

Mid-Life Crisis

Does it Exist?

Chapter 1

"I feel an unutterable anxiety...this is the sharpest thorn on which I have ever set my foot...I cannot with all my philosophy and Christian resignation, keep up my spirits. The dismal prospect before me, my family and my country, is too much for my fortitude". Age: 39.

"In the ocean there is no safe harbor... as we must deal with our temporal concerns I have made a will". Age: 43.

Until now I have maintained calmness but...I fear every day gets worse and worse". Age around 42.

Do these fears sound familiar? Has life ever turned around on you, bringing vague and scary unknowns that will upset your life course in unexpected ways? Has this coincided with your early forties?

The people quoted above have two things in common. They were the forefathers and mother of our nation, and they were the age for mid-life crisis or transition, age 38 to 44.

John Adams, George Washington, and Abigail Adams. Their fears were related to the budding country's, and also to their own reactions to these changes in their lives in their Mid-Life. It is fascinating reading to watch the changes in John Adams perceptions as he struggles with the idea of war with England, and his own need to respond to the external crisis with strength and resolve, and leadership of his own. At least he had external angst to pin his changes to...

What if one is changing internally for no apparent reason?

What is "Mid-life" crisis? Does it even exist? Astrology believes it exists, that it is a normal but often turbulent passage into the second part of life. We believe that everyone will have a mid life transition, and that though not all people will react to this transition the same way, they will, and should change in some way. The mid-life passage can bring different growth processes to different people, yet, like some of the other transitions in life, there are similarities that affect each person in an age appropriate as well as a demographically appropriate way. In other words, this book would argue that there are normative passages to mid life, and that every 40 -something that goes through these passages will have some commonalities of experience and insight.

Divorce, sudden health problems, adolescents out of control and ailing parents are some of the normal problems of this passage. There will also be differences; in not only experience, but in the way these passages are reacted to. That sounds all too apparent, but it makes a difference to an astrologer when we see the particulars of someone's chart, and try to help them understand how or why they might be reacting to mid life the way they are.

There is a dearth of established scholarly criteria for a mid life transition, unlike the earlier developmental stages of childhood and adolescence, which have been studied extensively. By established criteria I mean accepted theory that could be taught as common knowledge as a normal chapter of a developmental psychology curricula.

Certainly the well known developmentally slanted psychologists like Eriksson or Maslow acknowledge and affirm that there are maturational goals to be achieved, throughout life, however those goals remained, perhaps purposely vague, and the time periods are nowhere nearly as well delineated as childhood or adolescence. The ideals of self individuation and self actualization are sort of left up to the person to discover the meaning of these themselves, (as they should be). What these developmentalists often left out is the mechanism where by life situations inappropriate to those goals of self actualization had to be broken down first, to get the train of life headed for that next phase of discovery. That period is what we call mid-life transition or crisis, (if one is unprepared for it). On the other hand, in the area known (somewhat detractively) as "pop psychology" or self help; there are increasingly a number of good books out there on mid life, with of course, Gail Sheehy leading the way, and they are getting more and more popular every day as the Baby Boomers live long enough to try to sort out their lives. As I mentioned in the preface, for our purposes, these writers can only help us flesh out the meanings of mid life transition, and inspire by their example of those that have made sense out of the aging and the losses and the endings that mid-life can bring. The fact that they do not ascribe these forces to astrological events, and come up with very close to the same time frames only ends up supporting our thesis; that Mid -Life transition definitely exists, and is in some ways a quantifiable or distinct set of growth processes, that can be followed in each person's life. Why is it called a crisis? Below is a quote on a mid life web page by Daniel Johnston, Ph.D., which says it all.

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"The Chinese word for crisis readily shows these two basic elements. In the Chinese language the ideogram for crisis is made up of two separate characters. One of these characters represents "danger" and the other represents "opportunity." Thus the proper translation of crisis from Chinese is as a "dangerous opportunity." Any crisis in our lives provides the chance for change and growth -- the opportunity -- as well as the risk of regression or stagnation -- the danger. In the images of Quest, Metamorphosis, or Renaissance both opportunity and danger exist. You may not always attain the goal of the Quest, the Metamorphosis may not be complete, and the Renaissance may be a stillbirth. The danger of midlife is very real. Successful transition to the next life stage is not guaranteed".

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I really liked this quote on mid life. It is so true that the changes undertaken in mid life are fraught with danger. Danger as one leaves a secure family or career, and responds to inner pressures that still make little sense to one, and starts a divorce. Change as one tries something totally new and risks failure. (Like taking up 5 string Banjo at age 45). Crisis, as one has to face new horizons to conquer, like finding a new job, (much easier at age 24 than say 42), or having a spouse suddenly die.

The people I talk with and give readings to have no doubt mid-life crisis exists, and they come in gripping the edge of my table, almost white knuckled, asking for some sorts of answers, something that is going to help them make sense of what just happened in their lives.

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Does Astrology help? I think so. We do have indicators and markers that we astrologers believe we can greatly assist a person with understanding the timing of mid-life transition, and help sort out the import and content of their attempts to break free in mid-life.

