

When the Career That Fit You Then Doesn't Quite Fit Now

It usually starts with a whisper. You're sitting in a meeting you've sat in a hundred times before, or you're looking at a spreadsheet that used to feel like a satisfying puzzle, and suddenly, a thought drifts in: *Is this it? Is this what I'm doing for the next fifteen years?*

If you are feeling a sense of friction between who you are today and the work you do every day, I want you to take a deep breath. You aren't failing, you aren't becoming "difficult," and you certainly aren't losing your edge. You are simply evolving.

In our 20s and 30s, many of us chose careers based on a version of ourselves that no longer exists. We chose based on the need for validation, the drive for financial security, or perhaps a passion that has since been dampened by the realities of corporate culture or the sheer exhaustion of the "hustle." Now, in midlife, the internal landscape is shifting.

The Midlife Career Paradox: Successful but Searching

I hear from women every day who feel a strange sense of guilt about their career dissatisfaction. They say things like:

- **"I worked so hard to get here. Why don't I want it anymore?"** There is a specific kind of grief in reaching the "top" only to realize the view isn't what you expected.
- **"I don't hate my job. I just don't want it to own my life."** This is the realization that the trade-off—your time and energy for a title and a paycheck—is no longer a fair exchange.
- **"I have no idea what else I would do."** After twenty years in one industry, the outside world can feel vast and intimidating.
- **"I want more responsibility... or maybe I want much less."** Some women feel a surge of "it's my turn" energy, while others feel a deep soul-hunger for a slower pace. Both are valid.
- **"I've spent years caring for everyone else. What would I even put on a résumé?"** The "invisible" skills of managing a household or navigating a decade of caregiving are often the most valuable, yet the hardest to name.

Note

A Shift in Perspective: Outgrowing a career, a role, or a company does not mean choosing it was a mistake. It means that the "you" who made that choice did exactly what she needed to do for that season of life. You are allowed to thank that version of yourself and then move toward what fits the woman you are becoming.

Normalizing the "Midlife Mismatch"

We often talk about midlife as a crisis, but I prefer to think of it as a **re-calibration**. Your body is changing, your hormones are shifting, and your perspective on time is narrowing. When you realize you likely have more years behind you in the workforce than you have in front of you, the stakes change.

You start to value **meaning** over **metrics**. You start to value **peace** over **prestige**.

If you find yourself dragging your feet to your desk, it might not be because you're "burnt out" in the traditional sense. It might be because the role you are in is a size 6, and you are now a size 12—spiritually, intellectually, and energetically. You've expanded. You've learned. You've survived things that the 22-year-old version of you couldn't have imagined.

The "I Need the Paycheck" Reality

I want to be very clear: we are not here to talk about "following your passion" at the expense of your mortgage. For many of us, the paycheck is the non-negotiable foundation of our lives. We have kids in college, aging parents who need support, or simply the desire to retire with dignity and a full pantry.

When you feel stuck because of finances, the frustration can feel even heavier. You might feel like a prisoner to your own success. But even within the "I must stay for the money" reality, there is room to **Notice, Widen, and Choose**.

- **Notice:** What specifically about the job is draining you? Is it the work itself, or the way you are doing it?
- **Widen:** Are there ways to stay in the role but change the boundaries? Could a lateral move within the same company preserve your benefits while refreshing your daily tasks?
- **Choose:** Can you choose to view the job as a "sponsor" for the life you want to lead outside of work, rather than the source of your identity?

Exercise: The "Then vs. Now" Audit

To understand why the fit feels off, we have to look at the evolution of your needs. Use the following prompts to reflect on the difference between the woman who started this career and the woman reading this today.

Exercise

Reflective Journaling:

1. **The Then:** When I first entered this field/role, what were my top three priorities? (e.g., proving myself, making \$70k, learning the ropes).
2. **The Now:** What are my top three priorities today? (e.g., sleeping 8 hours, feeling like my

work helps people, having Fridays off).

3. **The Gap:** Where is the biggest conflict between my current daily reality and my "Now" priorities?

4. **The Gratitude:** What is one thing this career *has* provided for me that I am genuinely grateful for? (This helps remove the shame of wanting to leave).

The Fear of Starting Over

One of the biggest hurdles in midlife is the feeling that we are "too old to be a beginner." We worry that if we change paths, we lose all the ground we've gained.

"You are not starting from scratch. You are starting from experience."

This is the Power Reset Path mantra. You aren't a 22-year-old intern anymore. If you decide to pivot, you are bringing two or three decades of conflict resolution, project management, emotional intelligence, and "figuring it out" to the table.

Whether you stay exactly where you are but change your approach, or you decide to burn it all down and start a bakery, the goal is the same: **Intentionality**. You are no longer drifting along the path set by your younger self. You are taking the wheel.

Moving from "I Should" to "I Want"

Society is very good at telling women what they *should* want in midlife. We are told we should be "leaning in" to leadership, or we should be "slowing down" to care for grandkids, or we should be "reinventing" ourselves with a side hustle.

The Power Reset Path isn't about the *shoulds*. It's about asking: **What role do I want work to play in the life I'm building now?**

For some of you, work is a creative outlet. For others, it's a social hub. For many, it's simply a way to fund a life full of travel and family. There is no wrong answer, as long as the answer is *yours*.

As we move through this guide, keep this in mind: **You are the authority on your own life**. Not your boss, not your spouse, and certainly not a LinkedIn influencer. We are going to look at the evidence, look at your health, and look at your heart to find the path that actually fits the woman you are today.

Work is Part of Your Life — Not a Separate Life

For a long time, we've been sold a lie. We were told that "work-life balance" is like a scale, where work sits on one side and "life" sits on the other. The goal, supposedly, was to keep them perfectly level. But if you're in your 40s, 50s, or 60s, you know the truth: it's not a scale. It's a soup. Everything is mixed together.

