

How to Avoid a Quarter-Life Crisis Helpful Tips for Turbulent Times

By Cindy Valliere

Not long ago, while waiting to meet a coaching client, I began reading a book whose title captivated me: Conquering Your Quarterlife Crisis: Advice from Twentysomethings Who Have Been There and Survived by Alexandra Robbins. I was curious about the subject matter and went immediately to the table of contents. I wondered, “how is a quarter-life crisis different from a mid-life crisis?” I quickly scanned the chapter titles, closing the book just as my twenty-something client arrived. Something I had believed for years was confirmed in that moment:

Adults and young people have more in common than meets the eye. Sure, there are clear generation differences...yet our career and life issues remain amazingly similar.

Several chapter titles focused on hopes and dreams: What if I don't know what I want?

How do I find my passion? How do I weigh doing something I love versus making enough money?

Others concerned identity: How do I stop feeling so overwhelmed? What if I feel stuck? How will I know if I'm dating “The One”?

As a career & life coach, I've counseled adults stuck in the wrong career or going through a life changing experience such as divorce; many of them were asking these same questions. Career and life issues transcend age. Out of Robbins' 25 chapter topics, I've coached adults on 23. Whether you are twenty-something or fifty-something – it seems that we, as a society, are still figuring out who we are, what we want, what's

important to us, and where we're going – whether it's life after college or life into retirement.

With this in mind, I offer a few tips to help you transition the turbulent 20s and 30s – additionally, a few of my clients will share their perspectives as well. What you learn now as an emerging adult can better prepare you for what lies ahead; and better yet, you may avoid the more well-known mid-life crisis!

And keep in mind that life doesn't care if you've landed your first job with a prestigious Wall Street firm or that you've merely coasted through college.

Ready or not, life's gonna happen; at times it is very unpredictable!

Tip #1: Choose a Rewarding Career

Too many young people select major or career paths without doing much, if any, investigation. This is a serious concern – having this attitude can change the course of your life forever.

Begin by asking yourself these questions:

- When you were a kid what did you want to be when you grew up?
- Do you still have a spark left for it; can it be reignited?
- What is your secret passion?
- What career would you pursue if you had unlimited time, talent, or finances – if you could do anything you wanted?

Forget TV, video games, and going out to bars every night. Start TODAY to make your life a priority. There will plenty of time later to do other stuff.

Check out inventory assessments; they are invaluable. I personally recommend the Enneagram (enneagraminstitute.com) and StrengthsQuest (strengthsquest.com). Even though you won't receive valuable one-on-one feedback, they'll provide useful information about your strengths.

And by the way, save yourself grief and don't just go for the big bucks. I could fill a large room with people who started down that path and are now miserable.

Tip #2: Become an Extraordinary Employee

Whatever job you currently have – working as a kennel assistant in a vet's office (better known as a pooper-scooper) or landing your dream job in a high-rise downtown office building – ALWAYS act as an extraordinary employee. Here are a few ways to differentiate yourself and increase your personal value on the job:

1. GET TO YOUR JOB EARLY.

Be there before anyone else. This shows that you are eager to get the day started. On the flip-side, don't always be the last to leave the office and make sure you have a life beyond work.

Matt Logan (27 years old) shared these thoughts: *"Take time off. My father was very big on working every day. It can consume you to be so intent on working all the time to get ahead. Take a week and go out of town. Don't answer your cell phone. Don't talk about work. Just relax. Work will be there when you get back and you'll be more focused, motivated, and on top of your game more than ever."* Matt is married and a Financial Advisor with Loflin Financial Group, Inc. (When he's not taking time off, he gets to work early...!)

2. UNDERSTAND WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU.

You got hired to improve the bottom line, right? Then work to improve it. Make sure you are clear as to your main job objectives – get a written job description and understand each task for which you are responsible. Consider this: Ask your boss to

share with you five ways that you can help him or her be more successful in their job; this will surely grab their attention. Then implement a plan to make it happen.

3. IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS.

Unless you keep growing, you can't expect your income to keep rising. Be a sponge and ask questions about every aspect of the business you're in. Get to know people outside your department. Listen with full attention. Watch what you do. Take work-related courses. Read company annual reports. Know the company vision. Learn to be a self-promoter (this may be hard for some, as it will take you out of your comfort zone; but the effort is well worth it). Let your boss know your successes and challenges; send him or her a quarterly email that addresses your progress; don't wait for the annual review.

Tip #3: Learn to Love Feedback

Feedback from your boss and colleagues will help you go further and faster by maximizing potential. You may be good and even better than most – but you will never be as good as you could be without outside input. We all do better when someone on the outside is watching and evaluating.

I tell my clients: *"If I could download you with one skill, it would be the ability to both ask for and receive feedback without getting defensive."* This takes a healthy dose of self-esteem. Self-confidence is situational, self-esteem is foundational. Build a strong foundation.

Tip # 4: Get Smart About Money

Which is truer? Money is the root of all evil? Or, not having money is the root of all evil? Regardless of your answer – money is an important part of life and the earlier you begin to understand money, the better. The book stores are filled with informative information. One of my favorites is: [Automatic Wealth for Grads](#) by Michael Masterson.

Earlier in my life I recall someone asking a poignant question: *"How are you going to fund your dream?"* Never lose sight of that.

Tip #5: Faith it 'til You Make it

Marci Crenshaw, age 24, is surviving the turbulent-twenties. Here's what she had to say:

"Never give up. If you do you'll never make it. I had to pick myself up after every job rejection and remind myself to keep on trying. I would take a deep breath and remember who I was, because if you know who you are and are comfortable in your own skin... there is nothing you can't do. It's all about having faith in yourself."

I hope this information has been helpful. Check out my website – inventoryourlife.com. Self-assessment exercises are available, plus you may find articles that are of interest. Wishing you the best of life!