



## Next Chapter NEW LIFE

DOROTHY TANNAHILL MORAN

Phone: 503-621-9642  
dorothy@nextchapternewlife.com  
[www.nextchapternewlife.com](http://www.nextchapternewlife.com)



Midlife crisis – Is it real? Am I having one?

By Dorothy Tannahill Moran

Once you hear the term “midlife crisis” it conjures up an image of a pot bellied, middle aged man with a new red sports car and a young blonde babe next to him, with whom he’s having an affair. There are other back stories to that image like the fact that he’s bored with life and has spent the last six months embarrassing his kids with his attempts at appearing cool and dressing like them. We’ve all heard about these kinds of things and to some degree, we’ve seen bits and pieces of it with people that we know. So, it must be real, right?

I personally have a problem (not a big one) with that term. It’s cliché and it almost pokes fun at a phenomenon that occurs to all of us to varying degrees. The phenomena I’m talking about is that, at midlife, we make some changes. We’ve been doing that almost every decade but this one is different. The change is all encompassing as it hits all of our life. It makes us rethink the meaning of our work, the meaning of our life, and the value system we thought we had. We question our relationships, and we start, for the first time in our lives, to seriously think about how we to spend the rest of our life. It’s a mid life change for sure. I’m not sure it’s has to be a crisis. There are several experts that have studied the various changes we go through and the majorities talk about them in time periods closely aligned to decades. Obviously, as the imperfect creatures that we are, this is very approximate. We all differ.

The 20’s is the first real decade of being an adult. We may have been finishing college, but were definitely launching what would turn out to be our first career or profession. That may make it sound like we all did the choosing. In many cases, “work happened” and it turned into a career, such that it is. We were busy discovering what being a “non kid” is like. We discovered numerous things and as a result were often very idealistic during this time. As we neared the end of this decade, our thoughts turned to love.

In our 30’s, the reality of life set in. We have fell in love, got married, bought a house, had kids and acquired possessions. In this decade, we hit full speed on everything including our careers.

With that we may have developed a keen sense of ambition and were often willing to do what it takes to get ahead.

In our 40's and starting into our 50's life takes a breather. This becomes a catalyst for rethinking our lives. At this point, a number of things that we were so driven to accomplish we have accomplished. The kids are leaving home, the house is almost paid for, you hate your boss or your job, and what you haven't yet bought you don't care to get anymore. The things that were once important to you, no longer are. It doesn't mean they never were important; it's just that they aren't now. It's just that you aren't who you used to be. For the first time in your life, you have actually looked to the future and you can actually see the end in sight. You have now solidly arrived at this midlife rethink, but you really don't know what to think. You can't figure out what is important. With this, my friend, the anxiety builds. This is not a pleasant experience because we are creatures of comfort. We will do almost anything to avoid discomfort. Introspective and creative people will take pause and use this confusing time to really ask themselves the tough questions about what is now important and what will give them new purpose going forward. The less introspective they will try to dump this discomfort like a bad date. What they don't know is that this is an internal process and only they can discover the answers. The answers are not new material possessions, new family, or a big bottle of scotch. This person is developing their own garden variety midlife crisis. It's a crisis. That confusion, the need to figure out what's important, will loom indefinitely until they answer the questions.

The moral to this little ditty is that if you are 39 and counting, you must carry the knowledge that this might happen to you. If you are 40+, you may already be there. Whenever it happens to you, you must relish this time as an opportunity to contemplate what your life ahead will be. Sure, it's hard work to figure out what you want to do when you grow up. It was when you were 18, and things haven't changed. But now, with experience and some maturity, you've got more in your toolkit to answer those questions. You must also acknowledge that this won't be comforting to you until you figure it out, but you will. Once you do pure excitement awaits you. You have to learn and grow. Read. Talk to people. Find your passion. Your passion won't find you.