



When Life Falls Apart

Your Guide to Soulfully and Powerfully
Navigating a Challenging Midlife Transition

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WELCOME TO MY EBOOK, WHEN LIFE FALLS APART!

I wrote this book specifically to **help you understand what is transpiring at the deeper level of your soul during a challenging midlife life transition**. In this eBook, I share with you how to navigate this time gracefully and powerfully.

Sometimes it seems that everything in life is working against you and that things are occurring outside of your control. During these difficult times, your ego—your psyche—can struggle to let go and adapt. Attached to the role, situations and circumstances of our lives, our ego can catapult us into fear, anger, frustration and even depression when life starts to implode.

I know. My life fell apart twice during my midlife transition, and until I learned the deeper purpose of these incredibly challenging times, I would be hurled into fear, confusion and depression. I experienced several “Dark Nights of the Soul,” where I truly felt life had abandoned me. These experiences were excruciating and heart-wrenching; at times I was not sure if I would emerge. Fortunately, I survived! Through patience, compassion, understanding and a lot of support, I rebuilt my life into a joyous, more fulfilling and more purposeful expression.

What I learned from my transitions and two decades of coaching others through difficult transitions is that there is a deeper purpose and process to these challenging passages. There is a way to navigate these difficult times with greater ease and understanding.

The truth is...

Your soul knows the way even when your ego doesn't.

That is the reason I wrote this book...for YOU. Your soul—the essence of who you are—has wisdom and guidance for you if you know how to hear its whispers. This eBook can help you learn how to hear and how to trust your soul during the difficult time of midlife when your life seems to be falling apart.

My wish for you is that this book is **a companion on your journey**. In truth, these difficult times are great opportunities to bring out a fuller and more glorious expression of who you were designed to be and the life your soul was meant to live!

After you read this eBook, if you'd like to talk, I'd be honored to speak with you. Send me an email and we can schedule a time!

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THE FIRST TIME MY LIFE FELL APART

Awakened out of fitful sleep, I panic. Where am I? The room looks completely unfamiliar. I don't recognize anything, and once again my heart starts pounding. This is not my bedroom. My mind races and my eyes search to make sense of my surroundings. A strip of light off to my left comes into focus. I recognize it as the bottom of a door. Slowly the dim outline of a dresser, a television, a drapery-covered window come into focus. A hotel room. Yes! I'm in a hotel room, but where? My mind flips through cloudy memories of the last dozen hotel rooms I've slept in recently.

Then my exhausted mind recalls that I went out after work for a "team building party" with my consulting colleagues who are staffed on our client project. I knew I would be out late again, so I arranged to stay in a hotel near my client's site instead of driving home.

Before I could relax into realizing where I was, it hit me. I had come to know these excruciating 3:00 AM episodes. The anxiety, my racing mind, my pounding heart propelling me down into the dark inner hell of a panic attack. At least that's what I called them. They were excruciating. It was always the same. I'd awaken in some hotel in the middle of the night not knowing where I was, panic and then be thrust into a downward spiral of abusive self-talk from my ruthless inner critic. "You have no clue what you are doing. You are worthless. You have no right to be working here. They are going to find out that you are a fraud. You should just disappear. The world and everyone would be better off without you around." I sob and sob, my heart feeling like it will break from the emotional pain. I pray to God to make me disappear and stop this inner torment.

Eventually the voice quiets and I stop crying. I stagger into the bathroom to wash my face and then collapse into bed in the hopes of a couple more hours of sleep before I must be back at work to lead my team.

Truthfully, I was enormously successful at my job. So successful that I had been promoted at record speed after being hired by a prestigious global consulting firm right out of business school. My success had skyrocketed me to the executive level and opened the door to a lucrative and well-respected career. I should have been ecstatic, but I was miserable, exhausted and in serious danger.

I didn't know it. Not until I cautiously shared my reoccurring panic attacks and feelings of hopelessness to a close friend. Looking back, I owe that friend my life. She took a risk and shared what she had been witnessing in me for several months—the slow deterioration of my mental stability. She urged me to get professional help. I was stunned! I was in total denial that I was seriously ill. I thought I just needed a little

rest—a week off to recover. Fortunately, I trusted her and made an appointment with my doctor.

As I started sharing with my doctor what I'd been experiencing and my symptoms, I began to sob, asking if he would grant me a week's time off to help me rest. I was shocked when he said, "No!"

What he told me threw me into a state of disbelief. He said I was suffering from anxiety and depression and that I needed three months off! That wasn't possible. I was just tired. I just needed a little rest; I couldn't be "mentally ill!" He insisted I take three months off, wrote me a referral to a therapist and a prescription for antidepressants.

That was the beginning of my road to recovery and more importantly, my spiritual awakening. **At age 40, it was the first time my life fell apart**, and over time it spawned a more fulfilling life for me. It took me the full three months to be well enough to start back to work, but it wasn't until years later and a completely new life that I truly felt I'd healed the brokenness in my body, mind and spirit.

