



# Managing Midlife Crisis

## IS THAT ALL THERE IS?

“IS THAT ALL THERE IS?” If that’s your theme song, then you may be experiencing a midlife crisis. You may feel that your job has lost its challenge, your spouse really has nothing new to say and you’re going nowhere fast. These feelings are all normal as you pass into middle age. How can you cope?

### Midlife Crisis

After the turbulent years of your teens, you emerged as a young adult ready to take on the world. You went to school or got special training. You went on to find a job and worked with zest at your job as you moved up the ladder. Along came a mate and excitedly you learned about love and commitment. Then you experienced the sometimes exhausting phase of babies and found most days different and full.

At middle age, you’ve finally reached a stable state at home and work where you can enjoy the fruits of your labor, but you find you’re bored, restless or depressed. Your job is routine and probably the one from which you will retire. There are few surprises in your life with your mate. Even sex has lost its appeal.

The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson says the challenge of the middle years is to bring the parts of your life to a meaningful whole. You have a strong feeling of wanting to live a life that matters and leaves something for future generations. Preventing stagnation and boredom is paramount. You feel the pressure that half of your life is gone and what have you really done? All of your chances to count for something are shrinking. That’s why you feel your life is at a roadblock.

### Physical and Emotional Changes

By middle age, your body is showing signs of aging. Your skin, hair and body shape may be forcing you to face your body’s aging process and your own mortality. The dieting and exercise of younger years doesn’t work the same magic. You came to middle age with high ideals and now disillusionment reigns. Great disappointment can be followed by depression and feelings of low self-esteem. You may feel out of control and confused.

### What to Do

Despite the upheaval of this stage, most adults weather the storm without major disruption. The goal of this stage is to use your maturity and experience to redefine your goals. You can make them more realistic and do-able. You may need to go back to school, change jobs, take a long vacation, rediscover your marriage, leave homemaking and find work or



*In weathering a midlife storm, you may need to redefine your goals. Try developing a new hobby, changing jobs or going back to school.*



develop new interests or hobbies. You can purposefully try to delete some of the boring routines that have bogged you down. Use your gift of creativity to

add some sparkle to your home and job. You’ll find your own special niche so you can get that zest back into your life.

### When to Seek Help

Because of so many disappointments, many adults try to fill their emptiness with thrills. They may find a younger mate or become promiscuous, waste money on frills, such as sports cars they can’t afford, overindulge in alcohol and other drugs or risk death by taking up dangerous hobbies. These substitutes generally don’t work and lead to worse situations. Another way of coping would be to give up, indulge in self-hate and fall into a deep depression. In either case you could benefit from professional help. You’ll find that the small pleasures in life will add up to a meaningful whole.