

Signs You Are Experiencing Depression Versus a Midlife Crisis

Just hearing the phrase “midlife crisis” conjures thoughts of balding men zipping around in expensive sports cars trying to wow younger women, but the midlife transitional period is no joke. People go through profound, abrupt changes that can be devastating. A midlife crisis isn’t a psychological disorder *per se*, but it’s still an uncomfortable period of transition between 40 and 55, although there’s some variability in the timing of midlife crises. Men and women experience midlife crises somewhat differently.

The most important factor that can easily differentiate a midlife crisis from depression is that people experience the symptoms of depression on a daily basis. A person experiencing a midlife crisis may still have enjoyable days and feel fine, whereas depression is a chronic biologically-based mood disorder.

A midlife crisis is a conflict between a person’s perception of themselves and their lives as they think they are and what they want them to be. It’s generated by the desire to change or improve one’s identity. A middle-aged person who is content with themselves and their past can experience depression but will not experience a midlife crisis. A midlife crisis is a [purely psychological disorder](#), although it can co-occur with depression.

What are the Symptoms of a Midlife Crisis?

Midlife crisis symptoms vary widely from [person to person](#). The most common midlife crisis age range is 35 to 55, with some variability between genders. There’s overlap between many symptoms of a midlife crisis and depression too. Figuring out what’s going on can be a challenge, as different disorders may be occurring at once.

Consider the following symptoms of a midlife crisis common to men and women:

1. Feeling unfulfilled in life
2. Intense feelings of nostalgia, chronic reminiscence about the past
3. Feelings of boredom, emptiness and meaninglessness
4. Impulsive, often rash actions
5. Dramatic changes in behavior and appearance
6. Marital infidelity or constant thoughts about infidelity
7. Constantly comparing one’s self to others, who seem happier or more fulfilled
8. Intense feelings of regret

The Symptoms of a Midlife Crisis in Men

Men may also experience the loss of their sex drive, erectile dysfunction, decreased levels of testosterone and feelings of sadness. Sadness in a midlife crisis tends to be much less intense in comparison to full-blown depressive disorders.

Note that people show great individual differences in their [symptoms](#). Some may show only one or two of these characteristics; others may experience all of them.

Midlife Depression Symptoms Include:

1. Changes in sleep habits, either insomnia or sleeping too much
2. Changes in appetite
3. Intense, often debilitating feelings of sadness
4. Feelings of guilt and worthlessness
5. Lack of interest or enjoyment in previously fun activities (anhedonia)
6. Changes in body weight (unplanned loss or gain)
7. Loss of interest in sex
8. Withdrawal from social interactions
9. Elevated levels of anxiety, fear and worry
10. Irritability and anger (typically in men)
11. Tearfulness, uncontrollable emotions (most often in women)
12. Thoughts of death or self-harm
13. Aches and pains without an identifiable cause, including muscle pain, digestive problems, and headaches

Midlife Crisis and Depression in Women

Depression is a significant concern for [women in midlife](#). When looking at gender and age, women from age 40 to 60 have the highest rates of depression of any group. Depression in middle-aged women is made more complex due to menopause. Menopause during midlife crises naturally makes the situation worse. Female depression at age 50 or up can be perimenopausal depression. Perimenopausal depression is a type of depression unique to women and is in part aggravated by fluctuating levels of estrogen. Painful or abnormal menstrual cycles, hot flashes and intense, abrupt mood swings are often symptoms of depression women in middle age endure.

Women in midlife crises suffer many of the same [symptoms](#) as men; however, women tend to experience less anger and irritability and more tearfulness. At the same time women usually have midlife crisis, they are also in the approximate age range for menopause, which has a big impact on midlife. Women who don't have children confront their feelings about their decision to remain childless.

Depression versus a Midlife Crisis

Major depression isn't linked to a particular age or period in a person's life. It is a disease that can strike anyone, regardless of their feelings of satisfaction or contentment with their lives. Although midlife depression can be aggravated by external situations, it's a disorder of the nervous system, particularly the way in which the nerves and tissues of the brain communicate with each other, coupled with the challenges brought about by a person's unique environment.

Depression also has nothing to do with goal-directed behavior; that is, a person cannot become depressed by trying to or wanting to. Likewise, they cannot move past a depressive episode by force of will. A midlife crisis without co-occurring depression involves impetuous, rash and

impulsive behavior that originates from a person's desire to recapture lost youth or to make radical life changes without careful consideration.

A midlife crisis involves a person's questioning of their identity as they leave young adulthood behind. Successfully resolving a midlife crisis means making peace with one's life as it has been and either continuing on or making changes to get more satisfaction out of life.

Midlife Crisis and Depression in Middle-Aged Men

Not only are men at elevated risk for depression in midlife, they're at an increased risk of suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control, white men between 45 and 54 have the highest rates of suicide in the nation. The symptoms of depression in middle-aged men are similar to those in women except men tend to become irritable, angry and may act out with some aggression.

How To Deal With Midlife Crisis Symptoms

Coping with a midlife crisis is challenging because a person's feelings are screaming at them that something is wrong and must be corrected immediately. It's the sense of urgency, the feeling that time is running out that drives people to make poor, even disastrous decisions. It's important to slow down.

- **Make no hasty decisions.** Making a change for the sake of having done something isn't a good plan. The bigger the decision, the more thought needs to be given to it.
- **Talk to someone.** Men and women in a midlife crisis feel lonely and isolated. Find someone to open up to, and if you don't have anyone you trust, see a professional mental health expert.
- **Touch base with reality.** Remember that your emotions are not necessarily grounded in reality. Emotions themselves are real, but they may be based on an incorrect interpretation of things. Get some objective input into your situation.
- **Be kind.** Be kind to yourself and others. If you've given thought to dissolving or changing a big relationship and decided after reflection you want to do that, proceed with kindness. If you're quitting your job to go back to school, don't surprise your family by ambushing them with the announcement. No matter what you decide, remember that you're always part of a tapestry of connections.

If you want to beat midlife depression and you're concerned about the many side effects of antidepressants, consider NeuroSpa TMS in Tampa, Florida. NeuroSpa TMS offers treatment for depression via Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), an FDA cleared non-invasive treatment for mental health disorders. NeuroSpa TMS uses targeted magnetic pulses to stimulate areas of the brain that affect mood, which helps you get back to your best life quickly and with no side effects. Among the many depression treatment options out there, TMS therapy is an excellent, pain-free solution that is covered by most insurance. Learn more at <https://www.neurospatms.com/>.

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