

7 steps that will take your midlife career from confusion and frustration to clarity and power



By Caroline Stagg

Hi, I'm Caroline Stagg



Thank you for downloading this eBook. I hope it gives you the inspiration you need to take action and make the move into the next chapter of your work life. I've made this journey and worked with many others to help them do it too.

I did a degree in Psychology, then accidentally fell into a long career in publishing, which served me well for many years.

Then gradually things started to change; it started to feel a harder to care so much. My ideas then never seemed to get off the ground.

It was hard to see my next move. I blamed it on 'politics'. I would wake up in the middle of the night feeling frustrated and confused. I felt isolated. I couldn't talk to anyone about it. I couldn't contemplate leaving my job because I had no idea what I would do instead; what I even wanted to do. I didn't know where to start. I was the biggest obstacle.

What with looking after my children as well as my ailing parents, it was easy to have an excuse not to face facts but eventually it hit me:

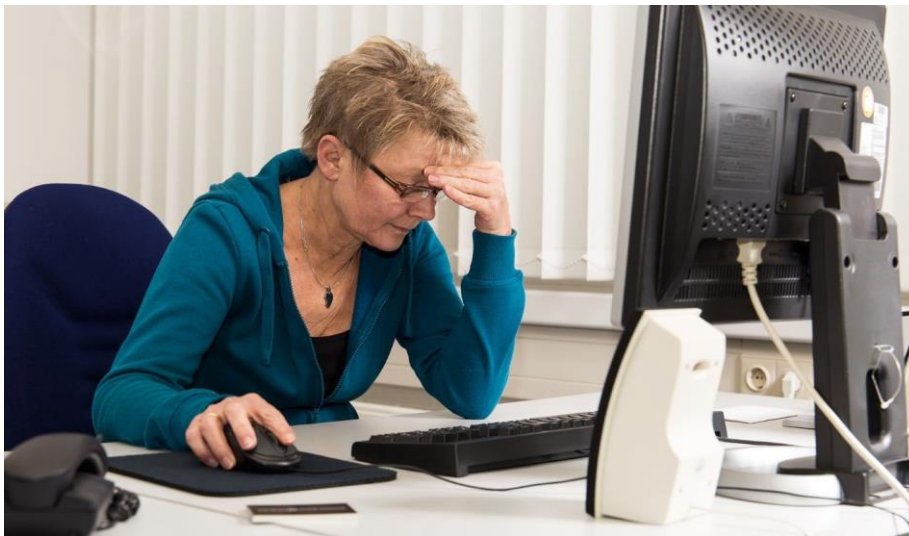
There is literally no one who is going sort this out for you – no one is going to tell you what to do or save you: you have to save yourself.

This realisation was chilling but it was the catalyst that made me make the break.

I freelanced; I did lots of personal development work. I learned about the extent of the problem that I had been experiencing. So, bringing everything I learned in my corporate career of 20+ years, my freelance career of six years, everything I learned from Psychology, from years of personal development and from having coached tons of people in businesses, schools, and charities, I have created this **7-step process** that I wish I had been able to follow. I hope it gives you the clarity you deserve.

If you're reading this, maybe you're in your 40s, wondering how you measure up to all the bright young things coming up through the ranks; whether your sell-by date is about to run out. Maybe you're in your 50s, staring down the barrel of another 15+ years of feeling like this.

You're likely to be wondering how come the career that you longed for – and worked so hard for – just doesn't light you up each morning when you think about what the day holds. Something's holding you back and there's fear running in the background. You know what's holding you back is not a lack of skills.... and you've got experience.



Have you ever wished someone could show you the best way for you shake off this fear and anxiety and breathe life back into your career without burning out, neglecting your family and friends and falling asleep in front of the TV or laptop every night, after eating the first thing that came to hand in the kitchen before crawling up the stairs and flopping into bed?

Sometimes (too many times) you end the working day feeling defeated. Or worse, you're still sitting there at 7...8...9 even 10pm, unmotivated and procrastinating, with nothing to show for it. It's soul destroying. It's impacting on those around you, people you care about.

