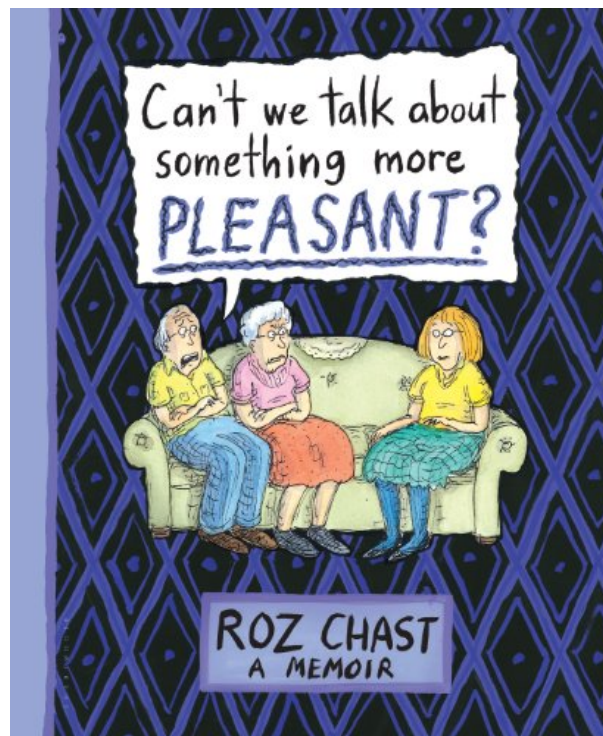
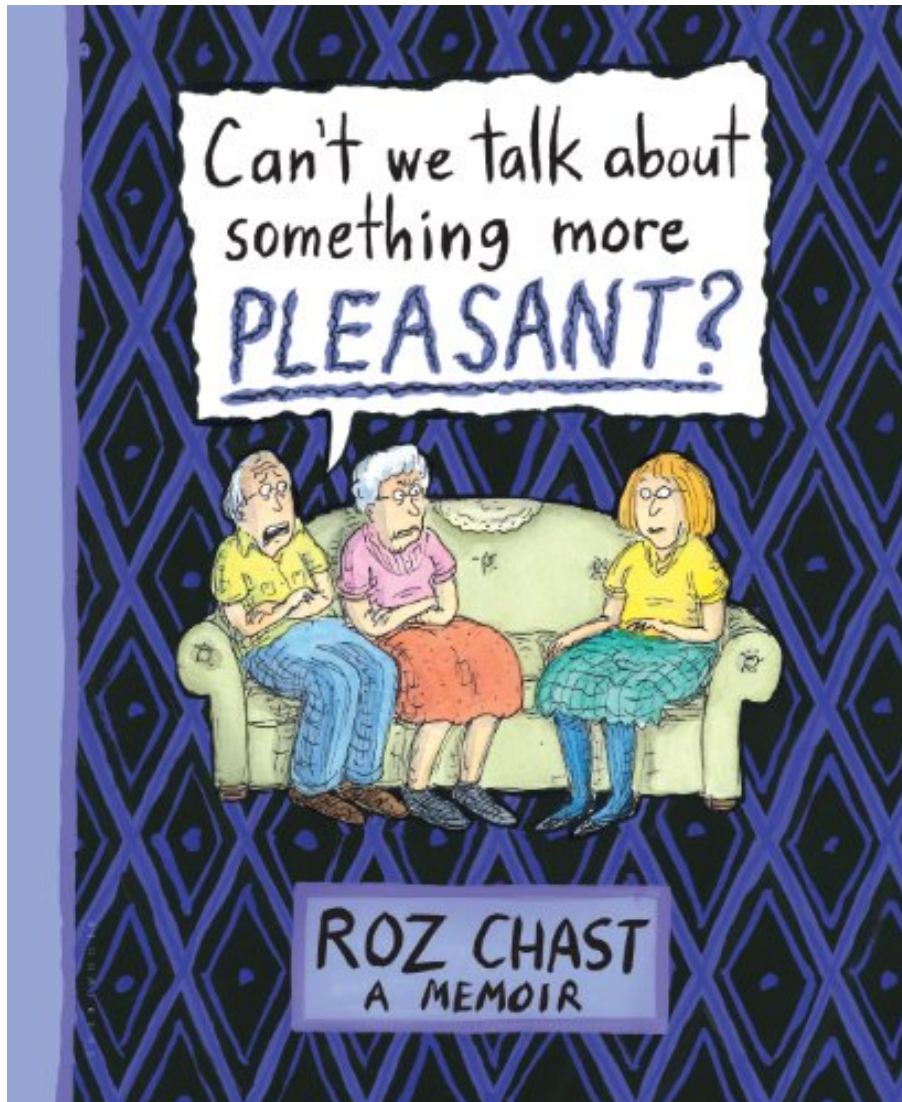


CAN'T WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING MORE PLEASANT?: A MEMOIR BY ROZ CHAST



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Amazon.com Review

Roz Chast, photo by Bill Franzen

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#1 New York Times Bestseller

2014 NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST

In her first memoir, New Yorker cartoonist Roz Chast brings her signature wit to the topic of aging parents. Spanning the last several years of their lives and told through four-color cartoons, family photos, and documents, and a narrative as rife with laughs as it is with tears, Chast's memoir is both comfort and comic relief for anyone experiencing the life-altering loss of elderly parents.

When it came to her elderly mother and father, Roz held to the practices of denial, avoidance, and distraction. But when Elizabeth Chast climbed a ladder to locate an old souvenir from the "crazy closet" with predictable results—the tools that had served Roz well through her parents' seventies, eighties, and into their early nineties could no longer be deployed.