Is this important? Is it imperative that we sort out and make sense of our lives in mid-life? Absolutely, if not more important than understanding the passages of adolescence or ones seventies. As we will see in a couple of chapters it is quite possible to not make it through some of these transitions in life, and certainly foreknowledge is very important in those situations. We will look at some cases of people hitting rock bottom and perhaps not making it through their mid life crisis. Life is often not kind, but it helps when someone can not only put the picture together for us, but also assist in looking out for the potholes, so we don't step in them. Mid Life Transition happens, and it is our job to make it through the growth, by anticipating it, and embracing it. Our job as astrologers to help guide people through some of those pitfalls

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A good example of crisis was Tina. Tina came to our clinic to try to get herself together. She was 42, and her life was falling apart. Her husband treated her distantly and somewhat meanly. He also ate poorly and was having heart problems. She was considering divorce at the time, but felt guilty about considering leaving him in the middle of his health problems. She also felt that she had an attention deficit disorder.

She was a Gemini, and Jupiter was going into Gemini during that time period. She was responding with positive planning, but feeling a little scattered. Her husband had just had bypass surgery, in his forties, and she was going to implement changes in diet and lifestyle that she had wanted to do for a long time. Up until now, her husband had been resistant to, and had even belittled her for wanting to change things for a healthier lifestyle.

Now however he has little choice, and was actually coming around to better communication after this scare.

Her plan sounded positive to me, she was given much encouragement for positive change, which she was setting out to do. This was not the only thing going on in her chart and life though. Saturn was about to go into Gemini, and Pluto was sitting across her chart, opposite Gemini, in Sagittarius. Saturn often brings a reality check in with it, based on the past behavior, or what has already been created, and Pluto brings absolute renewal through the process of death and rebirth.

As it did to her this time. In the middle of therapy, which seemed to be progressing rather well, her husband died. They were out taking a (healthy) walk, and he just keeled over and couldn't be revived. These were not the changes that she had planned on to get away from his negativity, but she had wanted to get out from under his thumb for a long time. Now she was, irrevocably, but one can imagine the ambivalent feelings she was going through. She shared many of those with me, as her therapist. Whether she had wished him to die, whether she was glad he was so conveniently out of the picture, whether she felt guilty about insurance settlements, projects unfinished. She was especially ambivalent about the fact that some of the weight of his anger was visibly lifted, from the house and off of her children. This was a mid-life crisis of much greater proportion and so much more real than she had imagined. Now who was she, since she had gotten most of what she wanted, but lost her husband in the process?

This is the type of import that a mid- life transition can have on a person, this particular transition being definitely more extreme than many. (Tina had Pluto opposite her Sun Sign, and Saturn on her Sun; one of the hardest transits an astrologer could come up with) This is the type of situation that astrology can help with, in counseling. She needs to know that, yes this shows in the chart, that something this dire was at least slated to be a possibility, and that, underlying all the dire change, that it is still about her needs and transition that mid-life is about. We want to help her separate out the changes she started out to achieve before her situation spun out of control, and not let any guilt process interfere with the growth she had started to achieve. (In the past three years, I or my colleagues must have seen and counseled 40 to 50 people that have had husbands die, most were Gemini's and Sagittarians, or having planets in those

signs. those that were hit hard with the Pluto/ Saturn opposition that went in 2001. These people are certainly a skewed sample in my database (since they are the ones in shock, and coming in for help), but pertinent just the same.

None of these women had a clue that they were about to go through a mid-life crisis, but some of them did know that they had been unhappy with their present situation. Some were not unhappy with their husbands, and were truly grieving their loss.

Saturn often brings real loss, and that may be the lesson of that time; that loss is real, permanent and may bring good out of that loss, but it is still very real loss. Some were not happy in their marriages or might have even been abused, and I don't need to report their response when I would ask about their loss. The reader can guess how they felt; almost as if divine intervention had stepped in to ease their burden. Saturn and Pluto are often known to dispense with a bad situation in a drastic sort of way, when the person has been unable to bring about an ending on their own. How can astrology help these people, especially when we often see them after the fact?

This is one of the biggest reasons why I am writing this book, to explore and clarify how much we should be counseling folks before the fact of mid life creeps up on them, (starting somewhere around age 39 by astrology's criteria), and how much should be left to the persons own machinations making their lives happen as they will. I throw that question out, but will need to leave it open for now. As we look at many stories of success and failure in mid-life, the reader can decide whether they would have wanted to know the events that were about to unfold in their lives, or in the lives of the people we are looking at here. We certainly seem to require fore-knowledge of the expected behaviors and passages of adolescence; we don't let teens do willy-nilly what they would want to do; i.e., have sex, experiment with drugs skip school , etc. Why do we accept letting adults run blindly into the walls of mid-life without at least guidance? Because they are now adults and should be able to run their own lives now?

One of the salient factors of Saturn's lessons as it brings them to us, or they unfold in our life, is of course that we can't see them as they are coming toward us. Carl Jung goes into this as the concept of the Unconscious, the idea that much of what drives us is hidden,

and the fact that there are huge parts of ourselves that we can't see, but others could easily pick out. Saturn is one of the symbols of the hidden or unknown parts of our selves. Even as astrologers, who might know we are coming up to a rough spot in our lives, often can't see how that might manifest. After all, it wouldn't be a lesson or a growth process if we could see it coming ahead of time now would it? We just wouldn't marry that person, or go down that road.

Is mid-life one of those blind spots? Yes, as we will find out in the next chapter, it is one of Saturn's most stressful hits on your chart, mixed with a whole lot more astrological influences at the same time. The last time it was where it is in the

planetary orbits was when you were 14, and you remember how settled you were then...right?

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Demographic Studies as well as common sense point to crisis times in adults lives,

but lack in insights needed to really pinpoint MLC changes. The arguments are flying out there, for and against mid-life crisis but visit any Mid-life web page, and you will be certain that something is going on and it is somewhere around age 40-45. I think folks are convinced that there is some change other than just the physical ones that go on there It is a matter of figuring out and codifying what those changes might be and whether there are definite patterns that apply to most people, patterns that would be just as valuable to know as those of early childhood or adolescent development.