You joke about your life being like a bad remake of the film Groundhog Day...but actually, it's not that far from the truth!

I'm writing this book because I see so many people failing to reach their potential even though they have amazing skills and are SO creative and gifted. It breaks my heart that some of the most talented people I know, who are in positions of management and leadership, are held back from doing their best work as they move into their 40s and 50s, because they don't have the clarity or motivation they need to show up in order to get ahead and get others on board, to bring the ideas, to create collaboration, and to forge partnerships – to create the impact they are capable of making – and get the rewards that brings.

Wherever there is resignation there is lost opportunity and lost potential

The thing is: it's not just you that's suffering – we're all suffering when people can't reach their full potential because the world needs people like you to step up and do their best work. How's it going to happen if we're all just going through the motions, 'getting by' and surviving?

If that's you, you're not alone: a 2017 Gallup poll found that **85% of workers worldwide hate their jobs**. Only 13% of workers feel a sense of passion for their work and spend their days driving innovation and moving their company forward.



Most people are sleepwalking through their days, putting little energy into their work – with **23% actively hating their jobs**. Can you imagine how much world-wide unhappiness is hidden in this? How much lost potential? How much under-achievement? I've been as guilty of it as anyone: I was one of those sleepwalkers.

Increasing life expectancy and rising retirement ages have serious implications

If you think the stakes are high now, think how high they are if you don't do anything about it. How about another 15-25 years of feeling the way you do now about every working day?

Perhaps you've been thinking about doing something for years, trying to find a way out and towards something more fulfilling and in line with who you are now but haven't really got anywhere. Either way, hanging on for dear life and contemplating your mortality is the wrong strategy if you're going to set the scene for making the most of the next 40 or 50 years!

This is why I believe that a Midlife Career Crisis is exactly what you need! It's the push you need to re-evaluate:

- where you are
- what's working at work and what isn't
- who you've become
- who you want to be
- what's important to you now
- what brings you happiness, joy, fulfilment, contentment – whatever you call it – and how you can bring that into your life.

The problem is you don't have a plan for how to solve this. You're likely overwhelmed and unsure of the right path, afraid of making a wrong turn and don't even know how to get started.

I have put together this **7-step plan** which provides the building blocks you need to find your own unique path to the work and life you deserve, and it will work for you whatever the twists and turns your career takes, whatever changes go on in your life, whether you're looking to carve out a new role where you are or looking to move on.

It'll show you what to focus on – what you need to become more adaptable and flexible – without losing sight of what's important because we need to adapt to everything life throws at us, so we can course-correct, without being knocked off course.

It's an opportunity to truly understand the best path for you, and the best way to reach it for you, the way you are *now* – using your own strengths and areas for development.

Why leave it to chance when there's a plan you can follow?

Step 1 – Self-awareness:

We see the world not as it is, but as we are

For the journey you're embarking on, one of the key factors will be the way that you engage with other people (*more on this in a later step*).

How you come across to other people is key but it's something that we're often not aware of because we all tend to operate on autopilot. We see things the way we prefer to see them; we think that people are like we are and think what we think, appreciate what we appreciate.

However, it's not the case: they are motivated by different things, like to be communicated with differently, use different behaviours.

So, the ways you communicate and behave have a significant effect when you are trying to build relationships, gain credibility and positively influence others. The signals you're giving off may not be the ones you're intending.

We have all heard of the Golden Rule: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' This implies the basic assumption that other people would like to be treated the way that *you* would like to be treated.

The alternative to the Golden Rule is the Platinum Rule: 'Treat others the way *they* want to be treated. This shifts the focus of shifts from 'this is what I want, so I'll give everyone the same thing' to 'let me first understand what they want and then I'll give it to them.'

We need to try to see people the way that *they* are and not just the way that we are.

Do a personal SWOT analysis: understand your strengths and weaknesses

Take time to discover your strengths. Ask people you know what they think your strengths are:

- What do people value you for?
- What do they ask for your advice on?
- Which problems would they come to you with for help?
- What do people say you're good at?
- What type of leader are you?