When you have a stressful day at the office, you don't leave that stress at the door when you walk into your kitchen. It follows you. It affects how you speak to your partner, how you sleep, and even how your body processes the dinner you just ate. Conversely, if you spent the night awake with a hot flash or worrying about an aging parent, you don't magically become a "blank slate" professional the moment you log onto Zoom at 9:00 AM.

In this stage of life, we have to stop looking at career decisions in a vacuum. A promotion isn't just a title and a raise; it's a change in your time, your stress levels, and your physical health. A career gap isn't just a hole in a résumé; it's a period where your life required your presence elsewhere.

The Whole-Life Impact Audit

To make an informed choice about your career, you must first **Notice** how your work is currently interacting with the rest of your existence. We often blame "the job" for our unhappiness when the issue might be that the job is consuming the resources we need for our health. Or, we blame "menopause" for our fatigue when the issue is an unsustainable workload.

Note

The "Soup" Principle: Your career is an ingredient, not a separate dish. If the ingredient is bitter, the whole soup tastes off. If you add too much of it, it overwhelms the other flavors.

1. The Physical Cost: Health and Energy

We are navigating a significant biological transition. Perimenopause and menopause change how our bodies respond to stress. Cortisol (the stress hormone) behaves differently now. If your job requires constant "high-alert" adrenaline, you might find you're crashing harder than you did ten years ago.

- **Ask yourself:** Does my work allow me to move my body, eat nourishing meals, and manage my symptoms? Or am I sacrificing my physical foundation to meet deadlines?
- **The Reality:** You cannot "hustle" your way out of a hormonal shift. If your work makes it impossible to prioritize sleep or movement, the "cost" of that job is your long-term health.

2. The Relationship and Caregiving Ripple

Midlife is often the "Sandwich Generation" era. You may be managing teenagers who still need guidance and parents who are beginning to need care.

- **Notice:** Is your work flexible enough to handle the "unpredictables" of midlife caregiving?
- **The Identity Shift:** Sometimes we cling to a high-pressure identity at work because it's the only place we feel "in control," while our home life feels chaotic. But if the work identity is preventing you from being the daughter, mother, or partner you want to be, it's time to **Widen** your perspective on what success looks like.

3. The Financial Foundation vs. The Emotional Ceiling

We have to be practical. We are English-speaking women in a world that requires money for housing, healthcare, and future security.

- **The Conflict:** You might stay in a job you dislike because the health insurance is excellent or the retirement matching is high. *That is a valid choice.*
- **The Shift:** However, if the income is high but you are spending thousands on "stress relief"—expensive convenience meals because you're too tired to cook, retail therapy to numb the dread, or medical bills for stress-related ailments—is the salary actually as high as it looks on paper?

Evaluating the Intersections

To help you **Choose** your next step, let's look at how work intersects with your core needs. Use the following categories to evaluate the "Whole-Life Impact" of your current role.

Exercise

The Whole-Life Impact Worksheet

Rate each area from 1 (Work is destroying this) to 5 (Work supports this beautifully).

Sleep & Recovery: Can I get the rest I need to manage midlife symptoms? []

Cognitive Load: Do I have enough "brain power" left at the end of the day for my own interests? []

Geography & Time: Does my commute or schedule steal my life, or does it give me freedom? []

Identity & Purpose: Do I feel like a whole person, or just a "worker"? []

Community:* Does my work connect me to people, or isolate me? []

Case Study: Sarah's "Perfect" Job

Sarah was a high-level marketing executive. On paper, she was winning. She had the title, the six-figure salary, and the respect of her peers. But Sarah was 48 and in the thick of perimenopause. Her brain fog was making her 60-hour weeks feel like 80-hour weeks. She was snapping at her kids and hadn't exercised in six months.

When Sarah used the **Notice 'Widen 'Choose** framework, she realized the problem wasn't marketing. She loved marketing. The problem was the *intersection*. Her job required her to be "on" during the exact hours her brain fog was at its worst, and her commute prevented her from getting the morning sunlight and movement that helped her sleep.

Sarah's Choice: She didn't quit. She negotiated a "remote-first" schedule that allowed her to start later in the morning (when her brain fog cleared) and work later in the evening. She traded a small percentage of her bonus for more vacation days. By looking at work as *part* of her life, she made the work fit the woman she was becoming.

The Myth of the "Work Self"

Many of us were taught to put on a "mask" at work. We were told to be stoic, tireless, and unchanging. But as we age, that mask becomes heavy.

"I spent twenty years trying to prove I could work like a man who had a stay-at-home wife. In my 50s, I realized I'm a woman with a life, a thyroid condition, and a mother with dementia. I stopped trying to hide my life from my work, and suddenly, I could breathe again." — PRP Community Member

Identifying the "Invisible" Costs

Sometimes the drain isn't the work itself, but the *identity labor* we perform.

- **The "Only" Factor:** Are you the only woman in the room? The only person over 50? The effort of constantly proving you are "still relevant" is a massive energy drain.
- **The Emotional Labor:** Are you the one who remembers birthdays, organizes the office retreats, and soothes the boss's ego? This is work. It counts. And in midlife, we often find we no longer have the patience for it.

Pro Tip

Pro Tip: If you feel exhausted but your "task list" wasn't that long, look at your *emotional* task list. How much energy did you spend navigating personalities or hiding your symptoms? That energy comes from the same "battery" you use for your health and family.

Moving Toward Integration

As you move through the rest of this guide, keep this section in mind. We aren't just looking for a "better job." We are looking for a **sustainable life**.

If you are considering a change, don't just ask "What will I do?" Ask:

- "How will I feel on Tuesday morning at 10:00 AM?"
- "Will this role allow me to be the person I want to be at 7:00 PM?"
- "Does this career path respect the body I am in right now?"

