



Midlife Matters

Change for the better

Turning Midlife into the Time of Your Life!





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3. Endings

For women in particular, midlife is regularly associated with loss and things coming to an end. It's often referred to in terms of 'losing one's looks', 'the empty nest syndrome' and of course, we mustn't forget that phrase used to signal the end of our fertility - 'the change'. So it's hardly any surprise that we respond in much the same way as we do to any emotional loss – we grieve. It often **feels** like grief because it's the demise of our 'younger self' and who we were, so it's perfectly natural to find ourselves running through a whole range of emotions.... denial... anger...sadness....before eventually coming to a place of acceptance.



Let's face it - endings are difficult for most us. Even if we are unhappy with the way things are, clinging to the status quo is often preferable to closing the door on it and stepping out into the unknown. However, for a

'When one door closes, another opens. But we often look so regretfully upon the closed door that we don't see the one that has opened for us.'

Alexander Graham Bell

transition to occur, we have to deal with what's ending before we can make a new beginning. This part of the transition process is referred to in many different ways – endings, surrender, dissolving and the one perhaps most appropriate at midlife - letting go.

So where are you in the 'letting go' process? In denial? Clinging on for grim death to your visibility and significance? You're certainly not alone in trying to resist - most people fight like crazy to keep their identities from dissolving. Some of us try various diversionary tactics... some begin affairs, others turn to drink, to cosmetic surgery or the fashion industry, in a desperate bid to disguise the uncomfortable truth that a phase of our life is ending. The result of these diversionary tactics is that we become even more estranged from our real selves.

We often have to 'let go' of the important people and things that have dominated our life as we move into our middle years. It's likely that some our key defining roles have started to change - our children may be



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leaving home or needing us less, our parents may be needing us more, a marriage or partnership may need re-evaluating and to top it all, we're often dealing with the physical reminders that our fertile days are also coming to an end.

This part of the transition process IS hard and it's completely natural that we respond with sadness and a tear as we say goodbye to such a significant life stage. But let's not forget the purpose behind the pain. It is important to make peace with the things that are changing or ending so that we are ready to explore our future options unhindered by feelings of loss and resentment. The upside is, these 'endings' are nothing to do with finality – they are simply a pre-condition of self renewal and the start of a whole new chapter in our lives.

This is **not** a time to make rash decisions and if it all seems frustratingly passive, remember the cocoon! However, what you CAN do is:

- Stay positive
- Stay proactive
- Allow yourself to grieve
- Be open to **all** possibilities
- Take care of yourself - rest, exercise, have fun.
- Focus on what you **have** right now and be grateful



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Action points...



In your journal, think about what is 'ending' for you right now:

- ❖ What roles are you saying goodbye to/grieving for?
- ❖ What are you still clinging on to?
- ❖ What is it now time for you to let go of?
- ❖ Now, shift your perspective and think about what you are now *free to do*.
- ❖ What are the *lasting* rewards of having been part of these roles that you are letting go of?

As you thought about the things it is now time for you to let go of, perhaps you also noticed something stirring in you, a desire to do something new, something different with your life. You may have the feeling that something is 'out there' calling you but you're just not sure what it is or how to find it!

Welcome to **the Neutral Zone**.....