

DISCUSSION GUIDE

It's Not All Downhill from Here

by Terry McMillan

BOOK GROUP

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Terry McMillan is an African-American author. Her interest in books comes from working at a library when she was fourteen. She received her BA in journalism in 1986 from the University of California at Berkeley and the MFA Film Program at Columbia University. Her work is characterized by strong female protagonists.

Her first book, *Mama*, was self-promoted. She achieved national attention in 1992 with her third novel, *Waiting to Exhale*, which remained on The New York Times bestseller list for many months. Forest Whitaker turned it into a film in 1995. In 1998, another of McMillan's novels, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, was made into a movie. McMillan's novel *Disappearing Acts* was subsequently produced as a direct-to-cable feature.

Her last novel, *Who Asked You?*, casts an intimate look at the burdens and blessings of family and speaks to trusting your own judgment even when others don't agree.

BOOK SUMMARY

After a sudden change of plans, a remarkable woman and her loyal group of friends try to figure out what she's going to do with the rest of her life.

Loretha Curry's life is full. On the eve of her sixty-eighth birthday, she has a booming beauty supply empire, a gaggle of lifelong friends, and a husband who's still got moves that surprise. True, she's carrying a few more pounds than she should be, but she's not one of those women who thinks her best days are behind her, and she's determined to prove her mother, her twin sister, and everyone else with that outdated view of aging wrong—it's not all downhill from here.

But when an unexpected loss turns her world upside down, Loretha will have to summon all her strength, resourcefulness, and determination to keep on thriving, pursue joy, heal old wounds, and chart new paths. With a little help from her friends, of course.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some challenges that the woman faced in the book?
2. Why was Loretha — who goes by Lo — dreading the celebration?
3. What did you think of Odessa, Lo's sister?
4. What would your reaction be if a family member stole from your parent?
5. Was Lo's relationship with her daughter realistic, explain?
6. Describe Lo's friendship circle.
7. What did you think of Carl and discovering he had a son?
8. The book's chapters are short and brisk, did you like this style of writing?
9. When Jalecia asks her mother what she's learned in her 69 years of living, Lo doesn't know how to respond at first. What did you think of her responses once she gathered her thoughts?

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