Your career is the scaffolding of your life, but it is not the building itself. You are the building. It is time to make sure the scaffolding is actually supporting you, rather than pulling you down.

Important

Remember: You are allowed to want a career that fits your life. You are not "lazy" or "unambitious" for wanting a role that accounts for your health, your sleep, and your peace of mind. That is called being a wise steward of your most precious resource: your energy.

Is it the Career — Or Something Around the Career?

It is so common to wake up one Tuesday morning, look at your laptop or your storefront or your classroom, and think, *"I just can't do this anymore. I need to quit. I need a whole new life."*

When we are exhausted, our brains tend to look for the biggest, fastest exit. We want to flip the table and start over. But before you hand in your notice or close your business, I want us to take a breath and look closer. Sometimes the house is on fire and you need to leave. But sometimes, the house is just messy, the lighting is bad, and the heater is broken. You don't need a new house; you need a renovation.

In this section, we are going to use the **NOTICE 'WIDEN 'CHOOSE** framework to figure out if the problem is the work itself, or the "stuff" surrounding the work.

The Danger of the "All or Nothing" Lens

When we are in the thick of perimenopause or midlife transitions, our stress tolerance can change. Things that used to be a "minor annoyance" now feel like a personal affront or an insurmountable mountain. Because of this, we often jump to the most extreme conclusion: *I am in the wrong career.*

But if you change careers without identifying the actual root of your dissatisfaction, you might find that the same problems follow you to the new office. If the problem is a lack of boundaries, you'll be overworked in your new job, too. If the problem is undiagnosed sleep apnea or perimenopausal fatigue, you'll still be exhausted even if you're doing your "dream job."

We want to make sure we are solving the right problem.

Step 1: NOTICE — Identifying the Friction

The first step is to stop and look at the "pebbles in your shoe." These are the things that make your workday feel harder than it needs to be. Don't judge them; just notice them.

Exercise

The Daily Friction Log

For the next three days, keep a small notebook or a note on your phone. Every time you feel a surge of annoyance, dread, or exhaustion, write down exactly what was happening.

Was it a specific person?

Was it a specific task (like spreadsheets or meetings)?

Was it the time of day?

Was it a physical sensation (like a hot flash or a headache)?

Step 2: WIDEN — Looking at the Variables

Now, let's widen the lens. If we assume for a moment that the *profession* itself is fine, what else could be causing the pain? Look through this list and see which ones make you say, "Oh, that's definitely part of it."

The Environment and Logistics

- **The Commute:** Is the two-hour round trip draining your soul before you even start work?
- **The Schedule:** Are you a morning person forced to work late shifts, or vice versa?
- **The Physical Space:** Is the office too loud? Too hot? Is the chair killing your back?
- **Flexibility:** Do you feel trapped because you can't leave for a doctor's appointment or to check on an aging parent without "permission"?

The People and Culture

- **The Supervisor:** Does your boss micromanage you, or do they fail to provide any direction at all?
- **The "Vibe":** Is the workplace culture toxic, competitive, or just plain boring?
- **Recognition:** Do you feel like a invisible cog in a machine?
- **Values Mismatch:** Are you being asked to do things that don't align with who you are anymore?

The Internal Factors

- **Health and Hormones:** Are you struggling to concentrate because you haven't slept more than four hours a night for a month? (We will dive deeper into this in the Perimenopause section).
- **Caregiving Load:** Are you "working" a full-time job at home before you even get to your paid job?
- **Skill Stagnation:** Are you bored because you could do your job in your sleep?
- **Boundaries:** Have you normalized answering emails at 9:00 PM?

Pro Tip

The "Magic Wand" Test

Imagine I could wave a magic wand and change **one** thing about your current job—but you have to keep the same title and the same company. What would you change? If your answer is "my boss" or "my hours," then the career itself might not be the problem. If your answer is "everything," then a bigger change might be necessary.

Step 3: CHOOSE — Finding the Right Lever

Once you've widened the lens, you can see that you have more options than just "Stay and Suffer" or "Quit and Run." You can choose to pull different levers.

Lever 1: The Conversation

Sometimes the problem is that we haven't asked for what we need because we assume the answer is no.

- *Script for Flexibility:* "I've noticed I'm much more productive when I can focus without office interruptions. Can we trial a schedule where I work from home on Tuesdays and Thursdays?"
- *Script for Workload:* "I want to make sure I'm delivering high-quality work on Project X. To do that, I need to offload Task Y or extend the deadline for Task Z. Which do you prefer?"

Lever 2: The Boundary

If the career is "owning your life," you can choose to take parts of it back. This isn't about being a "bad employee"; it's about being a sustainable one.

- *Action:* Remove work email from your personal phone.
- *Action:* Block out a "no-meeting" hour for lunch and actually leave your desk.
- *Action:* Stop volunteering for the "office housework" (organizing birthdays, taking notes) if it's not in your job description.

Lever 3: The Health Check

If you are experiencing brain fog, joint pain, or extreme fatigue, your first "career move" should actually be a doctor's appointment. It is very hard to feel successful at work when your body feels like it's betraying you.

"I thought I was losing my edge and needed to retire early. It turns out I was just severely iron deficient and having 20 hot flashes a day. Once I addressed my health, I realized I actually still loved my job—I just didn't have the energy to do it." — Sarah, 51

Lever 4: The Role Shift

Sometimes you love the company but hate the role.

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The Pivot: Could you move from Management back to being an Individual Contributor? (Yes, "stepping down" is a valid choice!)

- *The New Challenge:* Could you lead a new project or mentor a junior staff member to break the boredom?

When the Answer IS the Career

I want to be clear: Sometimes, after widening the lens, you realize the career *is* the problem.

