

Introduction

A friend is someone who knows you as you are, understands where you've been, accepts who you've become, and still gently invites you to grow.

—An Anonymous Friend

Drink wine and giggle. That's all our husbands thought we did when the three of us got together for one of our *retreats*. Although the men in our lives may have been right about our earliest girlfriend get-togethers, over time we started bottling our own fun.

None of us can remember who was first to roll down that steep, grassy hill in West Virginia with all the fearlessness and abandon of a five-year-old, but whoever it was, she tapped into our common desire to roll away from the familiar. Those early experiments with the weightlessness (and nausea) of childhood eventually led to conversations in song, “Chuck-It” lists, index cards piled high with the things we love and countless other activities, the best of which have become *Drink Wine and Giggle*.

Three women with academic backgrounds in finance and marketing, we met and became friends when we worked together for the same multinational company. As our friendship grew, so did our desire to get more out of life—we wanted to make our lives more closely resemble the things we loved. All the self-help books tell you to find your passion and follow your bliss, but often your talents come so naturally to you that they don't feel like talents at all. You need a friend to tell you that you are exceptional and that your talent is worth pursuing on a grander scale. And you need more than one approach to expand your concept of who you are and what is possible—this is where *Drink Wine and Giggle* has helped us and can help you.

The activities in *Drink Wine and Giggle* broadened our perspectives, taught us a lot about our true selves and, as the self-knowledge gained from our experiences fermented, changed our lives in ways that we never expected. It's no coincidence that our lives expanded in tandem with the agendas of our girlfriend get-togethers. Through the activities we did together, we discovered a formula for personal growth that produced moments of meaning where our random yearnings and aimless

wanderings finally made sense. And we all know as women when you hit upon those *ah-ha* moments (like when you discover that you'd rather be a pastry chef than an investment banker), you have to share them with your girlfriends.

We are certainly not unique in our experience of friendship as a catalyst for life change. Women have always looked to other women for encouragement and guidance, and today the need to connect and make sense of it all is greater than ever. Whenever and wherever women get together with their girlfriends—even if it's just around the corner for an evening without husbands or children—they are responding to an urge to converge that research backs up: friendships help fight illness and depression, speed recovery, slow aging and prolong life.

When we planned our retreats we didn't know about the research data on friendships. All we knew was that whenever we got together, our lives improved. As active women caught up in careers and family obligations, we had a desire to get more out of life and more out of our limited time together. We wanted to experience lots of rejuvenating giggles, to encourage each other and to expand our horizons. So, we took our get-togethers one step further. We developed and engaged in activities based on the latest self-help advice available.

Personal growth disguised as a girlfriend get-together. Is it possible?

We discovered the answer to this question is an emphatic yes. We have found that self-improvement, like wine, is best enjoyed in moderation, with friends who can help us reach previously inaccessible places and who gently reassure us that we don't have to be the best—it's enough to simply become better than we are today. We've helped each other understand that we don't have to *do* or *have* the most, but that we can each become the best version of who we really are and have some fun along the way.

Drink Wine and Giggle (101 ways girlfriends can connect, have fun and be inspired) combines friendship with personal growth in a collection of easy-to-follow activities that have been tested and proven to turn girlfriend get-togethers into life-shifting experiences. We learned that growth can be joyfully experienced while performing a one-act play together in *A Night at the Improv*, and the proven health benefits of expressing gratitude can be multiplied when performed collectively as an exercise in *Thank You, Thank You, Thank You*. Through our funny bone experiences we discovered that the inner child could be a great teacher. The unexpected taught us that when it comes to *Horsing Around* it's best to giddy up on a carousel, and when creating *Pop Art* you should never blow into a dollar store balloon filled with blue paint. We are thrilled to be able to share our methods and experiences with you — our girlfriends we have yet to meet.

The activities in *Drink Wine and Giggle* are short projects, exercises or excursions, most of which are free. The book is divided into four sections—mind, body, soul

and funny bone—with twenty-five activities in each:

- **MIND** activities increase mental fitness through learning something new, experiencing something old and familiar in a new way or expanding the belief in what is possible to achieve;
- **BODY** activities involve beauty, fashion, nutrition and exercise. The focus is on improving health and expressing personal style;
- **SOUL** activities encourage awareness and nourishment of self and contribution to others;
- **FUNNY BONE** activities are whimsical playtimes with the inner child where silliness rules and we abandon self-consciousness.

To guide you as you plan your girlfriend time, each mind, body, soul and funny bone activity comes with helpful hints on advance preparation (if required), time to complete the activity (based on our experience) and ideal activity pairings. A brief description of the activity is followed by our *giggles*—insights, reminiscences and occasional cautionary tales, based on our hands-on experience. In addition, twenty tips (either mini-activities or suggestions to enhance your girlfriend get-togethers) are sprinkled throughout the book.

This collection is intended to be a wellspring of ideas for women who want to harness the self-betterment power of girlfriends. The perfect get-together companion, *Drink Wine and Giggle* is dedicated to encouraging new adventures, discovering fresh insights and, most of all, enjoying great times with your friends. Activities have been designed to give you the biggest bang for the smallest buck in the shortest amount of time.

Our mission is to inspire, energize and rejuvenate women in a way that will help them grow, support each other, reduce stress and have fun. It is our hope that you and your girlfriends can experience the giggles, the personal growth and the depth of friendship that the activities of *Drink Wine and Giggle* have given us. Here's to growing gently together.

Lynne, Deb & Julie