This was the first of two pivotal and challenging midlife transitions that created the joyful life I have now. Unfortunately it wasn't until the second time my life fell apart that I learned how the soul navigates through powerful transitions. If I had known what was going on at the level of my soul during this first transition, I may have been able to navigate it easier with less trauma and heartache.

YOUR LIFE FALLING APART IS A CALL FOR CHANGE

Traumatic life events, whether expected or unexpected, create turmoil. Sometimes we can handle them, but many times our old ways of dealing with things no longer work. We are thrown into the chaos of change that does not match with anything we've dealt with previously. In my case, the harder I tried to put my head down and muscle my way through—how I'd successfully dealt with challenges in the past—the worse things became. When I finally surrendered to the reality that I was seriously ill, I began to accept that I was miserable in the life I had created. It was then that I could start to embrace the changes I needed to live a happier life.

If you find yourself in a difficult midlife transition where it feels like your life is falling apart, take heart! I have learned that there is a deeper wisdom at work in your life that can help you more gracefully and powerfully navigate this confusing and sometimes terrifying time.

What you need to know is that these transitions, while challenging, are a tremendous opportunity. A greater sense of meaning, fulfillment, creativity, empowerment and freedom can all be yours if you make the profound, conscious changes these life-transitions offer.

Challenging life transitions are your soul calling you to individuate and create a greater and more authentic and fulfilling expression of you.

The good news is, unlike the first time my life fell apart, you don't have to navigate this process alone in the dark.

THE IMPULSE TO INDIVIDUATE

The **second time my life fell apart** was the year I turned 50. Within 18 months, I lost my mother and my father, ended my engagement, battled with worsening hypothyroid, and lost the marketing arm that provided my executive coaching clients. I was devastated, exhausted, depressed, frustrated, and angry. I couldn't sleep and cried most of the time.

My health crisis and the losses I experienced over such a short time forced me to take another time out. I couldn't function well, and I had no energy or emotional stability to sustain my executive coaching practice. I was experiencing pretty much all of the symptoms of menopause. This time, I made the decision to take several months off and significantly scaled back my client work. I committed to doing whatever it took to get my life back. My heart was deeply wounded from all the loss, and I knew I needed find a way to support its healing process.

I worked with a holistic health professional to address my ailing thyroid, menopause symptoms and emotional instability. I started working with a spiritual coach who helped me develop a clearer relationship with my soul so that I could identify its subtle urgings. I went to energetic healers who helped me release many of the emotional wounds that had been plaguing my relationships. I read books on menopause and life transitions. I journaled. I meditated. I ate well. I exercised at a pace my body could sustain. I spent as much time in Nature as I could hiking, camping and backpacking in the mountains. I realized that I had to let go of how I had lived my life as the pace that I used to keep was not sustainable during this transition time.

One of the most important activities I did was working with my dreams, which were frightening as they were consistently filled with grizzly death! Fortunately during my spiritual guidance training I was taught how to understand my dreams as metaphors and symbolic messages from my soul to provide guidance for my inner transformational journey. My spiritual coach was instrumental in helping me find the deeper meaning and guidance, which accurately identified where I was in the alchemical transition process and provided guidance through my transformational passage.

I learned there are specific alchemical phases to large life transitions, particularly the midlife transition, that are akin to the ancient mystical process of alchemy—the ability to turn metal into gold. These traumatic events are our soul's calling to individuate—**to transform into the unique expression of who our soul was born to be.**

Through his research of alchemy, the great psychologist, Dr. Carl Jung, saw a connection to alchemy and the psyche. He realized alchemy was a way to

understand what occurs in the psyche, or the ego, during the process of individuation—the **driving force of the psyche to realize the potential lying dormant in one's soul**. Through his work, we now have a method to make conscious the inner alchemy that takes place within our psyche when our life feels like it's falling apart.

From the wisdom of alchemy—the ancient process of turning “lead” into “gold”—there are clear, identifiable phases of the inner alchemy taking place that give rise to what unfolds in our outer life.

Specifically, **inner alchemy is the process of transforming a leaden consciousness—one that is denser—into a golden consciousness—one that is lighter and more radiant**. In life transitions, it means diving into the inner depths of the psyche to reveal and release the self that has been outgrown—the ego's impressions it has taken on to master life—and discover and embody a greater expression of the soul's potential that's awaiting embodiment.

What makes inner alchemy challenging is its elusiveness. It operates in the mysterious landscape of the soul and utilizes the language of symbols, images, metaphor and emblems. Often the inner alchemical journey is revealed through dreams, however it takes understanding and interpreting the symbolic and archetypal imagery imbedded in the dream to grasp the soul's messages. Fortunately, **there are other more recognizable signs to help us know what is unfolding deep within our psyche**.

