

# Q & A

## with author Joy Norstrom

### **Q1. What inspired you to write a novel with aging as a central theme?**

I was inspired to write about older adults because it's a time of life often misunderstood and rarely glamourized. As a society we tend to focus on the stories that happen earlier in our lives such as falling in love for the first time, raising children, choosing our career paths, finding love for a second (or third!) time. Yet life doesn't end when you retire or reach a certain age, does it? The stories that happen later in life can be good and meaningful and of value too, if only we take time to hear them.

### **Q2. Flying the Nest is set in an assisted living lodge for senior citizens. Was it inspired by the Covid 19 pandemic?**

I wrote Flying the Nest in 2018 and 2019, before Covid 19 changed our lives and had devastating consequences for those living in long term care. Flying the Nest is set in a time period before the pandemic.

### **Q3. Loneliness is another topic covered in this novel and it's something that deeply affects several of the characters. Do you believe loneliness is a fundamental human experience?**

Loneliness is something we can all relate to at one time in our lives or another. I wanted to explore the idea of loneliness and connection across the age span, and that's why I have point of view characters from age 8 to 80. It's amazing how similar the feeling of loneliness is regardless of circumstance, isn't it? We often feel no one can understand and yet...maybe they can. It can be isolating to not fit in and the social structures that exist in elementary schools can also exist in your place of employment or even your long-term care facility. Who has friends and who doesn't. These issues don't go away just because we age.





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#### Q4. What books besides your own do you recommend?

Two of my favourite Canadian authors are Miriam Toews and Susin Nielsen. I love their books because they both do the exact thing I want to create in my own writing: a blend of humour and heartbreak with genuine, relatable characters.

#### Q5: How did you get started writing? Was it something you've always loved?

I've always been a storyteller. That's probably a nice way to say 'chatty.' I grew up in a house of readers and most of us happened to be storytellers too (picture a group of chatty readers and you've got it). I was on my second maternity leave and my mom suggested I should write a children's book. I was very quick to dismiss the idea. I didn't think it was possible to get published and I doubted anyone would be interested in what I had to say. And yet, the seed was planted, and I started getting words down on paper. I spent most of my thirties working on my writing craft.

#### Q6. What writing advice do you have for other aspiring writers?

Many people dream of writing a book and the only way to do so is to get words on the page. Our first drafts often doesn't look as brilliant as we thought they would and it's easy to get discouraged. It's sappy. Overly dramatic. The characters are flat and uninteresting. That's okay. Finish the story even if you think it's crap. Once it's down on paper you can revise it until it shines. You can't shine a story that exists only in your head. And to all those secret closet writers out there: it can be scary to show your work to someone else, but that's the only way you get feedback and sharpen your work. I encourage you to find a few trusted people to be vulnerable with.