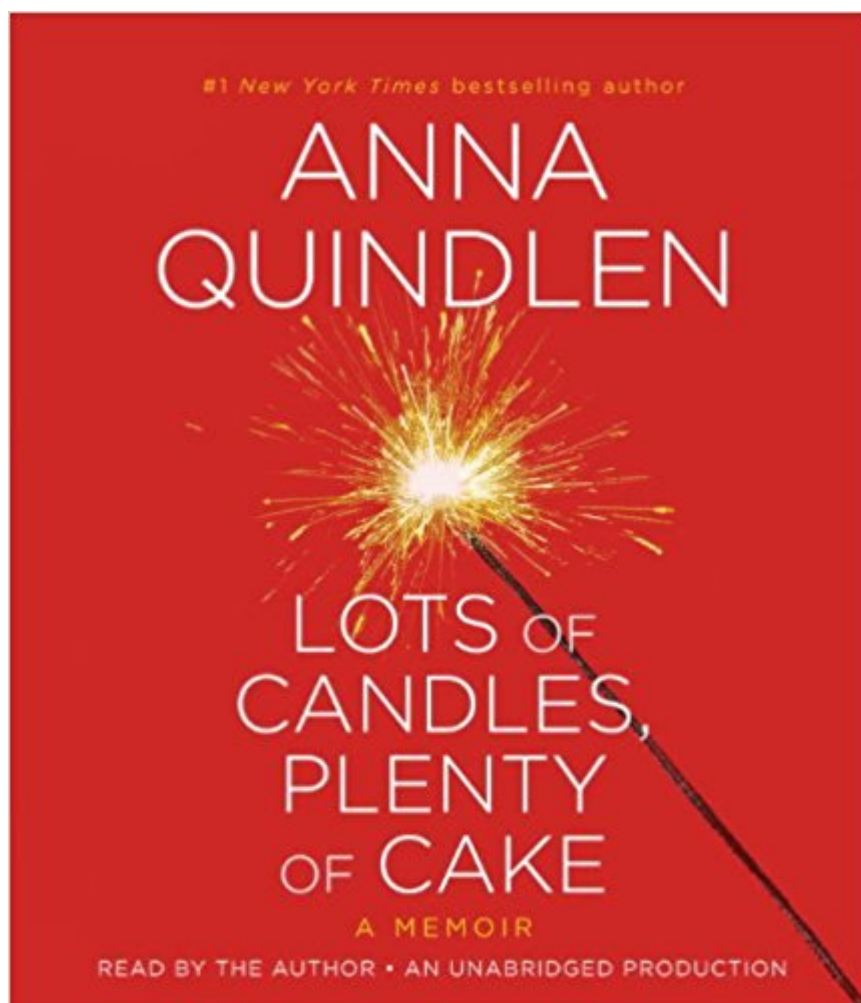


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# Lots Of Candles, Plenty Of Cake: A Memoir Of A Woman's Life



## Synopsis

In this irresistible memoir, the New York Times bestselling author and winner of the Pulitzer Prize Anna Quindlen writes about looking back and ahead—and celebrating it all—as she considers marriage, girlfriends, our mothers, faith, loss, all the stuff in our closets, and more. As she did in her beloved New York Times columns, and in *A Short Guide to a Happy Life*, Quindlen says for us here what we may wish we could have said ourselves. Using her past, present, and future to explore what matters most to women at different ages, Quindlen talks about

**Marriage:** “A safety net of small white lies can be the bedrock of a successful marriage. You wouldn’t believe how cheaply I can do a kitchen renovation.”

**Girlfriends:** “Ask any woman how she makes it through the day, and she may mention her calendar, her to-do lists, her babysitter. But if you push her on how she really makes it through her day, she will mention her girlfriends. Sometimes I will see a photo of an actress in an unflattering dress or a blouse too young for her or with a heavy-handed makeup job, and I mutter, ‘She must not have any girlfriends.’”

**Stuff:** “Here’s what it comes down to, really: there is now so much stuff in my head, so many years, so many memories, that it’s taken the place of primacy away from the things in the bedrooms, on the porch. My doctor says that, contrary to conventional wisdom, she doesn’t believe our memories flag because of a drop in estrogen but because of how crowded it is in the drawers of our minds. Between the stuff at work and the stuff at home, the appointments and the news and the gossip and the rest, the past and the present and the plans for the future, the filing cabinets in our heads are not only full, they’re overflowing.”

**Our bodies:** “I’ve finally recognized my body for what it is: a personality-delivery system, designed expressly to carry my character from place to place, now and in the years to come. It’s like a car, and while I like a red convertible or even a Bentley as well as the next person, what I really need are four tires and an engine.”

**Parenting:** “Being a parent is not transactional. We do not get what we give. It is the ultimate pay-it-forward endeavor: We are good parents not so they will be loving enough to stay with us but so they will be strong enough to leave us.”