During a challenging midlife transition, when your life appears to be falling apart, there are four distinct but typically overlapping phases. These are reflected in the four alchemical processes: Dissolving, Inspiring, Expanding and Manifesting. Each has a quality associated with one of the four essential elements.

Dissolving is associated with the water element as it represents the dissolving of the old life. This is the phase that starts our journey of individuation and what likely led you to reading this book.

Inspiring is associated with the fire element as it represents the inspiration and fire of new life that begins to burn at some point after the dissolving has begun.

Expanding is associated with the air element as it represents the expansion of life that generates the greater vision for the new life that will be manifest.

Manifesting is associated with the earth element as it represents the manifestation of the new greater expression of life.

While these phases are mysterious and defy being tied down, there are indicators to reveal the deeper process that is unfolding. Once you identify where you are in the journey, there are many things you can do to support the process and gain the maximum benefit.

In the following section of this book, I outline each of the phases, giving signs, images and symbols so you can recognize where you are in your inner alchemical journey. For each phase, I include a practice to support you consciously navigating and gaining the benefits of each phase. This will help you make your journey with conscious awareness, supporting your transition into a more golden version of yourself.

On the next page is a checklist to help you identify which phase you are most likely navigating. Note that you will likely have checks in more than one phase; this is very common as the alchemical phases typically overlap. However there should be more check marks in one phase, indicating which phase you are in at present.

In the following chapters, I describe each of the phases and give activities to help you successfully navigate each phase. Once you know the phase you are in, you can begin to support your soul and your psyche through the alchemical process of that phase.

CHECKLIST: IDENTIFYING WHERE YOU ARE IN YOUR LIFE TRANSITION

Read through each of the statements below and check the ones that most resonate with you at this point in your life. It's likely that you will find that you will have more checks in one of the phases. While the phases are not distinct, you likely will resonate more with one of the phases than the others. **This can help you identify where you are in your transition** and support you in navigating that phase. As your transition unfolds, come back and visit this checklist again. You may find that you now have more checks in another phase. This can be instrumental in helping you gain clarity on what's unfolding at your soul's level.

Dissolving

- ☐ Lack of energy to hold your life together
- ☐ Feeling drawn to spend time alone
- ☐ Limited motivation to start any new project
- ☐ Uninspired with your work and career
- ☐ Feeling adrift in your life
- ☐ Feeling disconnected from your life

Inspiring

- ☐ Longing for some new inspiration
- ☐ Noticing a curiosity to explore new endeavors
- ☐ Remembering unfulfilled dreams from your early life
- ☐ Emerging passion for a new project
- ☐ Increasing interest in creative projects
- ☐ Feeling infused with aliveness and energy

Expanding

- ☐ Reflecting on patterns and the progression of your life
- ☐ Feeling free to explore and be who you envision
- ☐ Watching the drama of your life with detached curiosity
- ☐ Seeing the wholeness in your life
- ☐ Getting a vision of what your life could be
- ☐ Recognizing the possibilities for your life

Manifesting

- ☐ Making something new and meaningful happen in your life
- ☐ Moving forward with manifesting a vision
- ☐ Carrying out and living a new aspect of your life
- ☐ Beginning to master a new craft, skill or profession
- ☐ Having the energy and discipline to follow through on achieving your goals
- ☐ Being fully present as you move forward in your life
- ☐ Building a life that brings you joy and fulfillment

THE INNER ALCHEMICAL PHASES OF LIFE TRANSITIONS

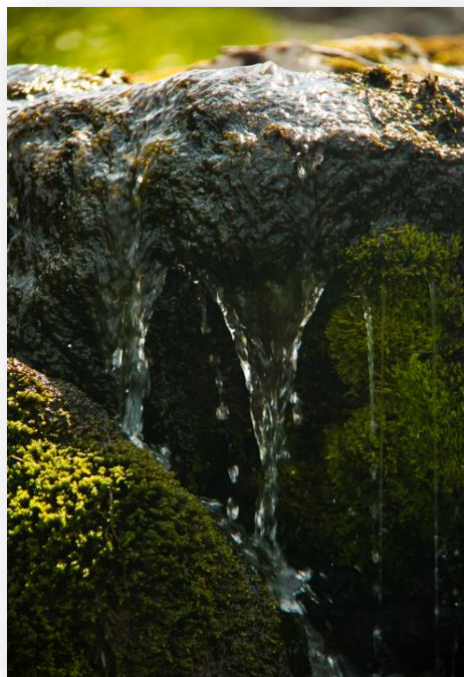
While life transitions have their own timing and unfolding, there are recognizable phases to these transitions that can help sustain you through the unpredictable twists and turns of the journey. From the wisdom of alchemy—the ancient mystical process of turning “lead” into “gold”—there are clear, identifiable phases of what’s unfolding within your psyche.