"This cohort of people, who in 1996 were about 45 to 55 years old, had already exceeded these projections as about 40% of men and women in these ages had divorced from their first marriage. Current projections now indicate that the proportion could be as high as 50% for persons now in their **early forties.**"

Rose M. Kreider and Jason M. Fields, "Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 196", U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports, February 2002, p. 18. 9

This is a small clip of what is a bigger body of stats by the U.S. Census about divorce, and which seems less than inadequate in a breakdown by age (essential to an astrologer) We would project two major times of divorce over the entire lifetime, somewhere around the Saturn Return, age 29-31, and MLC time somewhere b/t age 39 to 45, and it appears difficult to wade through the stats to glean this out, despite the above short clip. As I have said however, my clients don't need a statistic, (or a crystal ball for that matter) to know something is wrong with their lives, there is something intrinsic about these years that the relationships and arrangements that no longer work seem to fall apart at this time more reliably than earlier. Age thirty six would have been the time to have the crystal ball...

Normal Psychological Curricula do not reflect the new insights into MLC.

It is my feeling that psychology 101 should be at least addressing mid-life transition, and any MA should be well versed in this phenomenon, for a few reasons. When I go on the web pages of let's say Harvard's M.A. in Psychology curricula,

or closer to home at the Graduate catalogue of the University of Michigan, I do not see a class specifically designated as one for the developmental changes in

mid-life, even though the curricula on developmental change is very full and diverse. When I go on the website for the American Psychological Association it does not have a designated department for this transition, (nor does it have a department for the study of mysticism in people's lives, for that matter, even though it is a known fact that billions of dollars go into reading books on mystical alternatives in one's life).

Why do I find this disturbing? One, the transitions that are gone through at this age are much more potentially dangerous than, let us say the Saturn return (age 29-30), and should be planned for proactively. At the very least, depression can delay and impair a return to work, and social productivity. At the worst prior health conditions, heart and lung issues, hypertension, and even weight gain can turn deadly. Suicide can rise, (and does, although the bureaus stats are difficult to decipher in this respect). Many otherwise healthy people find mid-life a time of challenge and growth as well as some loss, but as we will see in a later chapter, if one has let themselves go, physically, emotionally or intellectually; mid life can be a Mack Truck barreling down a mountainside, hoping for a soft sand landing, knowing that now chance is a bigger part of the picture than one would have wanted.

Would a mid-life pre-emptive sort of check-up help? I think so, and I will even go further into the fringe (so to speak) and advocate that the psychological professions should offer a standard cognitive, mental and career check up for anyone interested

somewhere between age 39 and 42, along with the medical check-ups standard for ones transitions into their forties. (We will look at this later). Medicine has learned to be proactive with many other problems, from hypertension to prenatal check-ups, to genetic screening; why not a pre mid-life crisis check-up?

Psychology has always been proactive with testing and assessment in adolescence, and childhood. The field of Geriatrics saw its rise in the 1980's after Dr. Kubler-Ross brought us her seminal books, and now we see specialists who are able to treat all of the psychological states that come up with elder age, or as much as possible medically. So why isn't there a standard mid-life check- up out there? (Insurance companies would certainly benefit from it).

What do we see out there for mid-lifers? Web Forums of folks (mostly women) who didn't have a clue this was coming up, and tiny selections on the subject in the self help section of the bookstore. And of course, everyone waiting on the mid-lifer to pay the bills, take care of the parents, and pay for their kids college, while they haven't a chance to look at themselves in the mirror for 10 years, (if they wanted to). This lack of consciousness of the mid-life condition has already changed and formally should; the schools and bookshelves just haven't quite caught up.

Psychological goals for change or growth often do not reflect normative age appropriate goals or insights for mid-life.

In inpatient or outpatient mental health settings, there are standard sets of care and treatment planning that reflect a return to functionality and community; certainly healthy goals. No psychologist or psychiatrist that I know would actually advocate for the person to fall apart or disassemble, so to speak, before renewing themselves. Yet this is just what mid life requires at times, for the current life situation to fall apart so that a new person can emerge from the ashes. I think it would be far healthier for professionals in the field, as well as folks in general to acknowledge that lives have to “fall apart” for new energies to enter. Mid-life is when forms should change. Jobs have grown old and boring, marriages no longer satisfy. Bodies worked well enough to ignore, but no longer do, and have to be given quick or even emergent treatment to open arteries, or lose weight. Things have to change in midlife; and it could be, no is a mistake to try to patch up lives with Prozac superglue, and Wellbutrin duct tape and send people on their way. It is in mid-life that we should be nurturing people through these changes with more insight than we do now. After all of the above was written, then my sister, who has worked most of her counseling years in jail and or substance abuse populations reminded me that this is the expected model for substance abuse; that one must hit rock bottom before people consider changing, and she was right. That is the one part of the field of psychology that does expect that the life has to fall apart before it can come back together. The problem there is that not all mid-lifers are masking the transition with drugs and alcohol, nor are they getting the attention that a chronic substance abuser gets; in fact they probably are not. That is where astrology is a personal model that can identify many of those mid-life issues, and help folks cope and change, based on the acceptance that everyone in mid-life needs a little bit of help.

