



WORKBOOK:
Making Sense of Her
Midlife Crisis
(and what you can do about it)

Overview

This workbook is broken up into three parts.

The first part is a **midlife crisis quiz** that will help you identify how severe your wife's midlife crisis is.

Then, we'll use your quiz score to **identify what "level" of midlife crisis your wife is having**. You'll learn about the 3 types of midlife crises and **how your wife is thinking** during each.

Finally, we'll finish with a look at what you can actually **DO** to **help your wife move past her midlife crisis** and finally come back to your marriage.



Part 1.

The Midlife Crisis Quiz

Warning: *This quiz is not intended to enable blame-shifting or to lay the responsibility for your marriage on your wife. The purpose of this quiz is to help you figure out where your wife's head at, to help you better empathize with how she feels about the marriage, and to help you identify what your options are for coping with her newfound lifestyle while optimizing your chances of repairing the marriage.*

Step 1. Take the Midlife Crisis Quiz

Instructions: *In each question, you will be given a series of three statements. Circle which one best applies to your wife or marriage. If none of the statements match what's happening in your marriage, do not circle any and skip to the next question.*

Question 1 – What is her stance on the marriage?

- A. My wife doesn't know whether she wants out of the marriage or not.
- B. My wife says that she wants out of the marriage, but hasn't done anything about it.
- C. My wife wants out of the marriage and has either moved out, asked for a divorce or has filed paperwork.

Question 2 – How does she spend her time?

Compare how much time your wife spends at home now compared to before the suspected midlife crisis first started. If she is already out of the house, circle C.

- A. My wife is home as much as she normally is, but she is much less engaged with me when she's home.
- B. My wife is out of the house for a few extra hours every week.
- C. My wife is out of the house 10 or more extra hours per week. You feel like you hardly ever see her.

Question 3 – Any extramarital relationships that you know of?

This question is not intended to encourage speculation. Base your answer only on what you've seen or on hard evidence you have; not on what you suspect.

- A. My wife is not having any extramarital relationships that I know of.
- B. My wife is having an emotional affair, but it's the type where she still insists "We're just friends".
- C. My wife is actively going on dates or is openly having either an emotional or physical affair.

Question 4 – Does your wife know what she wants out of life?

- A. My wife does not know what she wants out of life and has started looking for answers outside the marriage.
- B. My wife does not know what she wants out of life, but she *is* sure that the marriage is NOT part of it.
- C. My wife DOES know what she wants out of life, and it's to be single and free (or something else totally opposite of being married).

Question 5 – How happy or content is your wife inside the marriage?

- A. My wife says that she's unhappy, but she doesn't know why.
- B. My wife says she's unhappy, but she seems to have found something outside the marriage that she believes does/will make her happy.
- C. My wife says she's unhappy, but it goes one step further... She is fully convinced I am the one that made her unhappy and she makes sure I know just how unhappy she is. If she has found happiness outside the marriage, it has come at the cost of those around her (not including you, eg. her kids, parents, old social group, etc.).

Question 6 – What are her reasons for wanting space, or for wanting out of the marriage? (or for not being sure)

- A. She doesn't really have any concrete reasons, she just knows she wants out. (eg. she's said something like, "I love you but I'm not IN love with you.")
- B. She has superficial reasons that could be easily fixed. (eg. she's said you don't do the dishes, or that you never ask about her day)
- C. She has superficial reasons, but she's really mean in how she presents them. OR she has a really big reason that can't be easily fixed. (eg. I can't trust you, you had an affair, I'm tired of being tied down, I hate you)

Question 7 – How engaged is she with the kids?
(skip if not applicable)

Here we're talking about how much love and attention your wife gives your kids compared to the amount that she gave them a few months ago before her midlife crisis took hold.

- A. My wife is equally as engaged or more engaged with the kids than she was before.
- B. My wife is noticeably less engaged with the kids than she was before.
- C. My wife has completely stopped trying to spend time with kids. In fact, it almost seems like she avoids it.

Question 8 – How willing is she to work on the marriage?