PHASE 1: DISSOLVING, THE WATER ELEMENT

The initial phase of any transition is the process of **dissolving** all that is no longer needed—that which will NOT be part of the new life that will emerge from within. The *Dissolving Phase* is associated with the water element as water, a well-known powerful solvent, dissolves even rock over time.

Water dissolves form and unites the parts into an alchemical mixture of elements so that something new can be created. In this same way, inner transformation begins by the dissolving of the ego’s connection to its sense of identity—who it has been—to merge with the soul in preparation for the rebirth into a larger, more meaningful expression of life.

One of the key roles of this dissolving phase is to dissolve a lesser version of yourself into a greater, more whole and integrated expression for the next chapter of your life. It makes way for an expanded and more creative expression of your soul.



What makes these events indicative of a life transition are their magnitude and the subsequent inability to either clearly navigate or have the energy to deal with them as in the past. The truth is the events are being driven by the soul’s desire to individuate and express its full potential.

This phase can be particularly challenging as parts of your identity and old life seem to fall away sometimes dramatically. The second time my life fell apart, in the span of 18 months my old life rapidly and dramatically dissolved, throwing me into a spiritual

crisis of identity. During that time I had many “dark nights of the soul” where I felt lost, alone and confused about who I was or what held meaning for me.

I’ve had many women clients seek me out for help with their own overwhelming midlife challenges. They were paralyzed with how to navigate all that was falling away in their lives and in some cases struggling to just make it through the day. The *Dissolving Phase* can be particularly devastating and disorienting as the ego is being dismantled with or without its cooperation. Not every woman experiences this depth of upheaval, but I have found that many of my clients were in high positions of responsibility and when the challenges of midlife transition hit, the disruption was quite debilitating.

Below are the most common internal and external signs of the *Dissolving Phase*.

INTERNAL SIGNS

- Lack of energy to hold one’s life together
- Feeling drawn to spend a greater amount time alone
- Limited motivation to start any new project
- Uninspired by work or career
- Feeling adrift in one’s life
- Feeling disconnected from life or relationships
- Experiencing unexplained emotional volatility

EXTERNAL SIGNS

- Serious life events like the death of a parent or children leaving home
- Significant relationship issues or endings
- A myriad of health challenges that leave one debilitated (frequently stress and/or hormone related)
- A career crisis (getting fired or laid off or ending up on the wrong side of the office politics)
- A combination of these events

SPEND TIME IN NATURE: A PRACTICE TO SUPPORT YOU THROUGH THE DISSOLVING PHASE

The key to navigating the *Dissolving Phase* is to **find ways to stabilize yourself during the process of dissolving and letting go**. This is where having a guide or a close friend to help **create a safe place for you to share** what’s occurring can be incredibly helpful. The trust I had in my friend to vulnerably share with her my panic episodes was the turning point for me to get help through my first *Dissolving Phase*. The most important thing you can do during the *Dissolving Phase* is to be gentle and easy with yourself. It is a tender and vulnerable time.

A beautiful way to support yourself through this challenging time of letting go is to take walks in parks, in the woods, along a river or on the beach particularly where water is present. Bring a journal and pen, and if you feel called your camera. Open your awareness to the sounds, smells, images and sensations.

Walk with mindfulness, focusing on staying present and conscious of everything that surrounds you—the smells, the sounds, the sights, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, your own breath. Look for signs of dissolving.

What images speak to you of dissolving?

Capture with your camera or sketch in your journal the images that reflect most the feeling of dissolving—of letting go, floating, flooding, washing away, sinking, showering, and melting. Make notes in your journal of what you are experiencing.

What is it that calls you to each image, sound, sensation or smell? What does it evoke in you? How are these reflected in your own life?



PHASE 2: INSPIRING, THE FIRE ELEMENT

Frequently before the dissolving process completes, the second phase of transformation begins. It is marked by the fire that stimulates the birthing process—the fire of new life.

In many spiritual traditions, fire is the element of transformation as well as the element of divine inspiration. It is inspired life force itself, burning away the old, purifying and bursting forth with new life and creativity. Just like the fire of a sunrise burns away the darkness of night and brings life to a new day, in the *Inspiring Phase* the **fire of the emerging new life begins to burn inside**, purifying the space and fueling the **desire** to create a new life.



In the inner alchemy of the midlife transition, this phase is characterized by a growing enthusiasm and curiosity for exploring new opportunities. Energy starts to rise and motivation to explore begins.

Remembering unfulfilled dreams from early life, **emerging passion** for a new project, increasing interest in creative projects are all signs of the *Inspiring Phase*. The qualities of the *Inspiring Phase*—feelings of exaltation, ecstasy, passion, aliveness and creativity—characterize this time.

