

Mid-Life Crisis or Opportunity?

By Mel Schwartz

The transition into mid-life often gives us cause to reflect on where our lives have gone and more importantly, where we want them to go. Prior to mid-life we likely filled our time creating and building what we thought would be the good life; nice home, loving partnerships, children, careers, friends and vacations. Although we might have achieved some of these aspirations, for many of us life still isn't as fulfilling as we would have imagined. The first half of life is typically spent constructing, acquiring and building, but with little regard to questions of meaning and purpose. As young adults we tend to move forward in an acquisitive way, focusing on the material and set upon achieving goals.

Perhaps having made some progress toward that end, by mid-life we come to question why we still aren't as happy as we ought to be. We live in a culture that bombards us with messages of material consumption, all the while devaluing matters of a more spiritual or philosophical nature. What truly makes for a joyful or meaningful life is not considered, but simply assumed. But for most people these assumptions are simply misguided. We fill ourselves up with things and live very hurried lives, but still quest in our struggle for more profound purpose. Ordinarily, it's not until we reach mid-life that we come to enough clarity to create fundamental changes in our lives. Mid-life crisis might be more aptly named mid-life opportunity.

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Many of us struggle with deeper questions of meaning and purpose, but we tend to hide it from each other. People in search of deeper meaning often upset the superficial tranquility of those around them. Why can't they be happy with what they have, others usually ask. The need to conform and the fear of moving out of the comfort zone cause us to retract in a fearful and constrictive way. This restrictive energy stifles our inner voice and blocks our quest for finding more profound meaning in our lives.

With few exceptions, most people don't contemplate the question, "What is my purpose in this life?" Yet, this is exactly the consideration that we need to look at to find our path. We all have distinct and unique purposes to manifest. Doing so requires that we step off the conveyor belt of conformity that dulls our individuality and stills our passion. In order to find our own voice we need to let go of the voices of others. These are usually voices that limit us or remind us to be cautious. Essentially, they inform us that we're not good enough, not worthy enough. We spend far too much time listening to what they say. Simply consider the expression, *they say*. Exactly who are *they*? They are a monolithic voice that instructs us to be careful and to conform. These voices lead us toward depression and mediocrity.

To open to and embrace deeper meaning we need to let go of our fears and release concerns of judgment. That may sound easier said than done, but acknowledging these barriers are at least a large step in the movement forward. It's not unlikely that following your deeper purpose in life may create a bit of turmoil, both in your own life and in those close to you. Sometimes we need to engage some struggle to be able to grow. The universe is in a state of perpetual flux, yet we relentlessly try to cling to the status quo. Entering into the flow of life permits purpose to arise.

The manner in which I'm speaking of purpose is akin to permitting your soul's voice to be heard. Whether it's a manifestation of your passion through your work, your relationships or your creativity, it links you to your higher self. Not only does this expression elevate your happiness and self-esteem, it leaves the world a better place. And it gives your life lasting meaning.

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