- A. She says that she's willing to work on the marriage or give things a chance, or perhaps she is willing to attend counseling, but she doesn't actually ever commit to making changes.
- B. She is not willing to work on the marriage; perhaps she says stuff like "*There is no point*" or "*I already gave the marriage too many chances*".
- C. She actively pushes away from the marriage at every opportunity. (eg. she is constantly mean, does things that damage the marriage, or has asked or filed for divorce)

Question 9 – How does she feel about you?

- A. She's giving you the standard, *"I love you but I'm not in love with you"* or maybe something like, *"I'll always love you as a father and friend, but not as a lover"* or even *"There's just no feelings or passion left."*
- B. She's giving you the cold shoulder. Trying to have a conversation with her is difficult because she is so unresponsive. She ignores your texts, calls and emails.
- C. She is downright nasty and mean. Almost every conversation turns into an argument, or you have to walk away because she's being so hurtful.

Question 10 – What is your sex life like?

- A. We still have sex occasionally or rarely, but not nearly as much as we used to.
- B. We do not have sex at all, or if we ever have sex, my wife is very reluctant. She may say things like, *"Let's get this over with"*.
- C. We do not have sex and my wife has told me we will not have sex or that she doesn't ever want to.

Question 11 – Is she involved in new social groups?

- A. My wife has not joined any new social groups that I know of.
- B. My wife has found a new social group that she's spent a lot of time with. (eg. CrossFit, work friends, college/high school friends)
- C. My wife has found a new social group that she spends ALL her free time with, perhaps even spending nights away from the house. (eg. she goes to overnight parties, or stays over at people's houses, or frequently goes on overnight/weekend trips)

Question 12 – Is she struggling with depression?

- A. My wife does not show any signs of depression or discontent.
- B. My wife is not depressed that I know of, but she is definitely discontent.
- C. My wife is depressed, either according to the diagnosis of a mental health professional or according to her own words and actions.

Question 13 – Does your wife have any big regrets about her life or past choices she’s made?

- A. My wife has not mentioned or expressed any regrets that I know of.
- B. My wife SEEMS like she regrets something in her life – whether it’s giving up a career, or losing a past relationship, or moving to a new location – but hasn’t said anything about it.
- C. My wife has said that she absolutely regrets getting married, having kids, moving, etc. Perhaps she’s gone so far as to say the marriage was a sham from the beginning and that she never loved you.

Question 14 – How much space does she want?

- A. My wife has asked for space, but not a separation.
- B. My wife has asked for a “domestic” separation (still live together).
- C. My wife has asked for an “official” separation (living apart) or divorce.

Question 15 – Have her decisions or actions hurt other people (and does she show remorse)?

- A. My wife has not done anything that had big negative consequences on someone *besides* herself and the marriage. If she has, she has shown remorse.
- B. My wife has done things that really hurt me (above and beyond just wanting space, which is always hurtful), and she did not show any remorse.
- C. My wife has done things that hurt our kids, her friends or her family and does not show any remorse.

Step 2. Score Your Results

Scoring your quiz results is simple. A's are worth 1 point, B's are worth 2 points and C's are worth 3 points. If you did *not* circle an answer for any of the questions, then that would obviously count as zero points!

So, here's what you do...

Go through and count how many times you circled each letter, then multiply that by the number of points that letter is worth:

- How many times did I circle A: _____ x 1 point = _____ points
- How many times did I circle B: _____ x 2 points = _____ points
- How many times did I circle C: _____ x 3 points = _____ points

Then put your total points below:

Total Points: _____



Part 2.

3 Levels of Midlife Crisis & What to Expect From Each

The questions above and the three types of midlife crisis listed below are all based on my experience seeing countless men and women go through these types of midlife crises over my years running Husband Help Haven.

This is far from an expert psychological analysis of your wife's current emotional or mental well-being. *Disclaimer: The advice you'll read here is not intended to replace the advice of a trained therapist or counselor.*

That being said, in my experience, **just about every midlife crisis I've seen falls into one of these three "levels"**.

Your quiz score is intended to help guide you in figuring out what kind of midlife crisis your wife is having. However, as you're reading through each of these archetypes, you should **use your own common sense too**.