I found the *Inspiring Phase* to be very challenging as have those I've worked with. I was anxious to "get on with my life," and now that my energy was shifting and I felt energized, my ego wanted to latch onto whatever was holding my interest and "make this my new thing."

I've always been, as many of my friends call me, a "nutrition junkie," and my long-held enthusiasm for helping others live healthy lives excitedly emerged during my midlife transition. Out of my ego's enthusiasm I enrolled in a PhD program of Holistic Nutrition. I was convinced that getting a PhD was the next step for me. What I failed to realize was my ego was still trying to find its worth by my number of degrees and trainings. This new opportunity was the fulfillment of my ego's need to be an expert, which of course, was of little importance to my soul's expression.

Not long after I signed up and began my studies, I realized that I did not have the enthusiasm to sustain a 5-year PhD program. In my haste to have direction for my own next stage of life, I jumped in and committed too soon before exploring other options that might have satisfied my interest in holistic nutrition. I eventually realized that getting a PhD was not aligned with the emerging direction of my unfolding new life. It was a costly learning to be more patient and explore without making significant commitments.

The ego has a hard time with ambiguity and not knowing. During the Dissolving Phase, the ego has undergone a peeling away—a dropping of much of who it was, and it likely feels a bit vulnerable and unsure. **Experiencing the excitement of a new venture or opportunity can be intoxicating** after the energy-draining time of dissolving, and it is easy to jump in too quickly without letting this phase of the transformation fully unfold.

DO THE THINGS YOU'VE LONGED TO DO: A PRACTICE TO SUPPORT YOU THROUGH THE INSPIRING PHASE

The key to navigating this fiery phase is to **develop ways to hold your center**—to stay grounded in the deeper essence of who you are at the soul level. The fire of inspiration can sweep you up in the enthusiasm of new life, leading to losing connection with your inner guidance that is gently, quietly and patiently whispering to your eager ears. When the passion and excitement for something hits it can sweep you off on a journey that is in the end is not right for you, leaving you needing to backtrack and reconnect with the deeper truth of your being.

Get out a pen, highlighter and a few blank sheets of paper, put on some inspiring music or go out in nature to an inspiring location, and answer the following two questions, one at a time, making a separate list for each question. Leave room to the left of each list to come back and score each item (I'll explain the scoring process later).

1. If you knew you could not fail, what do you long to do?
2. If time and resources were unlimited, what would you do?

Give yourself full permission to put down *everything* that comes to mind for each question. Don't hold back even if the same things come up on each list. Fully give into putting down everything that you can think of that you would *love* to do. Let go of any "buts" or "shoulds" or "shouldn'ts." This is just brainstorming and the more you can give into and surrender to the process the more you will begin to tap into the longing and inspiration in your heart.

The important point of this exercise is to notice where the energy is, not whether or not what you write down is possible or reasonable. That's not what you are looking for here. You are looking for the energy you experience as you write each thing.

Once you have exhausted your lists, go back and for each item, hold it in your heart as you read it. How does your heart feel as you tune into it? What energy do you feel in your heart? Write down to the left of the item the level of energy you feel in your heart. Use between 10 (totally excited) and 0 (no excitement) for your energy scoring.

For the items with a score of 8 or greater, highlight the ones that you would like to explore further. List them on a new piece of paper, leaving a little room between each for making some notes. For each, write down anything that surprised you about your energetic response to that item. How long have you had this longing? Is it new or has it been with you for years? What does it evoke in you (e.g., sadness, excitement, fear, longing, expansion, contraction)? Make notes of the feelings, thoughts and emotions you have for each item.

Choose between 2 – 4 items that you would like to continue to explore and write down one thing you could undertake to investigate that item further (e.g., read a book, attend a workshop, interview someone, research on the Internet, take a short exploratory trip). The goal is to give yourself permission to follow where your energy is leading you—what is calling you. Again, the *Inspiring Phase* is about exploring the energy—the fire of new life—**without making any commitments**. Noticing what calls to you and what ignites energy in your body will guide you in your explorations.

Make a commitment to do one activity every week to investigate further one of the 2 – 4 items that holds excitement and passion for you. Keep track of what you notice when you do that activity.

Did it continue to excite you?

Did it draw you in?

Do you want more or do you feel complete with that item?

What would you do next to continue to explore your enthusiasm for that item?

This process of exploring where your energy is will open up your creativity and enthusiasm for building a new and more fulfilling life for yourself. Again, **it's not about making commitments at this time**; it's truly about exploring, learning and reflecting. Choosing and creating will come during the later phases. For now it's just about experimenting, having fun and noticing.

PHASE 3: EXPANDING, THE AIR ELEMENT

The third phase of transition emerges out of the exploration in the Inspiring Phase. The *Expanding Phase* is the element of air and has the characteristics of taking a larger, more removed view of one's life. Just as sitting on top of a mountain creates an expansion in sight and cultivates a larger view of life, the *Expanding Phase* is marked by a time of **stepping above one's life and reviewing, taking stock and reflecting on the journey so far**.