- You no longer believe in the mission.
- The industry is changing in a way that doesn't fit your strengths.
- You've simply outgrown the "you" who chose this path twenty years ago.

If that's the case, don't panic. You aren't "starting over"; you are "starting from experience." But by going through this process first, you can leave with clarity instead of just escaping in a cloud of exhaustion.

Important

Notice 'Widen 'Choose is a cycle, not a one-time event.

You might choose to set a boundary this week, notice how it feels, widen your perspective again, and then choose a bigger change next month. You are allowed to learn your way into the answer.

Summary Checklist: Is it the Career?

Before you decide to leave, ask yourself:

- [] Have I ruled out physical health/hormonal causes for my dissatisfaction?
- [] Have I tried to set at least two firm boundaries regarding my time or energy?
- [] If I had the same job but a different manager, would I stay?
- [] If I had the same job but worked 10 fewer hours, would I stay?
- [] Is my "dread" about the tasks I do, or the environment I do them in?

By identifying the actual source of the friction, you move from being a victim of your circumstances to being the architect of your next chapter. Whether you stay or go, you'll be doing it with your eyes wide open.

Perimenopause at Work: You Are Not Incompetent

One of the most unsettling experiences a woman can have in her professional life is the sudden, creeping feeling that she is losing her "edge." You've spent decades building a reputation for being sharp, reliable, and capable. You are the one people come to when things need to get done. But lately, you might find yourself staring at a spreadsheet that used to make sense, wondering why the numbers look like a foreign language. Or perhaps you're in a high-stakes meeting and the perfect word—a word you've used a thousand times—is sitting just out of reach, behind a thick curtain of mental fog.

I want to tell you something right now, and I need you to hear it: **You did not suddenly become incompetent.**

What you are experiencing is likely a physiological response to a significant hormonal transition, often exacerbated by the high-pressure environments we work in. In this section, we are going to pull back the curtain on how perimenopause and menopause actually show up in the workplace. We'll look at the evidence, validate the struggle, and most importantly, give you a toolkit to navigate this phase without losing your confidence or your career trajectory.

Understanding the Biological Impact on Professional Life

Perimenopause isn't just about hot flashes; it's a systemic recalibration. For many women, the symptoms that impact work the most are the "invisible" ones—the cognitive and emotional shifts that don't always have a clear physical marker like a red face or a sweat-soaked blouse.

Research published in journals like *Menopause* and data from *The Menopause Society* suggest that a significant percentage of women report that their symptoms affect their work performance or their comfort at work. However, the narrative is often missing nuance. We aren't "failing"; we are adapting to a changing internal environment.

The Cognitive "Fog" and Memory Lapses

The term "brain fog" is frequently used, but in a professional context, it manifests as difficulty with executive function. This includes:

- **Working Memory:** Forgetting why you walked into a room or losing the thread of a conversation.
- **Word Retrieval:** The "tip-of-the-tongue" phenomenon where names or technical terms temporarily vanish.
- **Focus:** Finding it harder to block out office noise or stay on task for long periods.

Important

The Science of the Fog: Estrogen plays a protective role in the brain, particularly in areas responsible for memory and executive function. As estrogen levels fluctuate and eventually

decline, the brain has to work harder to achieve the same results. This is often a *temporary* period of recalibration, not a permanent decline in intelligence.

The Sleep-Performance Connection

We cannot talk about workplace competence without talking about sleep. If you are waking up at 3:00 AM with a racing heart or night sweats, you are essentially trying to run a marathon on a broken leg the next day. Chronic sleep disruption affects the prefrontal cortex—the part of your brain responsible for logic, emotional regulation, and complex problem-solving. Often, what feels like "losing your mind" is actually just profound, cumulative exhaustion.

Physical Discomfort and Stress Tolerance

Hot flashes, heavy or unpredictable periods, and joint aches aren't just "annoyances." They take up "bandwidth." When you are sitting in a boardroom trying to hide the fact that you are burning up, or worrying about whether your period has started unexpectedly during a presentation, you have less mental energy available for the task at hand. Your "stress bucket" is already half-full before you even open your first email.

Notice: How is it Showing Up for You?

Before we can choose a strategy, we have to **Notice** the patterns. I want you to look at your work week through a lens of curiosity rather than judgment.

Exercise

The Workplace Symptom Tracker

For the next five working days, jot down a quick note when you feel "off."

1. **The Event:** (e.g., "Lost my train of thought during the budget review.")
2. **The Context:** (e.g., "Had 4 hours of sleep; office was 75 degrees; hadn't eaten lunch.")
3. **The Feeling:** (e.g., "Embarrassed, panicked, felt like a fraud.")
4. **The Reality Check:** Did anyone else notice? Did the work get done eventually?

By tracking this, you might realize that your "incompetence" only shows up on days following poor sleep, or when you've had back-to-back meetings without a break. This is vital data. It moves the problem from "I am failing" to "My environment and my current physiology are clashing."

Widen: The Bigger Picture of Workplace Success

When we feel we are struggling, our vision narrows. We focus on the one mistake we made rather than the twenty years of expertise we bring to the table. To **Widen** your perspective, consider these factors:

- **Workplace Culture:** Does your office value "performative busyness" over actual results? Is there a culture of silence around health?
- **Environmental Factors:** Is the lighting harsh? Is the temperature controlled? Do you have a quiet place to focus?
- **The "Double Burden":** Are you also managing aging parents or teenage children? The "mental load" of midlife is a heavy weight that compounds hormonal changes.

"We are expected to work as if we don't have fluctuating hormones, and manage our hormones as if we don't have demanding careers." — Megan, Power Reset Path

Choose: Practical Strategies for the Modern Professional

Once you've noticed the patterns and widened your lens, it's time to **Choose** an experiment. You don't need to overhaul your entire career; you just need to adjust the dials.