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My family has its own personal stories in regard to the idea of an untreated or less than understood mid-life crisis. In 1965 to 70, we as a family were caught up in civil rights issues in the city of Detroit. The '67 riots happened; the city was rapidly becoming more and more divisive, and torn apart over racial issues. My parents were not particularly racist, being mildly to very liberal elementary school teachers. They were in their mid forties.

We lived in one of those typical American melting pot sorts of neighborhoods, with a Chinese family recently immigrated who we helped with English; Latinos across the street, the Hungarian family next to them, who produced a well known opera singer, the Jewish lady down the block; just regular folks as far as I knew... The only guy who got talked about on our block was a 30 something

white guy who had communist leanings. (A different prejudice from out of the 50's).

Whites were fleeing the city in droves, my parents had resisted that so far, but every day there were increasing incidents of violence at the high school that I went to, which finally exploded the morning that Dr. King was shot and murdered. We finally had to move as I was getting beaten up for no reason other than demographic change and reverse racism. (And the fact that somehow I had missed when they handed out racism, so I wasn't aware that I was supposed to be such, ergo, wasn't expecting any from black folks either.)

My point to the above story was that my parents thought they were responding to external demographics, (as they were). No one acknowledged to them that their lives were falling apart, that their health was affected in worrying about their children, and that they also might have felt horribly disrupted in their life purpose. We moved to a safer, less radically changing area of Detroit, and resumed our lives, but all my mother ever said about that era was that she and my father swore they would never move again, (and they didn't).

Very little discussion of how their values might have been challenged when faced with racism (on both sides), little guidance to the kids regarding the same, but my father suffered his first stroke during that time, certainly not due to that, but perhaps adjunct to the life stress experienced.

Nothing could have stopped the demographic forces sweeping Detroit at the time, and I do not in this book mean to refer to this with any political leaning. No one acknowledged their 40 something *personal* crises at the time. They were just moving to keep the kids safe. How many children have heard the term that their parents "did what they had to do" to care for them. I happen to think that it is not enough to leave it at that perception when there is insight and integration to be had when studying the problems that often appear at mid-life, which will help in the passage to the second part of life. There were undoubtedly African - Americans of all ages going through major psychological changes and advances, more than whites, but that is not the point in this book. The point is that the 40 something black parents probably had as much unrecognized mid-life angst as the whites, as their sons and daughters took on civil rights hats, Black Panther personas, and fought for their rights. I can easily imagine the other side, a black couple in their forties, working 2 jobs to get ahead, facing racism, and having whites stream out of the neighborhood that they were happy to have finally achieved the right and means to move into. This book acknowledges the personal crisis they might not have had time to acknowledge, not so much the demographic change that hid or covered their own MLC...

What does mid life transition mean and why should it be more of a “crisis” than other developmental times? Is it actually a crisis or just part of the process of life transition? Should it have been anticipated in ones life, or does it have to pop up suddenly, out of the blue, as changes unexpected? Can't it be a rational transition, or avoided altogether? I get these questions all the time from people, especially certain astrological types as well as just plain rational folks that are wanting calm and reason in their lives. We saw how Tina was recognizing that change had to happen, when her process spun out of all proportion to what she thought it was going to be. We will be looking at all sorts of stories where people had varying insights into the changes they were about to go through.

Each person's passage through the 40's will be different, and yet have similarities. It will be based on what they have created in life, which sounds simplistic, and almost too apparent to talk about, however laypersons and skeptics outside of astrology tend to think of our art as somewhat if not altogether deterministic.

This is not exactly true, and I would flip that observation on its ear and point out that, by mid-life what one has created for oneself is more deterministic than almost any dogma could possibly. We are all local or (parochial), and by now we have built our lives around a home, family, job, hopes for a pension, and retirement to Florida for a few warm years. How much more deterministic does it get than the average American couple in mid-life, who might be working 2 and 3 jobs to pay the mortgage, and 2 college educations? You have become what you worked 20 years to achieve.

In mid-life we look quite a bit at Saturn's role in your life and what the person has created in their past, to figure out what inner or outer structure has to break down, and where they might want to go, but that is just realistic, not exactly deterministic. In other words, if you made \$40,000 a year, and were a union steward at an auto company, you have life parameters different than a physician, or a coal miner; and at the time of your mid-life transition, you are not going to suddenly wake up and become a bank president tomorrow. You are going to be working with who you were and what you want to become from there, as you discover that. It is life in its daily mundane grind that becomes self deterministic and astrology that then tries to track this as well as the opportunities to change. Obviously one of the most affected and harmed group in mid-life is the women who chose to be a mother and housewife. She settled into that role and made the family work, as well as her husband's career, (she might have put hers on hold for him). Now in mid-life the husband has suddenly announced that he loves her but is no longer in love with her... (How many of you have heard that song before), and has had an affair or taken up residence with a 20 something who “appreciates him” for who he is, not just a paycheck! The previous role as wife and mother is about as deterministic as it gets when it comes to belief systems; that would be the belief that life could remain stable with-in the initial agreements of marriage that lasted until retirement. Now the man is starting to reap the rewards of his ability to focus on his career, while the woman has her

children to be proud of, and no current way back into the work force. Wouldn't it be much healthier to have a concept at least that there is a period of readjustment in ones forties, when the agreements that were made 14 -21 years ago could and should be reassessed?

I will talk about all of these cycles in detail in this book, but suffice to say that I think having a road map happens to be a prudent way to approach the life path; coming up to mid-life without a clue that things are about to drastically change is not what I call an enlightened life tour.