Get a wider perspective on your strengths. Do the same for your areas of development.

If you're serious, go to a professional who can give you access to profiling systems that can also help you with these areas.

Step 2 – Get clear on your values

A value is a 'hot button' that drives a behaviour

Even though you are unlikely to be aware of it, everything you do is done to fulfil a value. Knowing your values and their relative importance is key to leading a happy and healthy life.

For example: you might go swimming regularly to fulfil the value of improving your health and benefit from feeling relaxed afterwards. You might drink alcohol to fulfil the value of feeling less inhibited and to enjoy being sociable at a party. You might buy nice clothes to fulfil the value of looking good or feeling that you fit in, in whatever situation you find yourself.

You do what you do to either move towards a pleasurable feeling or value (a 'towards value'), or to move away from or avoid unpleasant or painful values or feelings (an 'away-from' value).

There's a little bit of both 'toward' and 'away from' in every value – a little bit of pleasure and a little bit of pain. For example, we might clean the windows because it's enjoyable to be able to look out through perfectly clear glass but also because of what the neighbours might think if we had dirty windows.

We feel good/happy when we successfully fulfil our 'towards' values, or successfully avoid our 'away from' values; and we feel 'bad' or unhappy when we aren't fulfilling these.

So, values can pull us in different directions. Without awareness of our values, we end up doing things without understanding why we do them. We might even continue in a career that makes us miserable and unfulfilled because we have a 'towards' value of 'security' which conflicts with an away from value of 'tradition'.

Values can change over the years so it's important to keep in touch with them

For example, my father was a development engineer with a strong work ethic who worked hard all his life, to the point that when he became ill with leukaemia he didn't even realise, and it was only after he was hospitalised with his spleen three times the size it should be that he realised why he had been falling asleep at his desk in the middle of the day for months. He was lucky and lived another 30 years.

Of course, I inherited that value of 'work hard' from him, but he had learned to take care of himself and would tell me: 'Nobody ever said on their deathbed that they wish they had spent more time at the office...'

(NB Who you are around on a consistent basis shapes your values and beliefs.)

Who do you listen to? Your past does not have to be your future?

Step 3 – Get clear on your vision

How do you attract the work you want, the projects that allow you to do your best work? If you don't know where you're headed, then it's going to be a lot harder to get there or communicate to others what you're about.

You may well be used to working for companies that have a well-formed vision statement. But what about your own personal vision statement?

As Simon Sinek says:

'People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it'

An effective vision statement says *why* you do what you do. It's the big picture for your ideal future, it defines the result you're going for; where you want to be, what success looks like. It's like a North Star that guides you towards your long-term achievements and dreams.

Try brainstorming the answers to these questions and get each answer down to six words – this isn't as easy as it sounds – be creative, use contractions:

- Where do I want to be in the future?
- Where does my excitement and motivation come from?
- What is the long-term effect I want for customers, the industry, the economy, environment, world?
- What does ultimate success look like for me?
- What core values drive me?
- How do I want people to describe me in 10 years?

This is a great exercise in using powerful language and getting to the heart of your ideas. You can use a synonym finder or an app such as [Wordflex.com](https://www.wordflex.com) to help you.

Now, write your vision statement in one or two sentences. The shorter it is the more memorable it will be to you and to potential employers or clients. Think about how it sounds when it's said aloud. Does it sound like you? Are you comfortable saying it? Does it sound exciting – to others and to you?

Your vision statement forms a key part of your 'personal marketing'. It's how people know to choose you.

Step 4 – Your mission

Where your vision is your 'cause', your mission is your 'effect'. Vision statements are aspirational; mission statements are what you will actually do to bring about your vision. Vision is 'Why'; mission is 'How'.



A personal mission statement will help you separate what is important from what is not, reminding you which markets, industries, or fields you are aiming to serve and how; it gives a sense of your intended direction for your new career or work. A mission is something to be 'accomplished'; whereas a vision is something to be pursued for that accomplishment.