1. Environmental Adjustments

If physical symptoms are the primary drain, small changes matter:

- **Temperature Control:** A small, quiet USB desk fan can be a lifesaver.
- **Hydration & Nutrition:** Fluctuating blood sugar can mimic brain fog. Choose high-protein snacks and stay hydrated to keep your energy stable.
- **Clothing:** Layering is your professional best friend. Natural fibers like linen or light wool are more breathable than synthetics.

2. Cognitive Scaffolding

If your memory feels "leaky," stop trying to force it to work the old way. Build a scaffold:

- **The "External Brain":** Use project management tools, digital calendars, and voice memos. If it isn't written down, it doesn't exist.
- **Meeting Prep:** Write out your three main points on a post-it note before a call. If you lose your place, the note is right there to ground you.
- **Monotasking:** The midlife brain often loses its patience for multitasking. Close your email tabs when working on a deep project. Give yourself permission to do one thing at a time, well.

3. Professional Communication Scripts

You don't have to disclose your medical history to be professional, but you can set boundaries that protect your performance.

Pro Tip

Scripts for Common Situations:

- **When you need a moment to think:** "That's a great question. Let me take a moment to pull the exact data so I give you the most accurate answer."
- **When you need to adjust a deadline due to fatigue:** "I want to ensure this gets the focus it deserves. I'll have the final draft to you by tomorrow morning rather than this afternoon."
- **When you need a break:** "I'm going to step away for five minutes to reset my focus; I'll be back at my desk shortly."

A Note on Seeking Support

If your symptoms are significantly impacting your ability to function or your quality of life, it is time to seek a medical evaluation. This isn't a sign of weakness; it's a sign of high-level self-management. Whether it's Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), non-hormonal medications, or lifestyle interventions, there are evidence-based options that can help clear the fog and restore your energy.

Warning

When to See a Professional:

If you experience sudden, severe cognitive changes, mood shifts that feel unsafe, or physical symptoms that prevent you from performing basic job duties, please consult a healthcare provider who is NAMS-certified (North American Menopause Society) or equivalent in your region. You deserve to feel well.

The Midlife Advantage

Finally, remember that while your *processing speed* might feel different, your *wisdom* is at an all-time high. You have "pattern recognition"—the ability to see how a project will play out before it even starts because you've seen it all before. You have "judgment"—the ability to know which fires need to be put out and which can be ignored.

You are not losing your ability. You are evolving. The goal of the Power Reset Path is to help you bridge the gap between the woman you were and the powerhouse you are becoming.

Learn 'Notice 'Experiment 'Adjust

What is one small change you can make to your workspace tomorrow to support your focus? Start there. Your competence is still there, right under the surface, waiting for you to give it the environment it needs to shine again.

The Experience Advantage and Unpaid Worth

If you are standing at a crossroads in your career during midlife, you might feel like the world is suddenly moving faster than you are. You might look at a job description and see terms you don't recognize, or look at a 24-year-old colleague who seems to navigate new software by instinct, and feel a cold prickle of fear. You might think, *"I'm obsolete. I've been out of the game too long,"* or *"I've reached my ceiling."*

I want to stop you right there.

One of the greatest myths of our modern workforce is that "innovation" is the exclusive property of the young. In reality, the most successful entrepreneurs and effective leaders are often those in their 40s and 50s. Why? Because they have something that cannot be downloaded, hacked, or taught in a three-week bootcamp: **Experience**.

The Midlife Competitive Edge

When you have been in the workforce (or the world) for twenty or thirty years, you have developed a "mental library" of patterns. While a younger worker might panic when a project goes off the rails, you recognize the signs because you've seen this movie before. You know how to navigate difficult personalities, you understand that most "emergencies" are actually just poor planning, and you have the emotional intelligence to keep a team steady.

This isn't just "getting older." This is the **Experience Advantage**.

Identifying Your Transferable Skills

We often get so caught up in our specific job titles that we forget the actual **skills** we use to do them. If you are a nurse, you aren't just "someone who gives medicine." You are a high-stakes communicator, a crisis manager, and a master of triage. If you are a teacher, you are a public speaker, a curriculum designer, and a conflict mediator.

Note

Transferable Skills are abilities you've developed that can be taken from one environment and applied to a completely different one. They are the "currency" of a midlife career pivot.

Let's look at the skills that actually drive value in today's market—skills you likely possess in abundance:

- **Pattern Recognition:** The ability to see a problem developing before it hits the bottom line.
- **Contextual Judgment:** Knowing not just *how* to do something, but *why* it should (or shouldn't) be done right now.
- **Navigating Ambiguity:** Being able to move forward even when the instructions aren't clear.
- **Professional Networks:** A "rolodex" of people you've helped, worked with, or learned from over decades.
- **Emotional Regulation:** The ability to stay professional and focused when others are losing their cool.

The Work That Never Appeared on a Paycheck

For many women in the Power Reset Path community, the "career gap" is a source of deep anxiety. Maybe you stepped away from a corporate role to raise children. Maybe you spent five years navigating the complex medical system to care for an aging parent. Maybe you moved for a partner's job and spent your time volunteering, running the PTA, or managing a household.

Society often calls this "time off." I call it **unpaid high-level management**.

If you have managed a household, you have managed logistics, budgeting, and human resources. If you have advocated for a child with special needs in the school system, you have mastered negotiation, legal compliance, and persistent follow-through. These are not "hobbies." They are evidence of your capacity.

"A gap in employment is not a gap in being a capable human being. Your worth did not pause just because your salary did." - Megan

Translating "Life Work" into "Work Language"

The key to returning to the workforce or pivoting after a gap is translation. You don't need to apologize for your time away; you need to articulate what you learned during it.

