

Leadership Coaching

An effective development route for executives:

- **To acquire gravitas and develop presence** - enabling them to demonstrate the qualities that help get things done incisively and with compassion, but without aggression.
- **To find their purpose in life.** Aware of the need for strategic thinking and a clear vision, leaders of all kinds can nevertheless find themselves caught up in a whirlwind of daily problems.
- **To re-align themselves.** Recognising that they aren't quite achieving what they want to achieve - we look at what led to their success in the first place and what works now. Finding there are better ways of managing situations so they are clearer, energised and more effective.

Graham Wilson

For the last 17 years, I've worked with the leaders of organisations, and their people, helping create a vision of what their world could be like, and then helping them to achieve it.

Believing in the enormous potential that people have I love to see them discover and tap into this in every aspect of their life.

Whilst both a futurist and strategist, my work has its roots in organisation development and is shaped by my training as a psychotherapist, sports coach, and minister.

You can read more about my background, leadership roles and my books on my website:

www.grahamwilson.org

MIDLIFE – WHAT CRISIS?

A 21st Century Guide
for Today's Executives

Leadership Coaching

I meet clients at a variety of locations around the country, including London, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Surrey, Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. Appointments can be made to suit your timetable - many clients preferring to meet outside their core working hours.

49 Freehold St
Lower Heyford
Oxfordshire
OX25 5NT

T: 07785 222380
E: coach@grahamwilson.org
W: www.grahamwilson.org

GRAHAM WILSON
LONDON • OXFORD

Midlife - What crisis?

Enough men experience a "midlife" crisis for it to be firmly established as a phase in male development. Yet very few people seem to know much about this time; even fewer can recognize the symptoms; many deny that they could possibly be experiencing one; most will never discover the very tangible benefits of having one; and a few will die without ever getting the message.

So, these ten pointers try to explain a little more about this valuable period of our lives and dispel a few myths.

1 What is a 'midlife crisis'?

It's a phase, particularly common in men, between 40 and 50, but not restricted to those ages, where they find themselves questioning what the purpose is in their life, wondering what could have happened "if only", and possibly wondering whether they will ever achieve what they have been (perhaps secretly or perhaps not) hoping to achieve.

2 What are the symptoms?

Some men will unconsciously do things to try to put the clock back; a few may become melancholy or depressed; some exaggerate the mannerisms they associate with "success" or "maturity". The experience needn't be all bad though; some just acquire a less ruffled exterior, become a bit more measured, and either become a quiet, but significant, influence on their younger colleagues or go on to far greater achievements than they had come to expect.

3 Can something trigger one?

Definitely. A few men appear to "fall" into this phase, but for most there are one or more triggers. A death, especially that of a parent; the "death" of a dream; being "looked over" for promotion; a child leaving home; redundancy; a spouse suggesting couple counselling (or even divorce).

4 Is it a kind of 'nervous breakdown'?

Not often. A "breakdown" implies that someone's ways of coping have literally "broken down", whereas the midlife crisis is more about these defence mechanisms being re-assessed. Some of the things we do to protect ourselves as we navigate our path through life, such as being very demanding of people around us might seem less useful - even shallow - while others, such as doing a job that has "real" purpose, might be more important.

5 Accept my own mortality?

Many people first experience the doubts that accompany a midlife crisis when someone close to them dies. This is more than a natural grieving process; the finality of the person's death has a bigger impact on us than we expect - while we know rationally that we should be concerned, this is something much deeper. The crisis involves working through these emotions and making long-term changes to our lifestyle. It's important to stress that this is NOT simply an intellectual exercise but a process that explores our sense of success, failure and personal values and the feelings associated with them.

6 Just a small cog...

In much the same way as death and frailty can provoke a more intense self-assessment, so can an event that makes us aware of just how limited our own role is in the world. Perhaps our company is taken over and suddenly we are only one of a much larger team, or a project that we had invested a lot of effort in is scrapped.

7 But why am I here?

An important step in addressing the 'crisis' is to decide on our own future direction and what we would be prepared to look back on and say: "It's OK, I made a conscious choice not to do that, so that I could do these things instead." So, perhaps we give up the fantasy of an immaculate mansion in the suburbs so we can invest in a farmhouse in Spain. Or give up the ambition of a Partnership so we can devote more time to our golf or another hobby. By making these choices consciously, we reduce the likelihood of becoming bitter later.

8 Power and proving my manliness!

Although their potency and physical ability decline from late adolescence onwards, by the time of the midlife crisis, it is difficult for most men to deny the symptoms of ageing. At first, they tend to try to do things they did when they were younger - flirting with younger women, taking up "running" or buying the motorcycle they could never afford in their teens! By understanding what is driving us in these circumstances, we develop the skills to interpret our motives in others, and generally become a wiser individual.

9 Accepting ourselves and our limitations

The thing that makes midlife into a crisis is the process of letting go of expectations that aren't realistic before you have developed new ones that are. A balance needs to be found between living each day fully (to coin a rather too clichéd term "as if each day was your last") and having goals in life that are about you and your own growth. These don't have to mean a complete change in your way of life, but inevitably lead to a more focused and fulfilling one.

10 First steps in dealing with the crisis

There are many approaches, but generally I find that most people prefer to work together in creating an inventory of their life - its ups and downs - exploring what led to the highs and lows. In the course of this, we usually get a sense of what that person really feels is their "purpose" in life and what stops them from realizing it.

For details of my leadership coaching, public speaking and other activities, please check out my website:

www.grahamwilson.org

or telephone me on 07785 222380.