For example, if you scored 23 points on the quiz (which would *barely* put your wife at a Level 2 midlife crisis), but you really think she better fits the description of a Level 1, then trust your own judgment over the quiz score. **You're encouraged to give your wife the benefit of the doubt.**

On the fence between two levels? Go for the lower one until you're proven otherwise.

With that out of the way, let's quickly overview the 3 midlife crisis levels and then dive into a detailed description for each one:

Level I. The Confused Midlife Crisis (0 to 20 points)

Honestly, if your wife falls in this category, "midlife crisis" probably isn't the best word to describe where she's at. She's trying to figure things out, she may not know what she wants, but she's not making unhealthy or chaotic decisions, so "crisis" probably isn't the right word. Level I is a baseline for the other two levels.

Level II. The Stereotypical Midlife Crisis (21 to 35 points)

This is where we get into the dictionary definition of a midlife crisis. Big changes in behavior, big push away from the marriage, and big shifts in priorities are all things you should look for in Level II.

Level III. The Aggressive Midlife Crisis (36 to 45 points)

If your wife scores at Level III, you probably didn't need this quiz to tell you that she's going through an internal crisis of some sort. This is where you'll start seeing really destructive, chaotic behavior in your wife without a hint of remorse or responsibility.

Even if you already knew your wife was going through a crisis of some sort, reading through the descriptions for each level should give you a clearer picture of how your wife is thinking, and will help set the foundation for how you should cope with it.



Level I. The Confused Midlife Crisis

Scored 0 to 20 points

Like we said in the overview, characterizing this as a “midlife crisis” is probably a little too harsh.

At this level, **your wife isn’t emotionally or mentally unhealthy**. Yes, she may not know what she wants, but at the same time she’s not on a warpath to figure out what exactly she DOES want.

This “soft” midlife crisis is characterized by an **overall lack of direction**.

In the blog post about [why your wife is having a midlife crisis](#), you learned that your wife’s current mentality goes back to a lack of fulfillment.

That’s what your wife is feeling right now – she doesn’t feel fulfilled in the marriage. Maybe the marriage isn’t the real reason for that, but at this point she can’t be too sure.

That being said, if she’s at this level, then **she still values the marriage on some level** and she appreciates the time, love and commitment that she’s invested into this relationship and family.

In other words, she's not ready to throw everything away, but she's also curious what's out there.

Your wife has probably asked for space. Probably not a full-on separation, because like we said, she's not adamantly AGAINST the marriage... She just doesn't have much interest in fixing it. Even if you're going to counseling, it probably feels like you never make any progress.



Level II. The Stereotypical Midlife Crisis

Scored 21 to 35 points

This is probably what most of us think of when we think of a “midlife crisis”.

As we said in the overview, this is where we start seeing big changes in behavior and demeanor. There is no doubt that she is pushing away from the marriage.

Honestly, this type of midlife crisis is very similar to the type you’d see depicted in a TV show or movie, although it’s not at all entertaining when you’re the one living through it.

At this point, **she is pushing away the way from the marriage because, while she still doesn’t exactly know what she wants, she *does* know that the marriage has made her unhappy.**

At this point, she probably believes that there is NO chance she can be happy as long as she is still married.

There are a few common behavior patterns that I have seen in wives who are going through this type of midlife crisis:

First, there is so much distance between your wife's heart and the marriage that the **distance has started to manifest itself physically**. She probably spends much more time than she used to away from home.

In many cases, this extra **time away from home is spent with a new social group** that she has identified herself with.

Joining a new social group makes perfect sense when you think about what is happening in your wife's heart when she's going through a midlife crisis...

She feels like she has no purpose, or like she has no identity that she can call her own. **Joining a new social group allows her to adopt a new identity** which feels really, really good. A new identity is a fresh start, and this new identity is probably serving as a way of helping her escape her current unhappiness.

Some typical social groups you might see your wife join up with include:

- CrossFit or a new gym
- An outdoor activity group such as a biking or hiking club (or another hobby group)
- Old high school or college friends (many of whom are likely divorced)
- Single/divorced work colleagues
- Frequently going out to bars, clubs or parties

Some other ways your wife might get away from the house is by getting much more involved at work, eg. volunteering for extra business trips, projects or meetings.