We do think that the orbital periods of the planets at mid-life do bring or indicate certain life goals and lessons; of course they are going to be built on what the person has created in the past, as well as their familial and socially collective past. Bill Ford's mid life transition would be different in some ways than others in the same community, as he is given many more responsibilities with a car company to run. Yet his transition will be the same as he is challenged to again, "grow up" even more and choose to take on those responsibilities, or not. In that sense, his crisis is no different than anyone else's in the community. It entails facing what you yourself, along with *life and your past* have created for you to deal with. It is important to recognize just this fact; that it is likely that much of what life is throwing you are curves that you at least had a hand in creating. It will be your task to ascertain how to react to these changes and how to grow with them.

As I was researching this book and thinking of more tragic figures in context of failing to negotiate these passages, I thought of Hank Williams. I play in the old-timey mountain genre, or New England type contra music, and I knew little about Hank, other than that he drank himself to death. What I wasn't surprised to see was that this was not in mid life, which he did not make it to, but was on his Saturn return (age 29), and he had gone down, as if on a mission of self-destruction. He died with transiting Saturn just passing his birth placement of Saturn, having just transited his Neptune, (Music and alcohol, and sad love songs). Saturn finished that mission. I use his example here because his story had much of the reckless determinism of the twenties. Hank, by the way had Jupiter in Scorpio, like Elvis Presley, (whom we will look at later), and while he was alive, he had "it", whatever that magnetism is on stage that says this is about more than singing. Women got it, and I can't even say that Hank Williams was a great singer... (But then again, I don't have to get "it", do I) ?

The *difference* in mid life from the age 30 Saturn Return is; by mid forties, we are in a career that we chose and are probably successful in, have children that we are rearing, and live in a community that we have invested in. We have survived our twenties and made our lives work, in some fashion. We *know* the forces that we have been dealing with, and can see at least some of the changes upcoming,

so in some ways the forties are eminently predictable. We had set those forces up, in our thirties, with all the power of an adult who knows what they want, and can choose to go for it. We know what many of our options are, and can follow them up or not, depending on our will. We have made our lives work! In fact as I will mention again, probably a few times in the book, in this particular breakdown of life's cycles, it is often that we have gotten all too comfortable with our lives in our thirties that constitutes the mid-life problem.

My own mid-life transition is a good example of that. By my late 30's I could do my job blindfolded, and wasn't learning much anymore. Instead of upgrading my degree (a B.S. in Psychology), I was engaged in all sorts of outside projects; building, neighborhood organizing and motorcycling. In other words, my life worked...but was getting stale.

Then mid-life hit. I have at times blackly joked that for my mid-life crisis, my significant other left me, my hospital job closed down, my good friend and fellow neighborhood organizer had *the nerve* to die and leave us; and on top of everything else, the two (attractive) women barbers that I had *finally* trained to not screw up my hair style, closed up shop and moved to New Orleans... Talk about desertion issues! And this was with a person who understands enough about astrology and psychology to know that change had to happen. It was still somewhat traumatic, as I did change in many ways, but all the time waiting for the other shoe to drop (as in waiting for something even more horrible to happen to me. (I mention more about my own transition in a later chapter).

My point there, if not too sacrilegious, is that, by our 40's it feels like we are just getting our lives right, but they are growing stale at the same time, and unbeknownst to us, about to fall apart. Sometimes it is the little desertions, like the women (or men) that cut your hair leaving, or your dentist or Dr. retires, (leaving you with some 20 something fresh out of residency that doesn't know the issues that are just starting to emerge in your health), that make us feel old or deserted. One of the disconcerting but fun little markers that I see with many women friends, clients or acquaintances of mine is them going into a reading with the words; "OK what is this that I'm looking at, I forgot my glasses in the car, (at home, at work, etc), bring that up on the screen a little bigger would you"?... Sorry ladies, but the need for reading glasses issue seems like a sudden cross to bear, whereas many of the women in late mid-life wear the Hot Flash like a badge of honor. Making it through a night sweat requires a 20 minute confab with the over - 45 gals, with comparison matches, (what is it they call it when men have these; ----ing matches?),

But being considerate enough to carry your own reading glasses into the restaurant so you can read your own menu seems like an Herculean task; it's so much easier to use his, right, and not quite admit that you have arrived in mid-life.

Or it can be like Tina, her crisis starting as knowledge that she maybe needs a change, maybe a divorce and poof: the crisis escalates way beyond that!

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The premise then of this book is that Mid life is just as dynamic and changing, as many of the other passages taken earlier, or later in life, and now in so many more arenas. I look at these changes through the astrological lens. Career, relationship, health, self-acceptance, aging; the list of changes is long. These areas of change in themselves are not mid-life "givens" in psychology, though they are to me as an astrologer. I think that it should be a "given" that these areas should be; must be examined in mid-life. I feel it is the most efficacious time to remake ones self, both inwardly and outwardly, for the rest of ones life. Many other writers talk about this time period in the same fashion, as one of total renewal. Astrology shows this to be the case as a tenant of the overwhelming nature of the planetary transits that hit at us at that time. That can mean different things to different people, and this is where the art of astrology helps us peek into the psyche one chose to enter life with, and help the person gain insight into why they are reacting to mid-life in the way that they are. Everything can be up for grabs for renewal in mid-life, since so many parts of ones life could be changing at this time. The psyche is ripe to be rebuilt but must be broken open first. (Sort of like Boot Camp, except with the additional psychological insult to the 40 something who feels that they should not be reduced to basics or starting over again.

