

# Why We Can't Sleep Summary

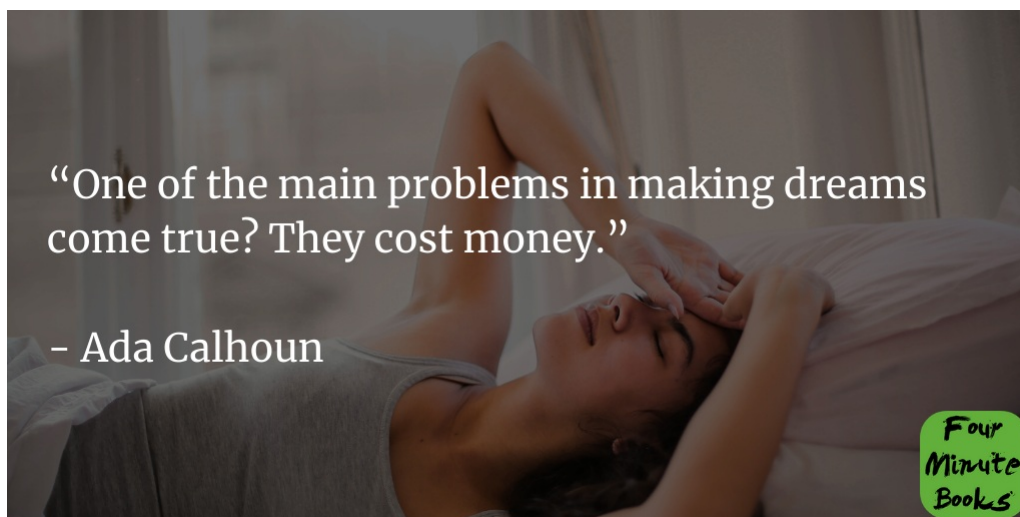
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 [fourminutebooks.com](http://fourminutebooks.com)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *Why We Can't Sleep* will help women in Generation X feel better about the challenges they face by examining the reasons why they are going through midlife crises due to poor market conditions, caring for children and elderly parents simultaneously, and facing massive amounts of discrimination.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



If you picture a midlife crisis, it probably goes something like this: a married man with a family wakes up one day and realizes he's not happy with his life so far. He'll maybe try doing something adventurous like sky-diving, buy a bright red Ferrari, and leave his wife for a younger woman.

This is how it goes for men. But what about women? Why don't we hear about their crises? Women of this age today, known as Generation X, are reaching a level of pressure that is getting pretty difficult for them to bear.

They are scared about money and receive unfair compensation for their work. They're also caring for their kids and aging parents. In her book *Why We Can't Sleep: Women's New Midlife Crisis*, Ada Calhoun brings to light this essential conversation.

Here are the 3 most interesting lessons I've learned from this book:

1. The upbringing of women of Gen X makes them have unrealistic expectations about adult life.

2. Generation X women face huge hurdles in the workplace including gender and age discrimination and juggling family life.
3. In order to come to peace with your crisis, you need to start by getting real about life.

Let's see why this perplexing situation is happening and what we can do about it!

## Lesson 1: **Generation X girls were brought up to believe they could have everything, and this is simply not true.**

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In the age of feminists, women were really excited about the progress they were making. And society was making great progress, so women were justified in being excited about everything that was available to women now.

As a result, girls raised in this time were told they could “have it all.” This meant they no longer had to be a secretary, they could be the boss. They could achieve whatever they wanted professionally and even have a great social circle and family life.

These promises came with immense pressure. **Now that girls thought they *could* do everything, they were made to feel like they *had* to do everything.** They had all of these new freedoms, and if they didn't achieve their dreams, it came down to their own failures.

But the problem was that they were things out of their control that made it hard to achieve these ambitions. One of these was successive recessions as they reached adulthood which caused job insecurity and surmounting debt. Another thing holding them back was the atmosphere in their workplace didn't change with the new gender norms.

These challenges were out of their control, but yet they feel like it's their fault life hasn't been what they dreamed. This feeling of guilt for not living up to their expectations is what is causing the midlife crises of women today.

## Lesson 2: **Women in this age group have to deal with age and gender discrimination in the workplace all while managing a family.**

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Generation X women were taught that they could and should aspire to be the CEO if that was their dream. But because gender discrimination is still rampant in the workplace, many of these women are disappointed to find themselves stuck in low-earning jobs by middle age.

The boomer generation may have bought them huge feminist gains, but the workplace statistics are still not in women's favor. **By mid-career, a man is 70% more likely to have a senior position than a woman.** By late career, that percentage jumps to a

startling 142%. Even when they have the same job as a man, they're paid less.

Though the gender wage gap seems to be closing, it's actually worse for women who are middle-aged. These women are not only facing gender discrimination but also ageism. They are now competing with Millennials, who are hard to compete with because of their reputation of being more tech-savvy.

To top all of this off, women of this generation are expected to be much more engaged in the lives of their children than previous generations.

All of their duties are placed on top of needing to work more and more as things become increasingly more expensive. The amount of work women are expected to do while working long hours at a job, seems impossible. It's no wonder they are left feeling so anxious and unable to sleep.

### **Lesson 3: You can start to feel better in your crisis by coming to terms with what life is really like, and the lies you were told.**

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So what can we do about it? Calhoun's answer is that women start coming to terms with reality. We are constantly shown perfect images on social media of people living lives more glamorous, rich, or exciting than ours. But the truth is, most women of this generation probably feel a lot like you do.

Realizing that you are not alone can help break you out of hopeless feelings of isolation. Calhoun also says that it will help to recognize just how unrealistic the ideals you grew up with were. Sure, you were told you could do and be anything you wanted. **But there were many things that hindered your accomplishments that were entirely out of your control.**

This can be empowering because when you recognize the challenges that you've had to face to get to where you are now, you will see that everything you did you accomplished against all odds. It will also help you to see *why* you are feeling the way you are.

And you can know that it's okay. Life is difficult, and feeling anxiety and depression is a normal reaction to these kinds of stresses.

Lastly, it's important to make sure you get the support you need. You can find support in friends or family, women that are experiencing the same thing, or a therapist. And always remember that time will pass and things will calm down.

## **Why We Can't Sleep Review**

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This is just crazy and so saddening that women of this generation are dealing with so much. Originally I thought *Why We Can't Sleep* would be about why everybody can't sleep, but I now know why some have it much harder than the rest. I hope that we can all have more compassion and help lift all women around us, Gen Xers or otherwise!

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## **Who would I recommend the *Why We Can't Sleep* summary to?**

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The 45-year-old husband of a woman who is having a hard time coping with everything they've got going on, the 35-year-old economist who is curious to understand how hard stock market crashes are on people, and any woman who was born between 1965 and 1980 who wants to know that everything is going to be okay.