Of course, if there is an affair of any sort, she'll spend a lot of time on her phone or Facebook and "distance" herself from the marriage that way. If your wife is not outright having an emotional affair, she may still be more welcome to platonic male friends than she used to be.

Disclaimer: Don't assume that just because your wife is in this category that she's having an emotional or physical affair. There would be other signs if that were the case.

No matter what specifically she's doing, **her goal is to have fun and feel good.**

Many times, she will be using her new social group to help her go back to a time before the marriage, or to take advantage of what she believes are missed opportunities.

Internally, your wife is probably telling herself this is the first time in her life she has ever done anything for herself, and that

she deserves the freedom to do what she wants and to feel good.

Because of this mindset, if she ever does anything that hurts you, she will show little to no remorse.

In her mind, you deserve it because you have been the benefactor of her selfless generosity for all the years that you've been married, and now it's her turn to feel good at your expense. She may not have literally thought those thoughts, but no matter the reason, she is now prioritizing her happiness far above your own.

Many times, at this point your wife will have outright asked for a separation. It will probably be a **“domestic” separation** to start with... The kind where **she wants to label your relationship as separated, but isn't yet ready to live separately.**



Level III. The Aggressive Midlife Crisis

Scored 36 to 45 points

There is a blurry line between a Level II and Level III midlife crisis. The biggest difference is in just how far your wife will go to push away from the marriage.

Even if you scored in the Level III point-range, I highly encourage you to read through this carefully before assuming this is where your wife is at.

As I said earlier, use your own commonsense and judgment, and give your wife the benefit of the doubt. *The purpose of this description is NOT to give you an excuse to mope around feeling sorry for yourself, or to give you a reason to dislike or push away from your wife.*

That being said, **this is by far the most difficult type of midlife crisis to overcome.** Not just because this is the one where your wife is most distant from the marriage, but also because at this point your wife is probably doing some very destructive and hurtful things to you, your kids and perhaps even her own family without so much as a hint of remorse.

She is pushing away from everything that she feels is a responsibility or an obligation in an effort to truly be free and, in her eyes, happy. And she's doing it in a destructive, extreme and chaotic way.

Here are some examples of Level III midlife crisis behavior that I've seen over the years:

- I've seen more than one wife in a Level III midlife crisis walk out the door and never come back, leaving husband and kids alike devastated.
- I've seen a wife going through this kind of crisis move out of the house to live with another man without bothering to get a divorce first.
- I've even seen wives (and yes I do mean that plural) call the police on their own husbands with accusations of violence, all to force them out of the house and out of their lives. And these were cases where I KNOW there was no domestic abuse of any kind!

Granted these are pretty extreme cases. But, **these examples illustrate just how much your wife's behavior and personality can change** in this level of midlife crisis.

Usually, at the very least what happens is that **your wife becomes very combative.**

She refuses to work on the marriage or go to counseling. In fact, she refuses to do ANYTHING that isn't what *she* wants to do.

She won't listen or take responsibility, to the point that **she would rather work hard to NOT work on the marriage than work on the marriage at all.**

Chances are, **most discussions devolve into a fight or argument...** She simply can't talk kindly to you because she is so filled with resentment.

Even if she hasn't already moved out, **in her mind she is done with the marriage.** She is telling herself that she's single, even if technically she is still married.

In many cases, your wife will either be openly having an emotional or physical affair, or she is starting to date. At the very least, she is open to a new relationship, and, while she may tell you that she's not going to do anything "serious", she's also not going to keep herself from getting involved with another man.

Unlike Level II where your wife is still looking for happiness and trying new things, at Level III she probably HAS identified something that she believes makes her happy...And that includes complete freedom at any cost, especially if that cost is one that *you* have to pay for. Anything to get back at you for wasting so many years of her life.



Part 3.

How to Handle Your Wife's Midlife Crisis

We spent the first two thirds of this workbook talking about what kind of midlife crisis your wife is having. Now that you have a better idea of where her head is at, let's talk about what you can actually DO about your wife's midlife crisis.

I'll start with one last disclaimer that I am not a psychologist or a mental health expert, and my advice is not meant to replace or override that of a trained professional.

