

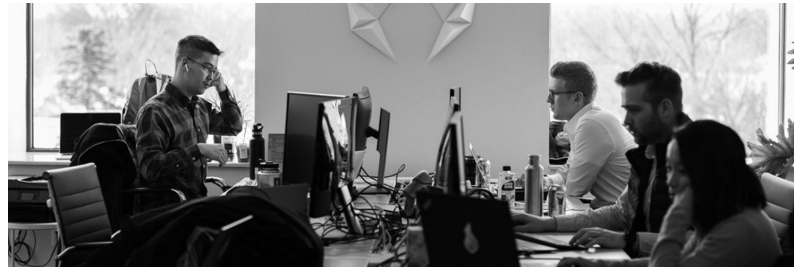
How to navigate the Quarter-Life-Crisis (QLC)

Agenda

1. Intro
2. What is a QLC?
3. What causes a QLC?
4. 4 steps to navigate a QLC
5. QLC caveats
6. Appendix

Who am I?

1. 10 years marketing & sales, leadership
2. Author, researcher, coach
3. 2x burnout victim + QLC



What is a
Quarter-Life Crisis?

What is a QLC?

*“A period in adult life that is noticeably more difficult, stressful and unstable than normal, during which you sometimes struggle to cope. A crisis is also an important turning point in your life due to challenging changes that occur during it.” – **Dr Oliver Robinson, adult developmental specialist***



QLC is recognized by several key factors

- Feeling trapped and like something needs to change
- Stress, demotivation, doubt, intense emotions, isolation
- Instability, feeling all over the place, not feeling “normal”
- Symptoms last for over 1 year and feel like they will last forever
- Negativity is overwhelming. Struggling to cope with known strategies
- Intense questioning of yourself, your life situation, and the meaning of life

Feeling lost

The QLC is a calling from within to change course

- As adults, we take control over our lives, but not our values/belief systems
- We are awoken from within by an existential sense of misalignment



So long as life proceeds in an orderly fashion

The QLC is held at bay*

Stimulation/growth/distractions mask any misalignments



*But if we grow up with values/worldviews that are meaningful to us or are inoculated by smaller doses of questioning/reflection along the way, it may not occur**

But when we hit limits...

The riot of the inner soul erupts to the surface as:

Anxiety

Disillusionment

Doubt

Fear

Depression

Uncertainty



However.

A Quarter Life Crisis is a sign of maturity



What causes a
Quarter-Life Crisis?

External triggers

- Death of a loved one
- Burnout or health issue
- End of a romantic relationship
- Moving to a new location
- Sudden financial/job/material loss



Inner triggers

- Sense of falling behind, stagnating, not achieving enough
- Negative self-comparisons vs network
- Parent/societal values diverge with our developing aspirations
- Stunted self-development in adolescence



Societal influences

Diminishing meaning sources: **relationships, bigger whole**

- Raising children
- Long, monogamous relationships
- Religious beliefs (countered by rise of spirituality)

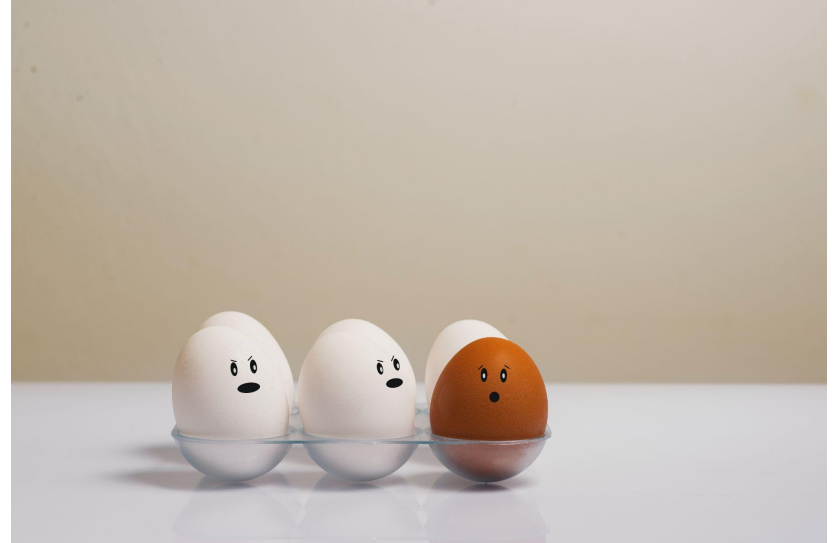
Growing meaning sources: **status, money**

- Work/career
- Comparison culture and curated sense of reality
- Expansion of knowledge, options, sense of self-responsibility



