the bad. It is a place where you are expected to be completely honest and willing to grow. The kind of support we could all use.

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## **Susan says**

On the cheap rack at Home Goods...the optimist in me keeps reading these sort of books while the pessimist in me makes fun of me....

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## **Patti says**

Good, common sense advice on how to cope with life's pitfalls.

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## **Inder says**

This is such an amazing idea - the accounts of four women who have been to hell and back, and lived to tell the tale. But somehow, they took real substance, and made it glib and shallow and worthless. You can't even get a self-help book about dealing with trauma today without coming face to face with our society's denial of any real trauma or pain. This book reads like, "Wow, pain is great, because it makes you a better person!" Um, do you think it could be more complicated than that? You'd think that a crowd of women who have lost loved ones to disease and accidents, and faced death themselves, would know better.

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## **Laurie says**

I liked the title and have, on occasion, found self-help books quite useful. However, this was not particularly helpful. The women portrayed were all super achievers (which is an admirable trait) who went through some serious trauma. But I felt, as did a couple of other reviewers, that the book made the trauma seem so glib. Additionally, I don't see that this book would be that helpful for the average person (not a super achiever). In fact, if you feel that you're not accomplishing enough in your life this book could possibly accentuate that feeling (i.e. "Look what these women went through and yet, not only did they come through it, they even became or remained super successful. What's wrong with me?").

The homework assignments were a nice touch, though, and I still recall the one about writing down all of the positive things in your life. Helps you to put things in perspective.

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## **Amy Christensen says**

This Is Not The Life I Ordered is authored by not one woman, but four. Deborah Collins Stephens lends her expertise in leadership. She is one of the founder of the Center For Innovative Leadership which works both with established Fortune 500 companies as well as new startups. She continues her career as a celebrated financial author. Jackie Speier shares her inspirational story as one of the staff members of Congressman Leo Ryan's delegation to The People's Temple Jonestown establishment in 1978. As one of the few survivors of this massacre, she articulates that a life can still move forward from the brink of death. She continues her pursuits now as a congresswoman herself. Michaelene Cristini Risley demonstrates the power of the female mind as a celebrated award winning filmmaker. She shares her humble beginnings in this work as the victim of childhood sexual abuse and how she continued to excel in her life despite adversity. Jan Yanehiro spent 15 years of her life as a television personality. She demonstrates the poignant struggle of when an exciting chapter in a woman's life comes to a close and the battle to regain a drive towards a new purpose.

This work is clearly meant for women. It addresses specific challenges women face in a patriarchal society. The four authors candidly share stories of losing husbands, children and financial fallouts. They share their mistakes, one being that financial fallouts were often directly linked to the cultural preference of women to allow the men in their lives to handle their finances. They share what they learned from those mistakes, so that the readers may benefit from their wisdom without having to experience that same situation for themselves. Additionally, this work advocates the bond of women. And stresses the importance of building a strong network of supportive female advisors. A strong network of wise women can then help one another

through the transitions of life. The stories featured in this work are from the four authors and a collection of women from around the world. These inspiring stories of transition demonstrate what is possible, and remain universal and timeless.

The work does not feature a lengthy bibliography nor does it include an index. The information is loosely organized with 50 observations made by the authors and their opinions on how to apply hard won lessons. The anecdotal stories will appeal to most women, but the loose form of organization may be distracting to some readers. I personally found the work thought provoking.

There are many exercises to ponder in the book. Something as simple as choosing three things I want to accomplish or experience was difficult for me to do. It made me realize that I had spent a great deal of my life attempting to please other people. Forcing myself to take a moment to identify something I wanted for myself made me realize I had effectively eradicated the emotion of jealousy from my being. Jealousy can be a vice, however it is an indicator that there is something in one's life that is not going well. It can be used as an expression of change – one I realized I was denying myself.

I was curious about this book due to the title. *This Is Not The Life I Ordered*, might very well be a perfect summation of how I feel about the 46 years I have lived. Suffice it to say, on more days than not, it is all I can do to get out of bed, put on my uniform and drag myself to my job. I often feel very sorry for myself and I feel very pathetic. However, these wise women of this book gave me a new perspective. I do not have to consider myself as pathetic; I can instead consider myself courageous. Yes, just getting up on some days, for me, is an act of courage to be noted (and perhaps even celebrated). Taking that small step, to see myself in a different light – in a courageous light – gave me the hope to embrace the idea that my circumstances can be changed.

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### **Laura Hancock says**

I judged this book entirely on the cover -- the name on the cover, specifically. And for once in my life, I made a good choice based on such superficiality. This book is full of inspirational quotes and stories from women who have had to "paddle upstream," losing jobs, husbands to death, husbands to cheating, surviving childhood abuse. One woman was shot and left for dead in the Jonestown cult massacre in Guyana.

Despite their pasts, they have learned to be happy and successful and share those secrets.

The reason I didn't give it five stars is because the book encourages you to form a group of females to whom you can tell anything in the spirit of sharing collective wisdom. At the end of each chapter are questions and ideas you're to discuss with your group. I didn't do this.

Also, the women assume everyone has been married or has children. I don't, so that was another thing that was foreign to me.

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### **Kristin says**

I wish I could give this book 2.5 stars. This book was completely underwhelming as a self-help book. It had no sense of direction. It was not obvious to me what lesson I was supposed to be learning in each chapter. The book gave little to no practical advice. It was simply a book of anecdotes. Essentially saying, "Here are all these women who have overcome. You can do it too. But we won't tell you how, you'll just have to figure

that out yourself." For some reason, each mini-section within the chapter was set off by two quotes, which I found strange and distracting. And I love quotes, but they weren't used effectively in this book.

If you are going to buy this book to read, I suggest skipping all of it except chapter 5. Chapter 5 was the only time in the book that my mind felt like it was getting practical information. The rest is purely anecdotal and not all that useful.

I would NOT recommend this book.

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### **Bethany T says**

If I could buy a copy for all my friends and relatives of the feminine persuasion, I would.

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### **Lain says**

I had high hopes for this book, but it didn't really deliver. There are some powerful women behind it with some fantastic experience, but the disjointed aspect of the book wasn't compelling to me. I couldn't really attach to any one author. I quit reading about a third of the way through.

My suggestion would be to pull all the "WIT" parts out of the book and put them in a separate section or a completely separate book.

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### **Cory says**

This was an odd one. When I started, I truly thought it had been written in the 80's, due to the design of the book. Something about the cartoon-y illustrations and the quotes thrown in every 1/2 to one page. At any rate, I think this would have been a much better book if they had stuck to telling their own stories. Or if there hadn't been so much repetition. Or if their advice had had some heft to it.

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