I'll also tell you up front that **you should NOT try and convince your wife that she's having a midlife crisis**. Here are three reasons why this is a really, really bad idea:

1. For one, she won't believe it and she won't be convinced.
2. For two, it will only push her further away because she'll feel like you're trying to change her.
3. Three, she will feel like you're shifting the blame onto her for the problems in the marriage.

Step One, Let Her Go

This is the single most important thing you *must* do if your wife is going through a midlife crisis.

If you don't let her go, if you're not willing to give her the space she wants, then guess what?

She's going to push and push and push until she gets the space she wants.

If you're dealing with a Level II or Level III midlife crisis, and even with many Level I's, it is of the utmost importance that you do not try to "convince" your wife to come back.

Through reading the accounts of people who have personally lived out real, hardcore midlife crisis... In other words, the people who actually make those destructive decisions in an effort to find identity ... Their story almost includes statements like the ones below, especially when they end up coming back to the marriage:

- "I just needed to get it out of my system."
- "I'm so glad my spouse gave me the freedom to do my own thing because otherwise I would have pushed away even harder."
- "I knew I was making a mistake at the time, but it was a mistake that I had to make for myself."

Sometimes, these midlife crisis sufferers will end up coming back to their marriage and family after a period of time enjoying the space they believed they needed.

Sometimes, they won't.

Either way, smothering your wife and keeping her from getting the space she wants is the best way to make her want it even more.

Again, this is ESPECIALLY true in a Level II or Level III midlife crisis.

Even in a Level I "midlife crisis", you should still be ready to give your wife space if she asks for it...

Yes, at Level I she may be more receptive to rational conversation about the marriage, and that "space" she's asking for may never lead to anything, but it is still important that

you be willing to give it to her if she asks. Not giving a Level I midlife crisis any space is a good way to push that Level I up to a Level II.

Recognize You Can't Force Her to Solve This Problem

One of the things that stuck out to me as I was researching midlife crises is that ultimately, **your wife is the only one that can fix these internal issues** that are causing her to want out of the marriage.

Many times, the best thing you can do is simply stop doing things that push her away.

If your wife is going through a midlife crisis, then it means that there are some deep, internal problems on her part that she is going to have to work through on her own before she will be able to come back to the marriage.

Remember, a midlife crisis ultimately goes back to a lack of purpose and fulfillment.

Guess what?

Purpose is a very big thing to be missing from your life, and it goes far beyond the scope of just your marriage.

This means that, while yes, you should absolutely be working hard to improve yourself as a husband and to try and find ways to make your wife's life better, you also need to recognize that you cannot FORCE your wife to fix these problems... At least not in the timeline that you would like.

Here are some things you CAN do (because they're under your control):

- You can give her an incentive to come back by being a better, more appealing husband...
- You can show her that the marriage and family makes you happy, so that hopefully she will see that and believe those things can make her happy too (more on that below)...
- You can offer to pay for counseling or therapy. If you do this, simply offer it with no explanation... Certainly don't tell her you think counseling will help her work through her midlife crisis!
- You can give her all the space she wants...

... But **even if you do all those things, it is still HER that must identify what's missing from her life and figure out how to put it into place.** And this process is typically only accomplished through trial and error.

This means she's going to have to make some mistakes before she'll be able to recognize that your marriage CAN be fulfilling and joyful, especially when you're married to a good husbandly leader.

Even if you could somehow figure out exactly what she needs to do, feel and hear in order to come back to the marriage...

... Even if you could somehow lay out the answer right in front of her...

... She *still* has to be the one to actually pick up that answer and apply it to her life.

So, the single best thing you can do when your wife is going through a midlife crisis is recognize that she CANNOT and WILL NOT be controlled. If she is dead-set on pushing away from the marriage, then you may be able to stall her, but you can't stop her.

Eventually you have to relinquish control over your marriage and give your wife the space she wants.

Show Her the Marriage is Fulfilling

& You Have No Regrets

(outside of not being a better husband)

We already touched on this a little bit...

One of your big goals moving forward needs to be to show your wife that you absolutely DO find your marriage fulfilling, and that you would NOT go back and change the life choices that led you to get married, even if you could.