It's a critical time of **reflecting** on the full life journey and seeing it with new eyes. It is an essential step in creating the expanded awareness that shapes a larger life for the future.

The Inspiring Phase of exploring new interests, trying on new roles, and learning new ways of being, creates an expanded sense of self. The ego is stretching and growing into a larger and more expanded version of who it was in the earlier time of life. The learnings from the Inspiring Phase are key to entering with sufficient knowledge and experience into the *Expanding Phase*.

In this phase, there is a **pause for reflection** and a **stepping out** of and above one's life. Some of the indicators that you are in the *Expanding Phase* are:

- Reflecting on patterns and the progression of your life,
- Watching the drama of your life with detached curiosity,
- Seeing the wholeness of your life,
- Seeing a vision of what your life could be, and
- Recognizing the possibilities for your new life.

The Expanding Phase is essential to the alchemy of your midlife transition as it is the key step in the alchemical process of creating a larger consciousness and vision for your life ahead.

If the Inspiring Phase ends with committing too soon, the *Expanding Phase* is bypassed in favor of moving into the Manifesting Phase. When this jump happens, the **alchemical possibilities for creating a more meaningful life are limited**. The opportunities to expand consciousness into a fuller expression of soul become stunted in favor of the ego's eagerness to jump into the next form. The outcome of this bypass can lead to a continual jumping of the ego from opportunity to opportunity in search of the fulfillment that it seeks, never achieving the fulfillment of soul's full expression.

I witnessed this with one of my clients who, even though I encouraged her many times to experiment without making a commitment, was anxious to move on with the next stage of her life. She kept jumping from relationship to relationship, thinking "this is the one" who I'll be with going forward, only to be disappointed a few months later. She was unwilling to spend enough time in the *Expanding Phase* looking at the deeper patterns of her relationship history that kept her recreating the same unfulfilling relationships. Her ego wasn't willing to stop and reflect on why she kept recreating the same unfulfilling patterns in her relationships—what could have been a life-changing activity in her *Expanding Phase*. Even though the players had changed, the patterns in her relationships remained the same. This is what can happen when the *Expanding Phase* is bypassed in favor of jumping too quickly into the Manifesting Phase.

The *Expanding Phase* is challenging as it asks you to **stop, take a step back and look at the history of your life, reflect on the patterns, identify the opportunities to change, and begin to craft a new expanded and ultimately more fulfilling version of yourself**. It is an essential process in exploring how to infuse more soul into your life going forward.

CREATE A VISION FOR YOUR LIFE: A PRACTICE TO SUPPORT YOU THROUGH THE EXPANDING PHASE

In the Expanding Phase you can be tempted to move too quickly through it to begin manifesting your new life. However, it is essential that you take the time to reflect on your whole journey, remove limiting patterns, glean the lessons particularly from what you discovered in the Dissolving and Inspiring Phases, and begin to craft a vision for your new life.

Take the time to step out of your life and spend time reflecting. If you can manage it, give yourself a gift and schedule a weekend away at a retreat center or a place of beauty, spaciousness and peace. It's particularly helpful if the place you choose has an expansive view, like at the ocean, in the desert or in the mountains. Bring things that create reflection and open-mindedness—your journal, reflective music, divination

tools (e.g., Tarot, IChing, Runes, wisdom decks), a few photos of some of the most meaningful times in your life—and spend time reflecting on the patterns of your life, what you’ve learned from your explorations in the Inspiring Phase, and distill these into a few meaningful themes that are important and touch your heart.

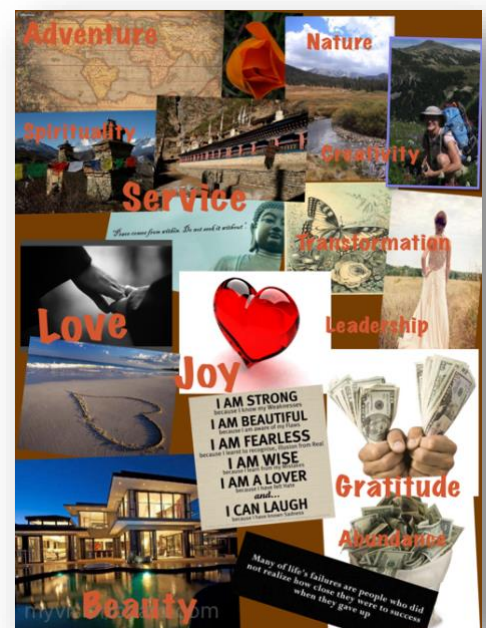
What values are being touched by these themes?