What I don't want to do in this book and chapter by the way is recount or pretend to be an expert on all of the physical standards of change in mid-life. I don't want to redo what other capable researchers have shown as fairly proven standards of change, such as types of weight gain for each gender, menopausal changes, eye changes etc. I could recount them here, but prefer to just footnote to better references. I am also not exactly the proponent of medical astrology either; it is an art too fraught with the possibility of expectations creating realities, as well as the assumption that a good astrologer would also have a store of accurate and insightful medical knowledge. That is often a wrong expectation, one much too popular in the "new age" arts. If your astrologer is a good one, meaning well studied in the arts of psychology blended with good amounts of mythology, mysticism, and geometry, it is not a wild guess to assume that many of them would have no more than a rudimentary knowledge of actual medicine, even though astrology includes many projections about medicine, based mostly on common sense. Let me give an example of that common sense medical astrology. A person with a prominent but afflicted Jupiter would; according to astrology, be predisposed to liver problems. This is ascribed because of the "rulership" of Jupiter to the liver, (easily dismissed by science as mumbo-jumbo). Along the

lines of common sense however; we do see the personality of a person with a prominent Jupiter as someone who might be self indulgent, and somewhat grand to grandiose. That person might toxify his liver by just such self indulgent activity; this is common sense mixed with some rudimentary medicine. Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead certainly showed that aspect in his chart, he had a Venus/ Jupiter conjunction in Cancer, and a fondness not just for psycho tropics, but sweets also. Drugs and diabetes did him in, and it shows in astrology. We will look at his chart later, but suffice to say that, even though his astrology fits his malady, I am very careful in assessing medical astrology, and would rather have had a good nurse administering insulin rather than telling me the sign the moon was in, *at the point where Jerry was very ill*. Earlier in my life I would though have certainly preferred a good astrologer remind me that I was too self indulgent, and try to correct that behavior psychologically. You make the call, based on your best health options. There will be medical astrological references in this book, just very careful ones.

We are very much able to guide folks in assessing their physical energy types, if they don't already know them; for instance a Mars in Scorpio would have more of a propensity toward silent, steady exercise such as yoga, than would a Mars in Aries, and we can guide in these areas, but suffice to say that a thorough physical work-up is needed in mid-life, to assess the weaknesses, and, of course, we could assist in guiding someone to a physical regimen based on what we see as their energy types.

Let's look at and summarize some of the psychological and sociological areas that life presents with the need to change in mid-life, both in the personal as well as universal sense, apart from astrology, before breaking down how astrology looks at these transitions.

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Personal/ Psychological Changes:

Inner/ Cognitive, and Self-perceptual changes. As mid-life approaches, the awareness of ones needs and desires starts to shift. This is in part due to our outer world changing and giving us the space for growth, and partially due to internal change, as we react to certain approaching times of completion. These will be looked at in detail, according to the planetary changes, but lets look at them from more conventional psychological perspectives.

A: Circumstances change, requiring a cognitive shift, or a re-thinking of how one perceives the world. Would this mean the same thing to different people? Yes and no; Most people are more pressed to make the changes in mid-life; we will

look at why the transits of mid-life press on one to change, more than other times in life; however certain signs and planetary placements are more likely to want to change than others. This is not rocket science, so to speak; we have all known people who change with the wind, or not enough, or at all in a set of similar circumstances, through-out life. We see this in every day astrology; Gemini's who thrive on change, Taurus's who change grudgingly, Aquarians who pretend to be free spirits but won't budge from their take on an issue. The premise in astrology is that the inner sense of the need to change would be more pressing, in mid-life due to the planetary oppositions we look at; and how that gets worked out is subject to 20 or 30 discernable inputs in a chart, as well of course, as the people and externals involved in the mid-life precipitators

Change in Self perception is sort of a given in mid-life, except it can sneak up on one. I tell the story of going back to school for some classes, and having now an excellent store of knowledge to assist me in study, but I can no longer read the book without raising my normal set of glasses to see the print! Time for crisis, or just progressive lenses?

The various changes that take place in mid-life can sneak up on us incrementally, and if they are not of crisis proportion, are still self perceptive changes as we puff our way through an activity that used to take minimal effort.

In fact, that's what makes mid-life so hard sometimes to go through, is that our self perceptions have to change to what had been gradual attritions to our perceived marketability, to our self and the world. If we lose a job at 25, we usually hit the bricks without a pause and get another one. If we lose one at 44, we look around us in a couple of ways; usually glad to be released, "Free at Last" ..., and "What the hell am I going to be now? Who is going to hire me? What if we do go back to school, or just need to undertake a new study to upgrade our jobs. We discover that learning is not as easy as it used to be, and even if cognition is sharp, there is a developmental and emotional difference to being a "newbie" at something in mid-life, rather than age 12 or 17.

Then we were newbie's, now it feels like we should be in command of our lives, and instead we are pushed, or push ourselves to learn in new frontiers, at a time when we emotively feel we should be experts, or on top of our field, (as we may well be in parts of our lives) For instance, working in psychiatry, we work with language, feelings and behaviors, in therapeutic interactions and in the patient setting. So, although computers do entail cognition and knowledge theory, I never got around to using them until getting into the qEEG field, and then had to play some major catch-up, as do many physicians around the field. Doctors, who have a good knowledge of neuro-chemical analysis, still don't know how to save a file on Windows. These sorts of frustrating experiences aren't unusual for mid-life, but they are certainly not a comfort zone. This frustration can, of course spill over into the emotional also. In my MLC, I undertook learning brainwave analysis and banjo, guitar, mandolin, and writing.

