

Perspectives

Midlife Makeover

Donna Daisy, Ph.D offers up seven steps to regain your life at any age.

Several years ago, I experienced what might be called a midlife crisis. Not the kind where you want to get a new red convertible and a face lift. It was the kind professional women are all too familiar with — the Superwoman Syndrome. I was the director of a social service agency, a wife, mother of three and a full-blown perfectionist living life at full speed. Adrenaline was my primary fuel as I tried to juggle the challenges of work, while also trying to meet the needs of my husband, our children, my friends, even my children's friends — everyone's needs but my own. As my stress level increased, I got crabbi-

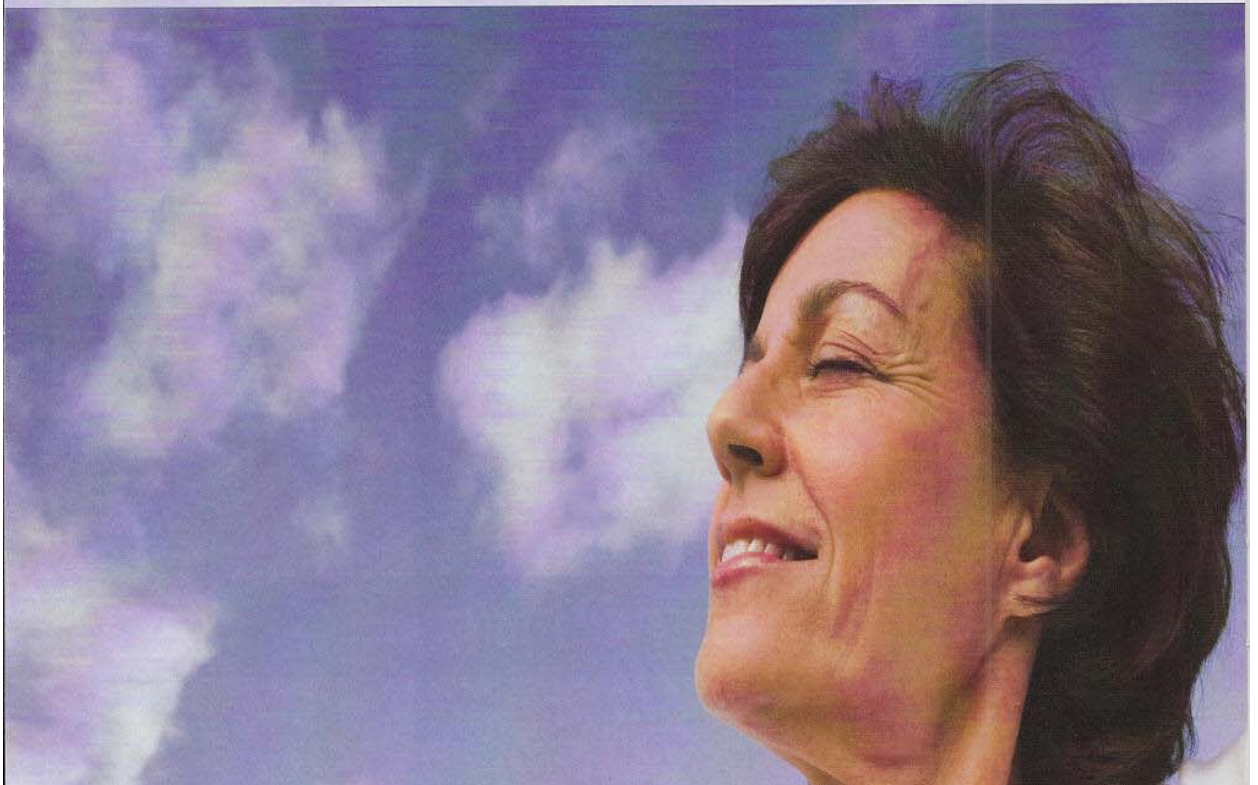
er with each day that passed, and started relying on way too much wine each night to take the edge off my anxiety. I could see a big case of burnout looming on the horizon if something in my life didn't change quickly.

Fortunately, I ran across a book by Cheryl Richardson called *Life Makeovers*. It was about how people who were sick and tired of living their lives in a fast-paced frenzy could regain a sense of control and start living a balanced lifestyle — one more aligned with their values and priorities.

As I read, I realized my attitudes about a lot of things began to shift. Many of

the things I'd considered terribly important began to take a back seat to my pressing desire for a healthier, happier, more fulfilling life. I started implementing some of the strategies in my own life, and as I began taking better care of myself, my stress level decreased, my energy level increased, my relationships improved and I was even more productive at work.

Many years later, I find that the same principles I put into practice when I was younger are just as important to my life balance and happiness today. If you're suffering from a midlife crisis or the stressors that often come





with growing older, there are some strategies you might find helpful for developing and maintaining a healthier lifestyle that provides you with a greater sense of control over your life, more balance and a greater sense of life satisfaction.

SEVEN LIFE-CHANGING STRATEGIES

Step 1 — Make Self-care a Priority.

If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take care of others who are depending on you. Self-care includes regular medical care, planning time for relaxation, eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise and building a support network of trusted friends who will be there when you need them.

Step 2 — Do What Matters Most.

some conscious relaxation and quiet time to your daily routine, make sure you do something to recharge yourself.

Step 5 — Invest in your Financial Health. Sound financial management is a critical skill for promoting a sense of control and creating the life you want now and in the years ahead.

Step 6 — Create a Strong Community. Studies repeatedly show that the greatest buffer against stress is social support, which comes from being with friends and family who make you feel cared for, valued and give you a sense of belonging.

Step 7 — Honor your Spirit. This means something different to each of us, but for me, it means having a sense of connection to something greater than myself, and honoring my commitment

Spend your time and energy in a way that reflects your priorities. Ask yourself, "Am I spending time on what matters most to me, or am I just reacting to the demands around me?" Time management is not about doing more in less time; it's about doing what matters most in the time you have.

Step 3 — Get rid of energy drains.

This might include ending unhealthy relationships or getting out of work you don't enjoy.

Step 4 — Renew Yourself Daily.

Whether it's 30 minutes a day of physical exercise (I walk my dog), or adding

to the values that give my life meaning and purpose.

Remaking your life takes courage and commitment, but the results are well worth the effort. My hope is to simply wet your appetite for the happier, healthier lifestyle that is just a few choices away.

Donna Daisy, Ph.D., has spent 25 years as a therapist, life coach, and author.

More recently, she has pursued research into the topic of aging consciously. Donna lives in Naples with her husband, Charles.