Begin to create a vision of how your life could be if you allowed yourself to live a life of soulful meaning. Give yourself freedom to dream big. This stepping out of your life to create your larger life is an essential piece in preparing you to manifest the next stage of your life.

From the Inspiration Phase you should have explored several possibilities for what you long to express. Specifically from the activity “Do the things you’ve longed to do” you should have learned what you have energy for and what no longer holds life for you. You should now have a few key elements of what’s emerging for you and where the energy of your soul is calling you. Getting a clear and committed vision may still be some time away, but by now you should have some clarity about a few elements.

Crafting a vision is a personal process, and there are several ways to go about it. If you have experience with crafting a vision for yourself and like the way you’ve done it in the past, feel free to utilize what has worked for you before, pulling all that you have learned from the previous phases of activities into the key elements of your vision.

Creating a vision board is the classic way to create a visual representation of a personal vision. Gather together several magazines of different orientations (e.g., women’s health, beauty, travel, adventure, home and garden, yoga, business, etc.). Set aside a few hours with the magazines, a piece of poster paper, scissors, a glue stick and anything else you want to have on your vision board. After reviewing the key themes from the “Things you long to do,” leaf through the magazines and tear or cut out images and words that resonate with the key elements you feel are emerging in your life. Don’t evaluate; just gather the images and words that speak to you and put them in a pile. And if an image or word strikes you that doesn’t relate to these key themes, include that as well. Many times your unconscious—your soul—will send you a subtle



impulse of something it wants you to pay attention to that has yet to be revealed. Trust your heart and intuition here.

Once you have gone through and collected the images and words that call to you, arrange them on your poster paper in a way that appeals to you. Typically the poster paper is almost entirely covered with images and words, but don't feel pressured to fill the paper. Only put items on the paper that truly resonate with you. Once you have the images and words arranged the way you want them, glue them in place.

After the glue dries and you are happy with your vision board, I suggest framing it and hanging it where you can see it every day. Spend time gazing at your vision board daily even if it's only for a few minutes. Just take in the images and words, tuning into how you feel as you look at the images and read the words. It should uplift and expand your energy. Take a picture of your vision board and carry it with you.

PHASE 4: MANIFESTING, THE EARTH ELEMENT

The last phase of the inner transition process is related to the earth element. It is bringing a vision into reality—manifesting a vision.

Just as a giant oak tree starts as a seed of possibility, **manifesting a vision** can take time, clarity, action, patience and perseverance. The full blossoming of a giant oak takes years, enduring each season and all the challenges that can interfere with its growth. Each successfully met challenge makes it **stronger** and more **resilient**.



The experiences, energy and clarity gained from the work done in the three previous phases fuels the *Manifesting Phase*. Just as the oak seed is **fueled from within** as well as from the environment, the journey to manifest your vision—to birth a greater expression of your soul—takes fuel from within as well as **support from your life**.

The soul needs room to incarnate—to be fully embodied and expressed. Just as the oak tree needs room to spread its branches, the soul needs room to spread its wings through your body, mind and emotions.

If during powerful midlife transitions, there is no accommodation for your soul's expression, it can lead to **spiritual depression** and a sense of **meaninglessness** or listlessness about life. Your soul needs a body to become form and express, and the midlife transition is meant to be the process of your ego surrendering to a greater expression that is manifested through the “birthing” of your soul—bringing out your **soul's potentiality**—the unique qualities, values and purpose of your deepest essence.

Emerging out of the Expanding Phase is when your vision of who you are to be in this new stage of **your life starts to take shape**. Finally after the seemingly endless months of waiting, there is forward momentum.

What was no longer needed for the next phase of your life has been shed, and the new values, desires and expressions are emerging and forming in your life. Various parts of your life start to come together into a cohesive whole. Your movements become more **focused** and **accelerated**. **Clarity** about direction, career, relationships and contribution fuel your choices and behaviors. Your energy and excitement for engaging in an outer life returns, and you feel **motivated** to reconnect with those who you now consciously choose to have in your life. A **glow of new life** radiates from your whole being.

While exciting and energetic, the *Manifesting Phase* **can be messy**. Your vision as imagined doesn't always turn out the way you anticipate. Things take longer than expected; blocks are encountered. New shortcomings emerge, and there may be false starts. Doubt about whether you have taken the right course of action can easily seep in and deter your determination to create your new life. In a way it's like starting over, and sometimes that can feel like too much and too late.

Just like the seed of the oak tree, with perseverance, determination, flexibility and clarity, the **manifesting of your new larger life** emerges and takes shape. While not always easy, each step of progress to create a more fulfilling and authentic life brings more confidence in the ego to trust the soul's guidance. With each step, the **ego learns how to trust the soul's guidance** and create a life of greater expression, meaning, authenticity and fulfillment.