The minority effect

- **Female gender:** expectations of nurturing, agreeable, submissive
- **LGBTQ:** rejection, denial
- **Ethnic/racial groups:** discrimination, hate, struggle to survive



Navigating a Quarter-Life Crisis

The QLC is a pivotal moment for your own self-discovery

Nobody else can tell you how to navigate your QLC. You must come to identify and believe your own answers. This is the crux of the crisis

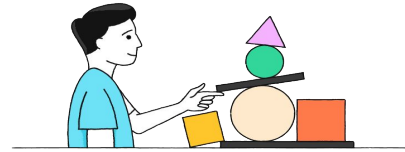
4 Stages of a QLC



1: feeling trapped



**2: realizing change
is possible**



3: rebuilding



4: solidifying

Stage 1: Feeling Trapped

Reflect on the past

- Which values or beliefs from my parents and society influenced me growing up?
- What external expectations have shaped my decisions?
- Who have I had to be to survive until now?



Stage 1: Feeling Trapped

Reflect on the present

- Where does the self doubt and trapped feeling come from?
- What parts of life drain my energy? Which fill my energy up?
- Who do I want to be?



Stage 1: Feeling Trapped

Reflect on the future

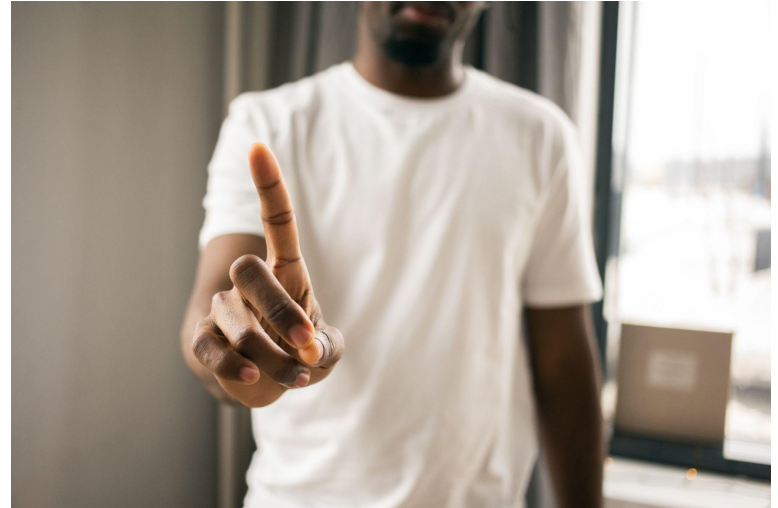
- What values and beliefs do I aspire to live by?
- What would I do if I were free from commitments and could start fresh?
- Who can I be moving forward?



Stage 2: Realizing Change is Possible

Blockers to overcome

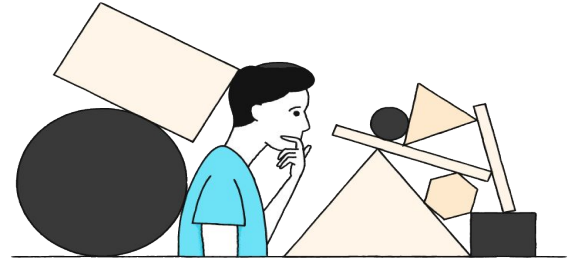
- “It’s better to keep things as they are, rather than face the unknown”
- “I have no choice but to stay in this situation”
- “I’ve tried everything and nothing will help”
- “I don’t know how/what to change”
- “I’m just not capable of change”



Stage 2: Realizing Change is Possible

What should be changed?

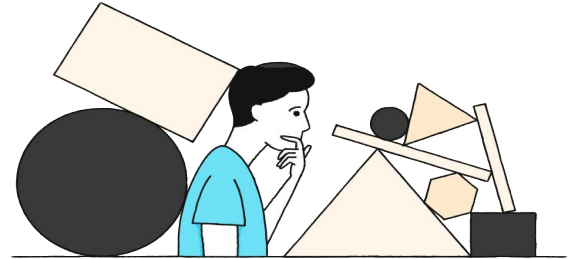
- What in my life no longer serves my growth and wellbeing?
- What needs to change?
- How does who I really want to be differ from who I have been?
- What do I really want out of life?
- What might I start, stop, change, and continue doing?



Stage 2: Realizing Change is Possible

What might change look like?