The learning curve was pretty steep for me, and for a while I felt like an idiot, at a time in life when I should be very competent and on top of my game. This is a common aspect of mid-life, (emphasized by the transits we see in astrology), the phenomenon of having to remake oneself.

Behavioral changes may require a cognitive shift. These can also be internal or external, but are more likely to hit harder in Mid-Life. People (men more than women) have a cardiac event that forces them to slow down, and change their life-style. Or substance abuse catches up, and this time the patient realizes that the Dr is for real when he says your liver can't take much more. Behavioral changes sort of sometimes erupt in MLC also, as people realize that the aging process that they have heretofore allowed to go unchecked suddenly gets checked in a big way, as one goes to the gym, yoga class, roller blades, take your pick. I got into contra dancing, and since I didn't do so before age 45, I can't compare how I would have felt afterwards, but I know I appreciate my hot tub on a regular basis after, dance weekends especially. The point here is that there are many, many prompts to action in life in general, they just might be more challenging in mid-life, as they challenge the self perception as well as the body a little more.

Emotional Changes require external change. Changes happen, as the job, marriage, kids, body, take your pick, gets old. These are often subtle inner changes that rise to the surface, sort of like when your paddle hits the river bottom on a lazy trip upstream; slowly the gases bubble to the surface, and let them selves be known.

One begins with the dissatisfaction that has been apparent since age 38 when, at the very least, one knew he or she wasn't growing. (We will look at the astrological start of midlife, as the Neptune square that hits around age 39). This vague sense that something isn't quite right anymore grows as the transits start to hit.

These could be responses to the increasing stressors from outer-world. The actual job loss, or hot flash, or divorce actually hits, and now one responds as well as they might have been prepared to, which is sometimes not at all. Family shifts, children growing, parents invalid or dying, of course bring emotional changes as well as cognitive. Often it will be that life will have just hit you with a crisis, which may still have its roots in a chronic condition. Whether subtle or sudden it is likely that the emotional changes will be dealt within mid-life, if heretofore they have been swept under the rug of our thirties. I have seen and met as many responses as folks interviewed in this transition, as well as my own. I will be telling in more detail later a story about a relationship that should have broken up after 1 year, after seven years, then as mid life hit, had to end even though they would have liked to stick it out until the child was 18. I could not begin to count the marriages that break up at 21 years,(the third Saturn square of itself in that relationship) and in the person's actual mid-life. The distinguishing

comment that I often get in those is the same: "Oh yeah, it was over seven years ago, we should broken up then. We stayed together because...(reader insert personal causes, kids, finish education etc.) Mid-life just often precipitates what we have known for a long time, that a certain encounter or passage has actually been over for a long time.

Differences exist in how each person confronts the normative losses of mid-life, as our usual emotional responses may prove less than adequate to breadth of loss that we may experience at this time.

Astrology is of great assistance in identifying those responses, especially when we are changing the way we respond, but of course so would emotive therapy help. Whatever therapy one might seek in mid-life, it will be very likely that you will be emotionally restructuring yourself at this time, and in this respect, knowing a lot about what has to change in life isn't the same as feeling it. Mid-life can make you look at yourself, and who you have become, and that is another possible emotional shift. I will say that we as astrologers can usually see how the person is trying to handle the emotional side and help them out there, and we will look a lot at this dimension throughout the book

Finally, changes in the perception of one's importance to society's changing mores as one ages is a biggie in MLC. Does one have to remake ones self or can a person remain serene, knowing that they have made their contribution to the development and evolution of the human situation, or even just their part of the world, their family, job, neighborhood. This is a question for the ages and philosophy, but again often hits one in mid-life when other avenues of fulfillment have been exhausted, and /or when some crisis to us or someone we love hits, and reminds us of our mortality. The possible permutations to remaking ourselves are endless (within the confines of who we have been Sounds paradoxical of course.. I will illustrate later that these changes can go both ways, in the sense that a liberal can become conservative in mid-life, or vice versa. A person who was moralistic can become libertine, and a good old beer drinkin' kind of boy can suddenly become a Promise Keeper. Again this will depend on what you have been so far and what needs changing in your approach and response to society and the world.

Certainly one must think as one travels on in life what was all this for, and of course, I feel that astrology can help sort out those new paths, again after the old have been wiped out by a flood of changes that force the person on down new roads.

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This is a very short look at the changes that can hit at Mid-Life. We will look many other changes that affect us, as well as look at the timing, in the context of real people's changes, instead of going on describing theoretical changes. We will

look at what the theories are in astrological thought and how these theories might correspond to the observed realities out there. My sources for these mid-life observations, besides my own extensive readings and experience in the field come from primarily two different camps of writers, Astrologers, and Psychologist/ Social workers. My impression of the writers and studies that exist on Mid Life transition is that while they are all very insightful with the content of each individual's transition, however the patterns or theories that are being promoted need testing externally through more studies, and or tweaking internally through astrological timing and analysis.

The psychological writers seem to be inferring a pattern from these one on one encounters and stories of mid-life transition Their goal would be to set some standards for dealing with a mid life transition, as well as formulating and consolidating theories about midlife transition. This is almost always the underlying drive of the author in any psychological work of great import; the need to be recognized as the person that was able to invent clarify or thoroughly understand a psychological condition of mankind, and the mid life transition is one of the most important passages for man.

Much of the content of these folks' stories and insights gleaned from them are excellent, and I especially stand in awe of those writers that can take what to me is primarily a developmental passage, and see it through the eyes of psychotherapist and the unconscious where of course, all of our behavior starts. (Kathleen Brehony is very good at this.)