From childhood memories to manic motherhood to middle age, Quindlen uses the events of her own life to illuminate our own. Along with the downsides of age, she says, can come wisdom, a perspective on life that makes it satisfying and even joyful. Candid, funny, moving, *Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake* is filled with the sharp insights and revealing observations that have long confirmed Quindlen’s status as America’s laureate of real life. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for Anna Quindlen ["A reporter by training, a storyteller at heart, \[Quindlen's\] writing is personal, humorous, and thought-provoking."](#) [The Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#) ["Quindlen is an astonishingly graceful writer."](#) [San Francisco Examiner](#) ["Thank goodness for Anna Quindlen. \[She\] is smart. And compassionate. And witty. And wise."](#) [Detroit Free-Press](#) ["Quindlen is\] America's resident sane person."](#) [The New York Times](#)

Anna Quindlen is a novelist and journalist whose work has appeared on fiction, nonfiction, and self-help bestseller lists. Her book *A Short Guide to a Happy Life* has sold more than a million copies. While a columnist at *The New York Times* she won the Pulitzer Prize and published two collections, *Living Out Loud* and *Thinking Out Loud*. Her *Newsweek* columns were collected in *Loud and Clear*. She is the author of six novels: *Object Lessons*, *One True Thing*, *Black and Blue*, *Blessings*, *Rise and Shine*, and *Every Last One*.

At age 60, Anna Quindlen has already had plenty of candles and birthday cake, but she wants more. A lot more. Her own mother died in her early 40s, when Anna was just nineteen. That early loss has made her grateful for every additional year she gets that her mother was denied. Anna's gratitude is the common ingredient that ties together these ruminations of an aging feminist baby boomer. She seems amazed, even somewhat astonished, at how fortunate she has been. She has

reached an age where she can look back and recognize the combination of ambition and serendipity that allowed her to "have it all" in terms of marriage, motherhood, career, and friendship. These essays will of course have the most appeal for those in Quindlen's age range whose life paths have somewhat paralleled hers. But if you've read her work before, you know she always shares observations and wisdom that are universally relevant. I like her spunk. I like her honesty. Most of all, I like the way she always manages to say the things I feel but cannot put into words. I recommend the book for all connoisseurs of life.

Delightful read that focuses on the process of a woman aging. I asked my niece who is in the nursing program at college: At what age are people considered old? She responded with two thoughts: textbook information or my opinion. Both. Textbook claims when one receives social security and medicare. Her personal thought was when a person is no longer able to go about daily routine nor take care of oneself. That was just one of the thoughts that caused me to ponder while reading this book. Enjoyable memoir.

Anna Quindlan never disappoints and that continues with *Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake*. As far back as her New York Times column, *Life in the 30's*, this remarkable writer with an unprecedented ability to observe her surroundings has again done just that and again the subject is her own life. She was "shaky and unsure" that her NY Times column would resonate with the world outside her own home's walls (all the while striking a loud chord with readers from across the nation whose lives might seem so different from Anna Quindlan's). This testament to the humble manner she regards her talent makes her seem approachable and made of every day stuff. These stories serve as another glimpse into the life of a woman not unlike the reader's. One feels "she is just like me" and so we are reading about the life we might have led; this lies in sharp contrast to the biographies of well known personalities whose lives we can hardly imagine or relate to. Anna Quindlan is us and you will love what she sees and hope you can develop the same lens through which she sees such mundane and common events. Pick this book up, you won't be able to put it down, then you will be ordering the rest of her writings and learning even more about your life!

Because Quindlen and I are about the same age, her youth and mine have a lot in common. I identified with many of her experiences, observations, thoughts, etc. The book touches on events and culture relevant to the leading edge of the Baby Boomers (born in late 40s, and early 50s), but you don't have to be a boomer to appreciate the book. She also gives advice on parenting while

occupying an empty nest and on how to age gracefully, which is appropriate for our generation--the one that said, "Never trust anyone over 30." Man, has that callow slogan ever come back to bite us! Quindlen admits as much.

Beautiful writing. I think this book speaks to all women as to who we have been, and where we are... How adaptation to change is vital and enriches our lives. Anna Quindlen is a mind-reader. I am in my 80s, have friends of various ages and learn from the younger ones about today's world, as well as my contemporaries with whom I can share much history. I am very fortunate to live in a multi-cultural community and have been and am exposed to various outlooks. The book points out the many choices women now have to explore interests, to choose careers, to travel, and to grow and change.

It would be impossible to decide if "Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake," or "One True Thing," were my favorite book. Each deal with getting the most out of life because it is not limitless. This book won me over with truths that every woman must face as she goes thru life. However, the author addresses these changes with a sound philosophy that educates the reader with a new perspective. Highly recommend.

If I could write a letter to Ms. Quindlen it would go something like this: Dear Anna (in my head we are friends) Thank you for writing the book that changed me. The book that changed the way I look at my child, my work, my marriage, my age, and most importantly my life. My only question would be...WHY COULDN'T YOU HAVE WRITTEN IT SOONER??? Of course having read the book, I know the answer to that question. Because it wasn't the right TIME for her to write it. But boy was it the right time for me to read it. Some books just come into your life just when you need them. I first read "The Women's Room" by Marilyn French at 23. If you can read that as a woman and it not change your entire being, I don't know what to say. And the same for this book. Of course at 21 I don't know if I would have found it applicable (God I would love to think so) but in my 40's I sure do. And thank you thank you for writing it. For giving it to the world. Kindle is still magic to me and to me, as a writer Anna, you will always be magic too.

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