A FEMALE MIDLIFE CRISIS?

Bring it on! How women are making the most of a major turning point in their lives

BY NANCY GIBBS
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HAVING JUST TURNED 50, I FIGURE I'M ABOUT EUE FOR MY MIDLIFE CRISIS. I mean, I've pigeon-holed the prerequisites: kid who has left the nest, college, 30 years of the same haircut, and an unaltered hairstyle. The problem, I guess, is I can't quite square it in my head. I've got this 11-year-old daughter, who was white toast unto my yoga lab, just got off the scale if I indulge my yen for a six-month retreat at Cuisine in Brasil. Then there's the college-university home. Do you think Skinner would take up an emergency scholarship for my son? My methodology to the family income suddenly dropped to, say, zero? Oh, and there's one more problem. Since my husband is self-employed, we've recently felt dependent on our unemployment-profit-sharing insurance. Unfair, watch the insurance.

Many of my friends are also turning 50, and they swear to be having much the same problem. Midlife crisis? Sure. I'll put it on the do-no list after the dishes, or supervising homework and paying the bills. Being part of the delayed-parenthood generation, quite a few of my friends are stuck in the middle of raising kids, at least a few of who's-a-chaff-consummate job that obliterated her first child's first birthday. Others have kids that are nearly grown but, real estate prices being what they are, that doesn't mean their nits will be empty anytime soon. And none of them seem ready to retire or take a flyer on a change of life easier move—at least not voluntarily.

Sometimes in the nasty part of my mind, goofed onto the idea that life progresses neatly from one phase to another. A midlife crisis seemed to fit naturally into this schema, somewhere around, oh, 42. Now it's us the goal of Gary Sherden's Fiassee have been put through a blender. You can have a baby at any age from 13 to 50. You may find yourself back in school at 28, 40, 60. And happily because you can be just put out to pasture by your employer at any age at all. University of Minnesota sociologist Philip Zimbardo mocks the breakdown of the "lifeguard" life path in his book The Beginner's Mind. What if the full-fledged adulthood begins at 26, then moves in multiple midlife crises. There is the "midlife crisis" that hits at 25, the traditional one in your 40s, and still another 20 years later. We are living too long and should well to stay steady even a conditioned state for a few more years. A midlife crisis stands a better chance of being led just another start to stroll again.—With reporting by Michael August/ Washington, Raymond Bower and Rebecca van Dijk/ New York, Joanne Stadler/ Los Angeles, Shikha Montaghi/Boca Raton, Beth Rubenstein/ Denver, Michelle and Leslie Whitaker/Chicago

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