I however, tend also to think that all of this wisdom is out there already, and in my mind, these writers are missing the fact that there may well already be overall patterns to these mid-life changes, patterns that astrologers look at regularly in chart transits, patterns that they could use to postulate a set of parameters that their clients might predictably be going through. These are planetary orbital periods that give us impressions of the passages of life throughout the life cycles, not just mid-life. Our art is developmental and could not exist without this timing framework. This is especially true because of the fact that, with in this predictability to individual's passages there are many variances to these cycles, or influences other than the mid-life ones, that affect the transitions. These planetary influences or variances accentuate the crisis, or hide it, or extend it, or make it permanent. (Or symbolize this.) Part of what I am saying is self-apparent, that everyone is different and unique in his or her changes. What is not apparent is that as astrologers we can track the differences, or the difficulties, the variances, or the timing of the changes, whereas a psychologist uninitiated to the cyclic studies in astrology cannot bring that proactive element to therapy. They remain a little more distant from the client, in their need to watch as the client unfolds the crisis (if it is that) due to their inability to see the greater picture in a fell swoop.

In all fairness, the obverse problem exists for the astrologer, we see the life patterns, and can infer from our set of predetermined meanings and insights

what the client is probably going through, and run the risk of missing or not even listening to some of their feelings or content.

That said, or admitted to, I however could not go backwards to basically what I would think of as rummaging around in the closet without a light, i.e. trying to do psychology without the aid of astrology. Even if it is your closet, and you know what outfits are in there, there is no guarantee that you will find the right one, for that day, for that transition, without that light. (And if you are a Libra, you know what that can do to your day having the wrong outfit on for the occasion, if you are a Gemini male you could probably care less..)

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I will sketch out these interweaving cycles in the next chapter, and then look more specifically at how they present in mid life issues.

We will spend time especially in looking at ways that a mid-life passage can be somewhat classic, or can be variant from current accepted thought in either field, (that of astrology or that of psychology). Since people are unique, and we are sort of in the early stages of the development of this part of psychology, I don't want some rigid set of accepted passages set down in stone, which we can then say an adult is not adhering to or successfully transiting. I look at the dozens of permutations of mid-life transition astrologically, or any transition actually, and try to explain to the client the timing of the cycles, as well as the variances and complexity without actually predicting certain things. We are asked to predict things all the time, a dicey business indeed, best left to some incredibly accurate psychic astrologers. We do talk about trends all the time, and in all respect to my field, there are incredibly accurate predictive factors, and predictive astrologers, out there.

My preferred technique in therapeutic astrology is to spell out the forces as I see them, and then explore options with the client. This is the best therapeutic use of astrology, though most people want some sort of all knowing seer, when they finally go to an astrologer, and I usually manage to impress if that is what they need for credibility's sake.

A good example of non-predictive astrology was my mother's passing recently. I knew that when Mars opposed where hers was in her birth chart that it might be the most difficult time for her physically. It was; she received chemo-therapy treatments at the time for cancer, and did not actually die at that time. I would have been wrong in predicting death at that time, (and wrong to predict death at any time) but I was right in noting that this would probably be the most difficult time for her with pain, fatigue, nausea etc. Eight months later, when she did die, the focus was less on the physical, which was slipping away, and more on the last growth issues of family interactions and legacy. What was interesting was that she died on the day that Saturn transited my 4th house cusp, which, among other things would indicate a normal ending, a passing of the old guard so to

speak, which it was. It was not a horrid traumatic untimely death, but a timely transition of life. I could have predicted her passing with my chart, but of course I did not.

In the same fashion we track midlife issues, and assist with therapeutic content, while not trying to dictate opinions and decisions to clients.

It is a tight rope walk indeed. I also know as an astrologer and as a person, that life brings only some guarantees with it, and I look at many mid-life decisions as a set of variable choices. Folks make choices based on their perception of what might be best for them, or choose not to take that path, choose instead other routes up to and including failure, suicide and even death of course. Mid-life ought to have an existential dialogue and some great difficulty to it, as the choices are very real, and the paths divergent. If we help point out the variety of options indicated by the transits, it assists in a client weighing their options.

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I have spent much of this first chapter trying to defend the idea that there is a mid-life transition, and will in the remainder of the book tie it to astrology, I hope convincingly. Most disturbing to the development of mid life thought and astrological analysis is the problem that that Astrology will have the usual difficulty promoting its insights as main-stream. (Inasmuch as modern science prejudices against the use of what they would call a non valid approach) This however, is problematic, and is simply unacceptable.

All developmentalists look for that Holy Grail of analysis that sets out a discernable stepwise evolution that the idealized person would follow.

Astrologers have the best platform and framework available, but we bear the prejudice of the researcher caught in the beguiling web of so-called realism. Because of this pre-conceived prejudice on the side of science, I feel it is important to do the studies, blind of astrological inputs, that help build the bones of this transition, but we will not be wasting our time in this book writing dry studies of demographical proofs. These are stories of living breathing people whose lives have been to their perception, suddenly ripped apart, and are trying to rebuild and heal.

That said about this book; all the better then to challenge any psychologists out there interested in the field to do the studies, formulate the theories, and write those dissertations on observed behavior alone, so that the body of knowledge grows on its own merits, and observations. That will give this so-called midlife passage validity and reliability, and give the substantiation, and validation of science.

I, of course prefer the incredibly accurate and insightful methodologies of astrology; a knowledge and practice that allows me to quite often cut to the chase

and identify major issues within seconds of meeting a person. Let us look at some cycles.