While the particulars are Chast-ian in their idiosyncrasies—an anxious father who had relied heavily on his wife for stability as he slipped into dementia and a former assistant principal mother whose overbearing personality had sidelined Roz for decades—the themes are universal: adult children accepting a parental role; aging and unstable parents leaving a family home for an institution; dealing with uncomfortable physical intimacies; managing logistics; and hiring strangers to provide the most personal care.

An amazing portrait of two lives at their end and an only child coping as best she can, *Can't We Talk about Something More Pleasant* will show the full range of Roz Chast's talent as cartoonist and storyteller.

- Sales Rank: #63044 in eBooks
- Published on: 2014-05-06
- Released on: 2014-05-06
- Format: Kindle eBook

[Amazon.com Review](#)

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Most helpful customer reviews

283 of 290 people found the following review helpful.

"The Wheel of Doom" and gallows humor about some grossly brutal truths.

By David Kusumoto

* As I write this, my 83-year-old dad is withering away in an assisted living facility, riddled with Alzheimer's. Sometimes I want my Dad to die now - because he's unaware of his suffering - and he'd cuss me out if he knew he is turning into what Roz Chast's mother describes as "a pulsating piece of protoplasm." I feel guilty feeling this way - but "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?" makes such forbidden thoughts feel normal.

* (BTW, don't buy the Kindle version. This title, with its colorful cartoons and photos - as well as its handsome construction as a hardcover book - truly belongs on your coffee table. I sampled the Kindle version, didn't like it, and bought the hardcover.)

* This book feels weirdly clairvoyant. It exposed my doubts, fears and paradoxical feelings about watching my parents die slowly before my eyes. I've read almost everything about the subject of aging and dying. And yet this is the first book that captures the exhausting experience of caring for aging parents, e.g., that it's sometimes gross - (see passages about hoarding, incontinence and "grime") - AND funny - (see "The Wheel of Doom" and Roz Chast's father's obsession with myriad bank books, decades old).

* The author's hand-wringing about whether there's going to be enough money to pay for her parents' care is spot on. How long will the money last if they live "X" more years vs. "Y" more years? I do these calculations every month, constantly updating and trying to prepare for the worst. Any savings will be drained by expenses which will have no effect on terminal outcomes. If the daily care and feeding of your parents doesn't kill you - then the avalanche of paperwork and legal stuff that must be done - will.

* Hence despite the preference to "talk about something more pleasant," if nothing else, this book demonstrates why planning for our parents' end-of-life care must begin NOW - not later.

* I recommend this book for every person who's on the brink of going insane about their aging parents. Give it to caregivers, give it to your siblings, give it to anyone who hates dark subjects - but who can handle them if they're presented in a disarmingly funny style that's accessible - yet still honest. (I don't think I can read another "text-only" book about the "death spiral" of aging parents.)

* In sum, "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?" takes the hard edges off some things while inflicting blunt-force traumas about others. Roz Chast nails the impending death of our parents in a way that feels like a landmark work. I know such praise sounds silly given the sea of excellent books out there about aging. But I've never seen this subject presented in an original, humorous and touching way, complete with hand-drawn illustrations and color photos. It avoids the trap of being overly optimistic, forcing us to confront the gruesomeness of mortality - while STILL providing an emotional "lift" about something universal.

* This book makes going through one of the darkest periods of my life - feel almost worth it.

184 of 196 people found the following review helpful.

Our parents lives...and ours?

By Jill Meyer

Cartoonist Roz Chast has written/drawn a book about her parents' final years, "Can't We Talk About Something Pleasant?". In it she describes both her own upbringing - only child, born late-in-life to older and neurotic parents - and how her feelings as a child hindered her dealing with the parents as they aged. She is certainly not alone in her mixed-up emotions towards her parents; most of us have the same feelings. Roz Chast can just express them better.

This is a difficult book to read. It must have been excruciating to live through and then put down on paper. But it is a book that all us "boomers" (hate the word but what else is there? "Lunch meat in the sandwich generation"?) should read. Because I'm not sure too much is going to change when we reach our 80's and 90's. We tend to have fewer children - Roz was an only child, as I noted above - and so fewer people to share the burdens of us as we age. Will we be put in Assisted Living "places" with the alacrity we seem to be putting our own parents into? For the record, both my parents died in nursing homes where they received excellent care.

Roz Chast's parents - George and Elizabeth - lived well into their 90's. And they aged "together". They tried to take care of themselves and each other in their dingy Brooklyn apartment, but it came the time to get them the extra care they could no longer give themselves. Roz describes how going through her parents' vacated apartment was like going through a junk store haven. And she shows photographs - as well as using her drawings - to show how crowded the apartment truly was.

The reader may come away thinking Roz had conflicted feelings about her parents. She sure did and she was certainly entitled to those feelings. I laughed a bit in parts, but I was able to appreciate her words and deeds because I had frequently felt the same way with my own parents, particularly as they aged. As death took the Chasts - two years apart - Roz seemed to have come to terms with these strange people who had given birth and raised her.

Chast's book is a very "personal" book which will resonate with a lot of people.

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Well worth a read

By Jak

This memoir is so honest (brutally so at times I suppose) and so well told with terrific humor, that I must say if you have an aging parent(s) that you are caring for, concerned about, worry about, wonder about or if you recently lost an elderly parent(s) who you took care of, this book let's you know you aren't alone while allowing you a moment or two to laugh (even through tears). Roz Chast expresses feelings that I think many people (certainly I) have felt during this journey - we simply don't voice them and occasionally feel guilty for having the thoughts. It is good to know that the frustration and other feelings you have at times while dealing with a parent (especially one with dementia) is shared. For me, this book was like having drinks with a good friend. I believe, in the end, Roz showed her deep loving connection in her own perfect way via this book. I think it was expressed in a way her mother would have understood even if a few other reviewers didn't.

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