

Steve Wenick, a middle-aged visitor to my web site, completed the following profile of men and women in their 40's as part of his graduate work. He sent it on to me and I thought I would offer it to you to read as well, with his permission. How accurate do you think they are? If you're in your 40's or have passed through already, do they make sense in your experience? If you have comments or reactions you'd like to share, e-mail them to me at bob@middleage.org.

Developmental Profile The 40's

Physical Development

Both Males & Females

- Two most notable changes: decline in hearing & seeing.
- Decrease in height.
- Hair is graying.
- Increasing wrinkles.
- Middle-age spread due to metabolism slow down.
- Bone mass deterioration.
- Slow steady decline in strength.

Males

- Balding.
- Decrease in testosterone levels between ages 45 - 50 (see Sexual Development).
- Health is more important to men.

Females

- Decrease in estrogen levels between ages 45 - 52 (see Sexual Development).



Social Development

Both Males and Females

- Need to recognize & nourish the changes noted in the other.
 - Not a time when couples divorce - but will separate for a time & come back together.
 - Dramatic climb in satisfaction in marriage after the mid-life crisis (see Cognitive Development).
 - Mate becomes a source of good friendship.
 - Grown children may become good friends & companions.
 - Individuals alone may find this period essentially good, being responsible only for themselves.
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- Rediscover community.

Males

- Being good father as important as promotions.
- Career position is important.
- Become family oriented.

Females

- Wives may want to go out to work; to seek their own way after the children leave.

Cognitive Development

Both Males & Females

- Mental stress due to caring for ageing parents & children.
- Death of remaining living parent one of the most constant crisis areas in image of self.
- May fixate on another's illness/disease.

Both Males & Females in Mid-life Crisis

- May be panicky; fear of getting too introspective.
- If depression does set in - get help!



- Looks more to the past than the future.
- Men & career women feeling time is running out; can everything be accomplished?
- Assessment of self extends to examination of responsibilities, career, and marriage.
- Time of considerable inner stress.
- Aging versus successful aging.
- Letting go of impossible dreams leads to sense of relief.
- Realigning goals and setting new ones.
- Dealing with dreams and aspirations.
- Adjusting idealistic hope to realistic possibilities.
- Recognizing the need to change in thinking.
- Replacing achieved goals & dreams with new goals & dreams.
- Moving out of roles; becoming more aware of self.

Males in Mid-Life Crisis

- Denying of middle-age through various escape mechanisms, i.e., affairs with younger women, extreme exercise to try to maintain body, and by being a workaholic to avoid thought on crisis.
- Learning balance between career and family.
- At 45, restabilizes & equilibrium returns.

Females in Mid-Life Crisis

- Empty nest syndrome.
- May enter crisis period before mate.
- Become bored.
- Caregiving changes; becomes redirected, directing focus to outside of home
- Becoming aware of own identity.
- Many enjoying time for themselves.
- Many choosing not to remarry after divorce.

Sexual Development

Males

- Testosterone levels decrease gradually & over long period of time.
- Climacteric (male menopause) occurs between ages 45 & 50.

- Climacteric seems to affect only 15% of men with changes in hormonal levels
- Symptoms include:

- Moodiness
- Anxiousness at ageing.
- Anxiety leading to further decrease in testosterone.
- Morning fatigue, lassitude, & vague pains; nervousness, irritability, & depression; diminished sexual potency; dizzy spells, hot flashes, chills, sweating, & headaches.

Females

- Estrogen levels begin to decrease.
- Menopause may begin around ages 45 to 50 years old; sometimes older.
- 90% of women are not overwhelmed by problems of menopause.
- Before menopause:
 - Vaginal lubrication diminishes to a degree.
 - Irregular periods & shorter cycles.
 - Fatigue & less energy.
 - Depression & mood swings.
 - During menopause:
 - Menstruation stops.
 - Hot flashes & skin temperature rises & falls.
 - Insomnia or sleep disruption.
 - After menopause:
 - Nervous system changes.
 - Vaginal dryness.
 - Bladder problems.
 - Increase in loss of bone mass.
 - "Menopause is as individual as a thumbprint. No two women experience it alike."

Creativity

- Creative crisis may occur:
 - Creative capacity may emerge & assert itself for the first time.
 - Individual may burn out creatively or literally die.
 - Individual's work undergoes decisive change.
 - This age group is redefining middle-age as: "The Adult Revolution".
 - Many are constructing a new second adult identity & reinventing self.

- 40's seen as gateway to "New Beginning".