Yes, you might change YOUR part in the marriage – for example, you might have put more effort into being a better, more attentive husband – but you would NEVER want to go back and erase the marriage as a whole.

She needs to know that no matter what happens, you have enjoyed being married to her and you will cherish the years that you spent together. Show her that her

perception of unfulfillment is just that – a perception – and that you see things in a completely different light.

Does that make sense?

Basically, once your wife can see how the marriage could be fulfilling... Once she sees that this midlife crisis is just a phase... That's when your marriage will be able to be repaired.

The hard part is that these are things that you can't really say to your wife... You have to *show* them to her slowly over time.

Have Kids?

You Better Be Stepping Up as a Father

Especially in a Level II or Level III midlife crisis, **it is very common for your wife to push away from her kids just as much as her husband.** So, during this time it is very important that you step up as a father in order to carry that extra burden left behind by your wife's absence.

Be more engaged, more loving and more present than you've ever been with your kids, and **expect nothing in return.**

This is what your kids *need* right now, so even though it may not be fair, it's what you *must* do as the father and leader of your family. And if you have a history of not being a very present father, maybe it's not so unfair after all.

Plus, stepping up as a father is a good way to show your wife that a marriage with you doesn't have to be filled with overwhelming responsibility; that two people can share responsibility and work together to make parenting both fulfilling and fun.

Even though proving yourself to your wife shouldn't be the reason that you're doing it (more on that below), by stepping up as a father... By doing MORE than your fair share of parenting while your wife is figuring things out... **You show her that you are capable of putting her needs above your own, even if there is no reward for doing so.**

Work On Yourself

For the Sake of Yourself

While your wife is taking this time of her life to figure out what makes her happy, you should be using this time to identify ways that you can be a better husband, father and leader.

The trick here is that you **MUST** be making these positive changes in yourself for your own sake – so that you will be happier with the man you see in the mirror.

You should NOT be making these changes because you are secretly trying to get your wife back.

This is what's called an **ulterior motive**, and it is one of the best ways to keep your wife distant from the marriage.

When you have ulterior or hidden motives behind the changes that you're making in yourself as a husband, it makes it impossible for your wife to find any of those changes appealing.

This is why step one **MUST** be to let your wife go and recognize that in a big way, the future of the marriage is in her hands.

Your mindset needs to be in-line with this statement:

"I am going to work hard to become the best husband I can be so that I am happy with the man I see in the mirror. But, ultimately I want my wife to be happy and I know that she is NOT happy right now. I believe that I can make her happy again if she gives me the chance, but at the same time I recognize that I cannot ask for that chance right now.

"If she believes she can be happier outside the marriage, I will respect that. If she sees and likes these changes I'm making and wants to come back, then I will work even harder to make sure I never lose her again. Either way, I will stay in control of myself and do my best to be happy with or without her."

See, as long as your wife believes that you are trying to get her back or to change her mind about the marriage, then she is going to see everything that you do as being done with an ulterior motive. The reason that you **MUST** let her go is because when you truly

relinquish control over her choices, you give her the freedom to see you through an unbiased lens.

In other words, by NOT trying to change her mind and get her back, you actually make it more likely that she WILL change her mind and come back.

What's Next?

At this point, you should have a solid idea of where your wife's head is at and how it got there. You also know how your wife is thinking about the marriage and what you can do to help her get through her midlife crisis.

If her midlife crisis has already started pulling the marriage toward separation, that's the next thing to wrap your head around.

The Separation Roadmap is a free guide that helps you identify what stage of separation you're in and what to focus on right now. If you're not sure what your next step should be, start here.

[Get the free Separation Roadmap](#)

Is there anything else you'd like to know about your wife's midlife crisis? Did I leave something out of this workbook? Do you agree/disagree with anything I said here?

Whether you've got feedback on this workbook or you have questions about your marriage, you're always welcome to shoot me an email at inside@husbandhelphaven.com. I'm always happy to help anyway that I can, but please give me a few days to get back to you.

I hope you've learned something from this workbook and thanks for reading!

Much manly love,

- Stephen