CHOOSE WHAT TO SAY "YES" TO: A PRACTICE TO SUPPORT YOU THROUGH THE EXPANDING PHASE

During the *Manifesting Phase*, you are bringing into reality the new aspects of your life—making manifest the “new you” and the life that supports and sustains you. This can be a challenging time even though you are creating a life that brings joy, expansion and a more golden expression of yourself. It's bringing into form the vision you have created for yourself, and rarely does the process of manifestation create exactly the vision you expect. From the transpersonal level, you are bringing into matter the spiritual or energetic quality you envision. Human existence is messy and chaotic at times, so be prepared to adjust, flex and refocus as you bring into creation the various aspects of your vision.

Our guidance comes from our bodies, not our minds. This practice will help you to cultivate a connection with your body for guidance on which activities to move forward with and which to let go.

Sit down with a pen and your journal or pieces of paper. Pull out and review your lists and vision from the Inspiring and Expanding Phases. Take a few cleansing and

centering breaths, letting go of all that's in your mind and tension in your body with each exhale. Then ask the following questions:

What in life can you say "yes" to? What are you willing to engage with and embrace in your life?

Just write down the essence of what comes, take a clearing breath (sigh) and ask again, continue asking these two questions for 5 minutes.

Then go back and review each answer that you wrote down, slowly saying it out loud. How does your body respond to each one? Choose a number from 1 – 10 (10 being the greatest amount of energy) for how strongly you feel the energy inside as you read each one aloud. Pick 2 - 3 with the greatest energy and for each identify at least three steps you could take within the next month. Commit to these steps and calendar them.

YOU ARE NOT MEANT TO MAKE THE JOURNEY ALONE

The process of inner transformation may sound simple, but it's rarely easy.

While there are clear signs and practices to support each of the phases, they are not distinct. Most of the time there are signs of all the phases occurring at the same time, which can lead to struggle and confusion. This is where having a **mentor** or **guide** who knows the way and is familiar with these phases. A guide can help you clearly identify where you are in the process, support you through each phase, and help you so that you emerge a fulfilling, powerful expression of your soul's potential—your authentic self.

You are not meant to make these challenging life transitions alone.

If my dear friend had not shared what she was seeing in me and implored me to get help, I wonder whether I would be writing this book today. I may not have made it out of my dark depression. It was through dear friends like her and professionals and guides that knew how to help me that I crawled out of my depression and began rebuilding my life.

It is my hope that this eBook will help you understand what's happening to you when you are in a challenging midlife transition. Understanding what is happening at the transpersonal level of your soul can give you the grounding to make the scary and possibly confusing journey of transformation undergoing in your psyche. But if you commit to the process, I know you will create a more fulfilling, satisfying and glorious version of you and your life. I've seen it with my own life and the lives of my clients. It's not easy and takes courage and commitment, but it's so worth it, I promise!

ABOUT NANCY



Nancy Monson, MA, MBA, CPCC, CNE is a Wise Woman Mentor devoted to helping you live your soul's greatest expression every day. She brings a multitude of skills, talents, wisdom and a lifetime of transformative experiences to guide you if you are truly ready to live your soul's purpose.

With decades of working in both corporate consulting and personal transformation, Nancy has a unique combination of experience helping hundreds of senior leaders, executive teams, and entrepreneurs using her unique combination of strategic, intuitive and pragmatic skills. This experience gives her a special ability to mentor women through their own personal and professional transitions. Her greatest fulfillment comes from **confidently guiding women dealing with difficult and challenging midlife transitions to create truly powerful, authentic soul-directed lives.**

Nancy holds an MBA from UC Berkeley's Haskins School of Business, an MA in the Science of Creative Intelligence from the Maharishi University of Management, and a BS in Mathematics from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. She also has completed numerous trainings with special emphasis in Human Design, Gene Keys, Evolutionary Leadership Transformation Techniques, life and relationship coaching, spiritual guidance, Tantric counseling, Deep Emotional Release™ bodywork, and Reiki energy healing. Nancy is a facilitator of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* personal empowerment course, and a coach of the *Women, Power, and Body Esteem* transformation program for women. She recently added certification as a Culinary Nutrition Expert and completed the *Menopause for Athletes* course to support her female clients in improving their health through their diet and exercise, critical aspects to navigating their midlife transition and living their soul's purpose.

Nancy is also an adventurer. She treasures the outdoors and spends as much time as she can hiking, running and mountain biking the hills around her Nevada home. In her years of travel and outdoor adventure, she has hiked the Sierra Nevada, Cascades, Andes, Himalayas, Alaska Range, Brooks Range, and Rockies. She has backpacked one range or another during every season of the year, climbed frozen waterfalls, numerous rock faces and mountains, and camped on snowy glaciers. Her greatest accomplishment was climbing Denali, the highest peak in North America at the time when it was uncommon to see women in such sports. **She believes nature is immensely healing and transformative, taking us to a deep place of inner connection with our own true nature.**