Exercise

The Translation Table

Take a piece of paper and draw two columns. In the left column, list a "life task" you performed during your gap. In the right column, translate that into a professional skill.

Example:

Life Task: Managed a \$5,000 monthly household budget and coordinated schedules for 4 people.

Professional Skill: Operations Management & Budgetary Oversight.

Life Task: Led the fundraising committee for the local library, raising \$20k.

Professional Skill: Strategic Development & Stakeholder Engagement.

Life Task: Navigated 24/7 care for a parent with dementia.

Professional Skill: Crisis Intervention & Complex Logistics Coordination.

Challenging the "Starting Over" Narrative

When we think about changing careers at 45 or 55, we often use the phrase "starting over." That phrase is heavy. It implies we are back at the beginning, at age 22, knowing nothing.

But you are not starting from scratch. You are starting from **experience**.

Even if you move into a completely new industry—say, moving from accounting to interior design—you are bringing your knowledge of business ethics, your ability to talk to clients, your understanding of deadlines, and your financial literacy. You are not a "beginner"; you are a "seasoned professional in a new context."

The Transferable Skills Inventory

To help you see the full scope of your value, let's break down the skills you've likely accumulated. Check off the ones that feel "ordinary" to you. (Hint: If it feels ordinary to you, it's probably because you're so good at it you don't even have to think about it anymore!)

- **Leadership:** Can you guide a group toward a goal, even if you don't have the "Manager" title?
- **Conflict Management:** Can you de-escalate a tense situation between two people?
- **Project Management:** Can you take a big idea and break it down into small, actionable steps?
- **Mentoring:** Do younger people naturally come to you for advice or to "run something by you"?
- **Technology Adaptability:** Have you taught yourself how to use new apps, software, or systems over the years? (Yes, even if you had to Google it!)
- **Writing/Communication:** Can you explain a complex idea so that a 6th grader could understand it?

Pro Tip

Ask three people who know you well—a former colleague, a friend, and a family member—this question: *"What is the one thing you always come to me for because you know I'm good at it?"* Their answers will often reveal your "hidden" expert skills.

Dealing with the "Incompetence" Fear

It is common in perimenopause to have days where you feel "off." Maybe you forgot a word in a meeting, or you had to read an email three times to understand it. When this happens, the "Imposter Syndrome" monster wakes up and whispers, *"You're losing it. You can't do this anymore."*

This is a lie.

Cognitive fluctuations during hormonal shifts are real, but they are not a reflection of your intelligence or your professional worth. Think of it like a computer doing a background update; the system might run a little slower for an hour, but the hard drive is still full of valuable data.

If you are feeling less competent, **NOTICE** the circumstances. Are you sleep-deprived? Are you experiencing a hot flash? Are you overwhelmed by a workload that would break *anyone*, regardless of their age?

WIDEN the lens. Is it really that you are "incompetent," or is it that your current environment is no longer supporting the way you work best?

CHOOSE a strategy. Maybe it's using a new digital organization system to catch the "brain fog" slips. Maybe it's a conversation with your doctor about HRT or sleep support. Maybe it's setting a boundary so you aren't interrupted every five minutes.

Summary: Your Value is Cumulative

Your career is not a ladder where you can only go up or down. It is a **portfolio**. Every job, every volunteer role, every difficult year of caregiving, and every project you've ever finished is a "stock" in that portfolio.

As you look toward what comes next, remember: The world doesn't just need "new" energy. It desperately needs **wise** energy. It needs women who know how to tell the difference between a fad and a trend. It needs women who can lead with compassion. It needs you.

Important

You are not a "has-been." You are a "well-seasoned." Your experience is a premium asset, not a liability.

Values, Money, and Redefining Success

In our 20s and 30s, many of us followed a blueprint for success that we didn't actually write. It was handed to us by parents, teachers, or a society that told us "more" was always better. More responsibility, a more impressive title, more money, and more "hustle." We climbed the ladder because that's what you do with ladders.

But midlife has a way of making us pause at the top of that ladder and look around. You might realize the view isn't what you expected, or perhaps you've realized the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall entirely. This isn't a crisis; it's a recalibration. It is the moment where you stop asking "How do I get ahead?" and start asking "What is this all for?"

Success Needs a New Definition Sometimes

For many of the women I work with, the traditional markers of success—the corner office, the high-pressure management role, the grueling travel schedule—start to feel less like achievements and more like heavy anchors. You are capable of doing the work, but the *cost* of doing the work has changed.

Note

Success is not a static destination. It is a moving target that should evolve as you do. The version of you that accepted your current role five or ten years ago had different needs than the woman sitting here today.

We need to challenge the assumption that "moving up" is the only direction worth going. In midlife, success might actually look like "moving out" (to a different industry), "moving down" (to a role with less stress), or "staying put" (but with better boundaries).

The "Invisible Success" Audit

If nobody else could see your title, your salary, or your LinkedIn profile, what would make you feel successful at the end of a Tuesday?

- Is it having the mental energy to cook a real dinner?
- Is it knowing your work helped one specific person today?
- Is it the freedom to take a walk at 2:00 PM when the sun is out?
- Is it the security of knowing your retirement account is growing while you sleep?

Values: What Matters Now?

Our values are the compass for our careers. However, values are not permanent. In your 20s, you might have valued **Adventure** and **Income**. In your 30s, perhaps it was **Stability** and **Advancement**. As you navigate perimenopause and the complexities of midlife—perhaps caring for teenagers or aging parents while managing your own fluctuating energy—your values often shift toward **Autonomy**, **Health**, and **Contribution**.

Exercise

The Values Ranking

Look at the following list and pick your top FIVE for this current season of your life. Be honest—not who you *think* you should be, but who you actually are right now.

Autonomy: Having control over how and when you work.

Income: Maximizing your earnings and financial power.