- **Start** something new that brings you more fulfillment
- **Stop** something that drains your energy and is unfulfilling
- **Change** the way something fits into your life to boost your overall fulfillment
- **Continue** something that you do enjoy, and appreciate continuity there



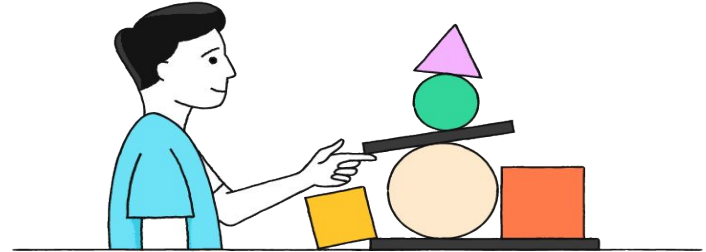
Stage 3: Rebuilding

Prioritize your idea list

- Flesh out appealing ideas

Experiment and explore

- Try new things, say yes to new opportunities, explore life, expand your horizons



Stage 4: Solidifying

Reflect again

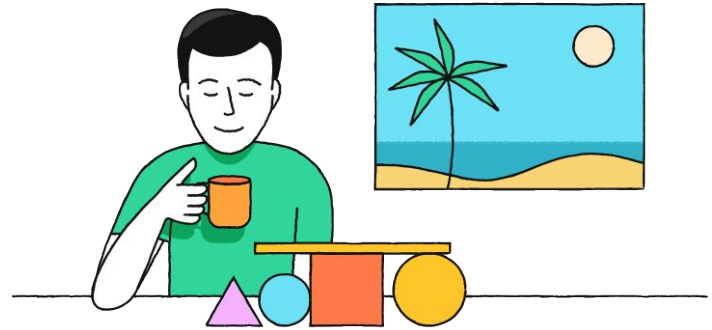
- How did experimenting with changes go?
- What did you learn?
- What feels better?
- What still feels off?
- Who are you now?
- Where is who you are now consistent now with who you were before?
- What other changes may be needed?



Stage 4: Solidifying

Integrate

- Create a life purpose statement
- Make an accountability commitment to someone
- Honor the change with a meaningful trip or ritual
- Conduct an integration therapy session
- Share your learnings via teaching, writing, art..

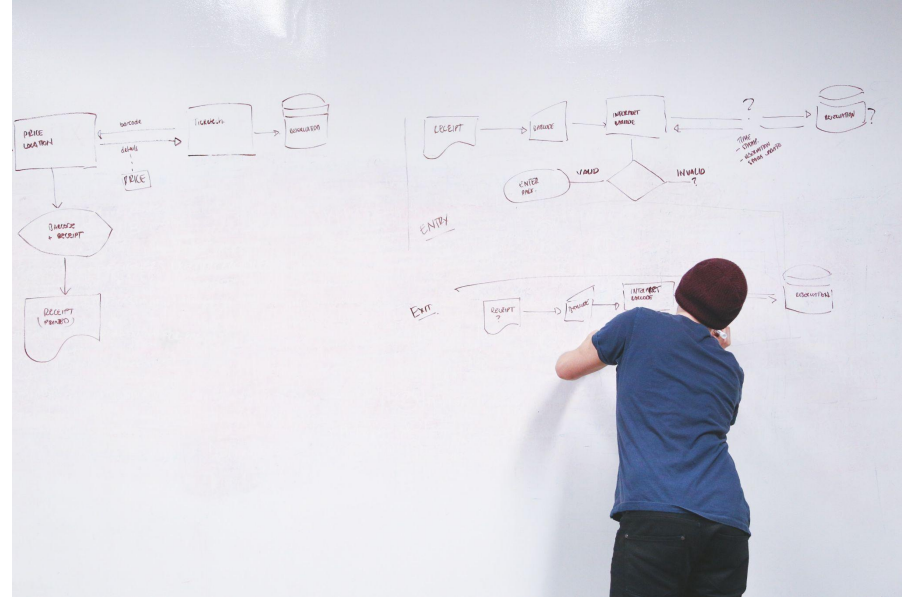


Quarter-Life Crisis

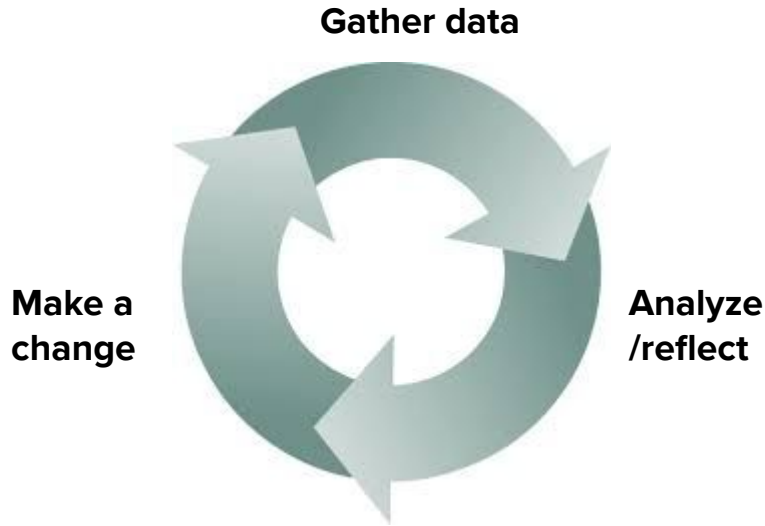
Caveats

When to initiate change?