Questions to ask:

- What do I do and how do I do it?
- What do I stand for?
- What problems do I solve?
- What do I offer that is particularly important or unique?

Do you want to make serious money, or is it enough to just make a living?
(Check with your values)

Your mission statement should be able to withstand the changes that come up over time. It's possible that you could deliver on your vision in a variety of ways.

Step 5 – Your Edge

Your edge is your secret weapon



Successful people and organizations have an edge. It might be a skill or area of expertise, or it could be the way that you handle certain people or situations, killer insights you have.

There'll be several things that you're good at, but your edge is what makes you valuable. If you have years of experience with a certain industry, and have insights on how it could be improved, that might be your edge. Your insight is something that no-one else has realised. You might have connections and a network that will allow you bring different opinions and perspectives.

Questions to ask

- What talents and skills do I have that are valuable? How do I define its edge in the marketplace I'm interested in?
- What do you do best? What should you do best?
- What talents and skills do you have that set you apart from others in your field?
- If you were going to be the best in the world in some area, what would it be?
- How do you use these talents to help others do what they do best?
- What are the things you know that few others know?
- What can you build that few others can?
- What unique or rare insights do you have that others don't?

Step 6 – Professional relationships

'Your network is your net worth' is true in so many ways

Successful people get results by working with other people (make sure you read the 'Self-awareness' section thoroughly). Therefore, having strong professional relationships with the right people determines a large part of your success. It will help you greatly if you can identify the key people you need on your side to help you succeed.

You DO have lots of contacts and now is the time to buy them a coffee. They may work in a high-level position or they may work in a much more junior position.

However, if they work in a company or area you're interested in they may be in a position to drop your name and really help you.

Questions to ask

- Which relationships are key to your future success?
- Which suppliers?
- Which government, industry, or sector officials?
- Which key leaders?
- Which customers?
- Which advisors?
- Who else?

Step 7 – Top 3-5 initiatives

Have a project to talk about and enrol people into

It will be easier to attract potential employers, clients, and collaborators if you have some work going on in the area you want to move into that you're supporting or leading. So, get some projects going or have some to talk about. They need to be in alignment with your vision (but not necessarily with your mission) so that you can focus effectively and, ideally get some performance metrics to show for your input. Which are the top three to five initiatives you need to drive to show your edge, better serve the people you're aiming at, and continue to move forward?

Your projects should directly and powerfully contribute to your vision and mission. If you get too many projects going at the same time, it will be too many to leverage so keep it to fewer than five at the very most. *Tell* people what you're up to. Share, share, share about your journey. You let it to remain a well-kept secret

So, there you have it: the 7 steps that can take you from frustration and confusion about what to do next, to clarity and power about how to do it

It's going to take time and commitment on your part to see it all through. When you've lived with so much anxiety around your career for a long time, it can be difficult to unpack it. There's likely to be blindspots - otherwise you'd have solved it by yourself by now, right?

So: If you'd like me to show you EXACTLY how you can start getting out of the fear trap and become clear on what you need to do next - using a *step-by-step plan* that is customised to your personal situation, then I'd love to help you have a breakthrough - ***and the entire session will be on me!***

I get quite lot of requests for this, so sessions are limited:

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](https://calendly.com/carolinestagg/45-minute-strategy-session)

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"From growing my confidence in my career choices, through prompting me to take the right steps to create the life I want career-wise, the transformation Caroline has taken me through is colossal."

Alex, London

"I have been impressed with Caroline's ability to explore not only what my goals are but also the precise actions I self-generated to achieve them."

Matt, West Country, England

"The significant moment for me was when I fully understood everything I was doing. It was staring at me in the face, but I didn't recognise and unify my activities. It was a catalyst moment for me and now, I am working revising my business model and I believe my social enterprise will do well and has a purpose"

Viviane Williams www.wakeupcampaign.co.uk

"Caroline has helped me realise what I need to do to deal with combining family and career. She has given me confidence to come up with fresh ideas about to how to push forward with projects whilst not impacting on my family and academic commitments."

Sandra, Blackheath, London



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