Creativity: The ability to build, design, or express ideas.

Stability: Predictability, benefits, and long-term security.

Prestige: Recognition, titles, and professional status.

Flexibility: The ability to work around life's other demands.

Challenge: Constant learning and solving hard problems.

Connection: Working closely with a team or community.

Purpose: Feeling that your work makes a tangible difference.

Ease: Work that feels sustainable and doesn't drain your battery.

Reflect: Does your current role support these top five? If "Health" is a top value but your job requires 60 hours a week and constant stress, there is a value mismatch. This mismatch is often the root of the "burnout" we feel.

Money Matters: The Reality Check

I will never be the person who tells you to "just follow your passion and the money will follow." That is dangerous advice, especially for women in midlife who often carry the financial weight of households. Meaning matters, but so does paying the mortgage, funding your retirement, and keeping your health insurance intact.

We cannot talk about career changes without talking about the math. A dream that ignores your financial reality isn't a plan yet—it's a risk. However, we also shouldn't let fear of money keep us trapped in a soul-crushing situation without actually looking at the numbers.

The Financial "What If" Framework

When considering a shift—whether it's reducing hours, switching fields, or starting a business—ask these four questions:

1. **What is my "Floor"?** What is the absolute minimum monthly income I need to cover my non-negotiable expenses (housing, food, insurance, debt)?
2. **What is the "Gap"?** If I took a pay cut for a more sustainable role, how much is the difference? Can that gap be bridged by cutting expenses, or is it a deal-breaker?
3. **What are the "Hidden Costs"?** If I leave a corporate job, what is the value of the health insurance, 401k match, and paid time off I am losing?
4. **What is the "Cost of Staying"?** This is the one we often forget. What is the financial cost of your current stress? (Think: therapy, convenience meals because you're too tired to cook, health issues caused by stress, or "retail therapy" to numb the unhappiness).

"Financial independence is not just about having a lot of money; it's about having the freedom to make choices that align with your soul." — Anonymous

Staying is a Valid Choice

There is a lot of pressure in the online world to "pivot" or "reinvent yourself." I want to give you permission *not* to do that if you don't want to. Staying in your current career is a powerful, valid choice—especially if it provides the stability you need to navigate a difficult health transition or family season.

If you choose to stay, the goal is to make staying **intentional** rather than **passive**. You aren't "stuck"; you are choosing this role because it serves a purpose in your life right now.

How to Improve the "Stay"

If you aren't leaving, how can you make the next year better?

- **The Boundary Script:** "I've noticed I'm most productive when I have deep work time. I'll be turning off my email notifications between 9 AM and 11 AM to focus on the X project."
- **The Capacity Conversation:** "I'd love to help with this new initiative. To make sure I give it the attention it deserves, which of my current tasks should I deprioritize or hand off?"
- **The Skill Refresh:** Sometimes we are bored because we've stopped growing. Is there a certification or a new technology you can learn on the company's dime that makes you feel more capable?

What If I Want More? (Or Less?)

Midlife ambition is beautiful. If you feel a fire in your belly to finally go for the executive suite or start that consultancy, do not let ageist voices tell you it's "too late." You are entering your "Prime of Wisdom." You have the pattern recognition and the emotional intelligence that a 25-year-old simply hasn't had time to develop yet.

Conversely, if you want *less*—less travel, less management, less noise—that is not a failure. It is an optimization. You are clearing the brush to make room for what actually matters.

Important

The "What Would Need to Be True?" Exercise

Instead of saying "I can't do that," ask: **"What would need to be true for this to be possible?"**

Example: *"I want to work 3 days a week."*

What would need to be true? I would need to reduce my mortgage, find a role that values output over hours, and secure my own health insurance.

Action:* Now you have a to-do list instead of a dead end.

Summary: The Power Reset Path Perspective

As you weigh your values against your bank account and your goals, remember the **Notice 'Widen 'Choose** flow.

- **Notice** the resentment or the excitement when you think about your work.
- **Widen** the lens to see how your health, your hormones, and your finances are all playing a part in your career satisfaction.
- **Choose** one small, informed step. Maybe that step is just opening a spreadsheet to look at your budget, or maybe it's finally saying "no" to a committee you hate.

You are not starting from scratch. You are starting from decades of experience, resilience, and self-knowledge. Whatever you choose—to climb higher, to step down, or to stay put—make sure it's *your* choice.

Stay, Change, or Go: Your Next-Chapter Map

We have spent a lot of time looking at the "why" and the "how" of your current career situation. We've looked at how perimenopause might be playing a role, how your values have shifted, and how your decades of experience are actually a superpower, even if you feel a bit rusty. Now, we reach the most important part of the Power Reset Path: **The Decision**.

I want to be very clear with you: there is no "right" answer that applies to every woman. Success isn't always a promotion, and it isn't always a resignation letter. Sometimes, success is simply deciding that you are going to stop letting work steal your sleep.

In this section, we are going to use the **NOTICE 'WIDEN 'CHOOSE** framework to map out your next steps. We aren't looking for a five-year plan that feels like a heavy weight. We are looking for the next right move.

The Three Paths: Stay, Change, or Go

When you look at your career right now, you aren't just looking at a job title. You are looking at a piece of your life's puzzle. To help you decide which path to take, let's break down the three primary options.

Path 1: The "Stay" Strategy (Intentional Stability)

Staying is a valid, powerful choice. In our "hustle" culture, we are often told that if we aren't moving up, we are falling behind. That is a lie. If your job provides the health insurance you need, the salary that supports your family, and a schedule that allows you to manage your perimenopause symptoms or care for your aging parents, then staying is a **strategic win**.

Note

Staying intentionally is different from feeling trapped. When you choose to stay, you reclaim your power over the situation. You aren't "stuck"; you are "positioned."