- Actively harmful (manipulative, toxic, abusive, etc.) OR
- Not aligned with your true values/belief system AND
- Cannot be brought closer in alignment AND
- Is not vital for another meaningful life element



Changes don't have to be permanent



Watch out for...

- Unresolved internal insecurities projecting onto external life elements
- Too much change at once
- Deafness of the real risk of harmful life elements
- “Returning to sleep”

Appendix

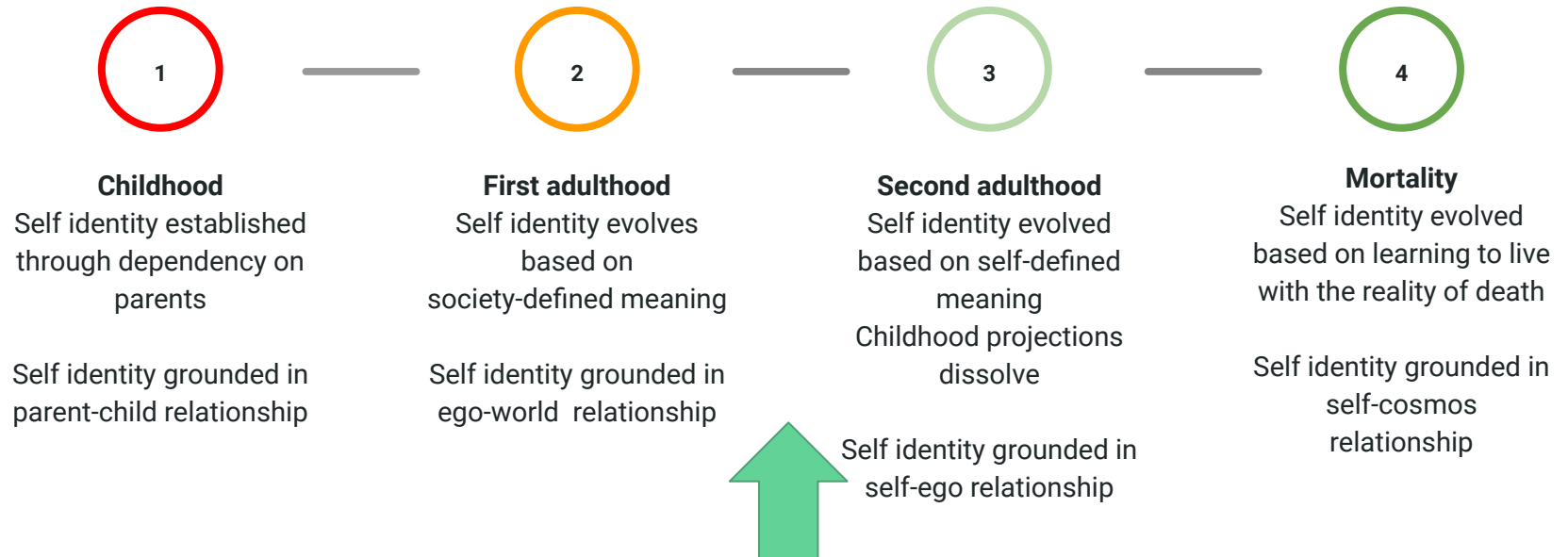
Links for further learning

- [Determine what influenced your QLC](#)
- [Navigating a QLC in 4 steps infographic](#)
- [Defining your personal values](#)
- [Informative essays on QLC](#)
- [5 books to read when navigating a QLC](#)
- [Quarter-Life Crisis coaching](#)

Lessons learned from my QLC

- We all need help sometimes
- There is no “good” or “bad” in life
- Excessive comparison is damaging
- We are all mortal and have our limits
- Life is about the journey, not the end/outcome
- It's never too late to start/stop/change something
- Self acceptance & kindness > self rejection & criticism
- Life is always changing; nothing can be made to stay the same forever
- We don't know the future, so we will **all** make “mistakes;” “perfect” is impossible
- Balance is important. Over-attachment to any one life element is dangerous
- Money/status/fame/things do not generate sustainable happiness in and of themselves
- We can *influence*, but can't **control** what happens in life, or other people. We **can** control our perceptions of life

The QLC occurs between stage 2 and 3 of the 4 stages of identity development



From Dr James Hollis's book, The Middle Passage

Thank you