Why you might choose to STAY:

- You genuinely like your colleagues and the work, even if you're tired.
- You are within 3-5 years of retirement and want to vest your pension or maximize your 401(k) savings.
- Your life outside of work (health, family, transition) requires so much energy that you don't have the "bandwidth" for a job hunt.
- The benefits (health insurance, flexibility) are currently irreplaceable.

Path 2: The "Change" Strategy (Internal Pivot)

Sometimes the house is great, but the furniture needs to be rearranged. This is where you stay with your employer but change the **conditions** of your work. This is often the most overlooked option because we assume things "are just the way they are."

Why you might choose to CHANGE:

- You love the company but your current manager is burning you out.
- You have outgrown your current role and feel bored, but you see other departments that look exciting.
- You need to reduce your hours or move to a remote setup to manage your health and energy.
- You want to move out of management and back into a "doer" role (the "Individual Contributor" path).

Path 3: The "Go" Strategy (The New Chapter)

This is the leap. Whether it's moving to a new company, changing industries entirely, starting your own thing, or taking a planned career break, this is about closing one book and opening another.

Why you might choose to GO:

- The workplace culture is toxic and affecting your physical health.
- Your values have shifted so much that you no longer believe in the mission of the work.
- You have hit a "ceiling" where no further growth or flexibility is possible.
- You have a "burning itch" to try something new that you've been suppressing for years.

The Major Decision Worksheet

I want you to take a deep breath and look at these questions. Don't answer based on what you *should* feel. Answer based on what you *do* feel.

Part A: The "Stay" Audit

- What are the 3 most "non-negotiable" benefits this job provides right now? (e.g., salary, proximity to home, insurance, a specific friend at work).
- If I stay exactly where I am for one more year, what is the best-case scenario for my health?
- **The "Not Yet" Factor:** Is there a specific piece of information or a financial milestone I need to reach before I can even consider leaving? (e.g., "I need \$10,000 in savings" or "I need to wait until my daughter graduates").

Part B: The "Change" Audit

- If I could wave a magic wand and change **one** thing about my current job (my boss, my hours, my specific tasks), would I actually want to stay?
- Who is the person at work I need to have a "brave conversation" with?
- What is one boundary I haven't tried setting yet? (e.g., "I will not check email after 6:00 PM").

Part C: The "Go" Audit

- If I left tomorrow, what is the one thing I would miss the most? (This tells you what to look for in the next job).
- What is the one thing I would be most relieved to leave behind? (This tells you what to avoid).
- Am I running *away* from a problem, or running *toward* an opportunity? (Both are okay, but it's good to know which one it is).

Your Next-Chapter Career Map

Now, let's get practical. Use this map to sketch out the landscape of your midlife career. Be specific. "More money" is a wish; "An extra \$500 a month to cover my daughter's tuition" is a map coordinate.

1. WHAT I WANT MORE OF:

(Examples: Autonomy, creative projects, daylight hours, quiet focus time, mentoring others)

2. WHAT I WANT LESS OF:

(Examples: Commuting, back-to-back Zoom calls, managing people, weekend emails, high-stakes travel)

3. WHAT I WANT TO KEEP:

(Examples: My professional reputation, my current salary level, my 4-day work week, my connection to the industry)

4. WHAT I WANT TO EXPLORE:

(Examples: Freelance writing, working for a non-profit, getting a certification in HR, starting a small Etsy shop)

5. WHAT FINANCIAL REALITY MUST I CONSIDER?

(Note: Be honest here. What is the "floor" amount you need to earn to feel safe?)

Pro Tip

The "Not Yet" is a Strategy, Not a Failure.

If your map shows that you want to "Go" but your financial reality says "Not Yet," do not view this as being stuck. View this as the **Preparation Phase**. You are staying *on purpose* while you build your bridge to the next thing.

Your 7-Day Career Experiment

Big changes are terrifying. Small experiments are interesting. For the next seven days, I want you to pick **one** small thing to do. We aren't quitting our jobs this week; we are gathering data.

Choose one experiment:

1. **The Boundary Test:** For one week, do not look at work communications after a specific time. Notice: Does the world end? How does your anxiety feel at 8:00 PM?
- 2.

The Connection Test: Reach out to one person who does a job you are curious about. Ask for a 15-minute "curiosity chat."

3. **The Skill Inventory:** Spend 20 minutes writing down every "invisible" skill you use (conflict resolution, logistics, crisis management).
4. **The Financial Fact-Find:** Open your bank accounts and look at your actual monthly expenses. Knowledge is the cure for the "I can't afford to leave" fear—even if the answer is "I need to save more," at least you know the number.

Exercise

The 7-Day Reflection Log

THIS WEEK, I NOTICE: (How do I feel when I walk into work? When I log off?)

****ONE THING I WILL EXPERIMENT WITH:****

****AT THE END OF THE WEEK, WHAT DID I LEARN?****

- What energized me? _____

- What drained me? _____

- What surprised me? _____

- What is my very next step? _____

Final Reflection: You Are Not Starting From Scratch

As we close this section of the blueprint, I want you to look at your hands. These hands have worked, cared, built, and navigated decades of life. You are not a "beginner," even if you are entering a new field. You are an expert in *navigating life*.

The career you chose when you were 22 was a great fit for that version of you. But you have grown. You have survived things that the 22-year-old version of you couldn't have imagined. You have more wisdom, better judgment, and a clearer sense of what actually matters.

The career you chose before does not get permanent ownership of the person you become.

You have the right to change your mind. You have the right to want more. You have the right to want less. Most importantly, you have the right to feel good in your body and your life while you work.

NOTICE where you are.

WIDEN your view of what is possible.

CHOOSE your next small step.

Your transformation doesn't require a leap of faith; it just requires the next right choice.