

'A straight-talking handbook for those of us who believe we're still at
our peak in middle age but need a few honest signposts' VIV ALBERTINE

MIRANDA OUT OF TIME SAWYER

midlife, if you still think you're young

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From the hugely respected journalist Miranda Sawyer, a very modern look at the midlife crisis – delving into the truth, and lies, of the experience and how to survive it, with thoughtfulness, insight and humour.

‘You wake one day and everything is wrong. It’s as though you went out one warm evening – an evening fizzing with delicious potential, so ripe and sticky-sweet you can taste it on the air – for just one drink ... and woke up two days later in a skip. Except you’re not in a skip, you’re in an estate car, on the way to an out-of-town shopping mall to buy a balance bike, a roof rack and some stackable storage boxes.’

Miranda Sawyer’s midlife crisis began when she was 44. It wasn’t a traditional one. She didn’t run off with a Pilates teacher, or blow thousands on a trip to find herself. From the outside, all remained the same. Work, kids, marriage, mortgage, blah. Days, weeks and months whizzed past as she struggled with feeling – knowing – that she was over halfway through her life. It seemed only yesterday that she was 29, out and about.

Out of Time is not a self-help book. It’s an exploration of this sudden crisis, this jolt. It looks at how our tastes, and our bodies, change as we get older. It considers the unexpected new pleasures that the second half of life can offer, from learning to code to taking up running (slowly). Speaking to musicians and artists, friends and colleagues, Miranda asks how they too have confronted midlife, and the lessons, if any, that they’ve learned along the way.

Out of Time: Midlife, If You Still Think You're Young Details

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From Reader Review Out of Time: Midlife, If You Still Think You're Young for online ebook

Carolyn Lochhead says

Back in the late 80s, Wednesdays were special. Every other Wednesday, a new edition of Smash Hits came out and I'd run to the shop with my pocket money, to pick up the funniest, cleverest, poppiest magazine there has ever been.

Along with Sylvia Patterson, Miranda Sawyer was one of my favourite - sorry, fave - Smash Hits journos. She understood the effervescent joy of pop, but I knew she was still a Grown Up, because she had a Job, even though that Job was writing about Pop. So it's a shock to discover that she's actually only a few years older than me. And she's written a book about being middle-aged. There is a possibility that this means I, too, am middle-aged, but that's too horrifying to contemplate so let's skate over it.

I went to hear Miranda read from *Aye Write* a few months ago and she was as sensible and self-deprecating as I expected, but it's clear that this book is born of genuine distress. Miranda's had the realisation that comes to us all when we hit forty that we are halfway through our lives and our best days may be behind us. She didn't buy a sports car or run off with a twenty year old: instead she wrote this book, about life and death and ways of finding meaning. And I enjoyed it, though she doesn't hold back on the negative aspects of getting older. Best not to read it till you're out the side of your own mid-life crisis. Thumbs aloft!

Nrr says

It is an easy read, and it makes some good points, although I could also have done without the 'I'm a cool indie chick', but then I'm a seriously uncool academic who spent her youth working hard. Although it's serious, it's clearly by a journalist: if you're looking for detailed philosophy, this isn't the place.

Julia says

Disclaimer: I'm under 40 (I kept writing jokes here and then worried about the ironic ways they could turn on me).

I agree with other reviews of this book on this site as I too was annoyed about it - there was something about her regaling us with tales of her rock-chick youth that felt a bit humblebrag-y, privileged and annoying.

But stick with it - it gets much better as she analyses the different ways we experience the different parts of growing older in the middle and then returns to the personal as she philosophises about what to do next towards the end.

Poppy99 says

I wasn't really feeling this book until the second half. The first half felt a bit smug - look at what an indie rock chick I used to be. I think I am being a tad unfair, but it just did not resonate with me. The second half really hit home, particularly the dying bit. Although I should have felt depressed by this, it energised me. I really have been sweating the small stuff recently, due to a discontent with my life and how stagnating it felt. I have been feeling a lot of anger, and struggle to be around people for any great length of time, particularly younger people mainly because I think that they have a chance to shape their lives, and my chance is over. I realise that I am scared that this is it and that I should have made better decisions and taken more chances. That I am not going to progress any further in life, that I am stuck. Except I am not. I am never going to be in a big west end musical, or run a marathon, but I can do other stuff. I can stop seeing life as a competition, as something to be endured. I need to get rid of the old stuff that is weighing me down, mentally and physically, and enjoy my life and the opportunities that I still have. I want to like me again. And the best way of doing that is not feeling bitter, or reading endless negative stories about the world online, but get back to what I used to be like, which was open minded, creative and seeing the fun in life and the good in people again. We are here for a finite time. What is the point of anything really - let's just enjoy the ride as much as we can. Mid life crisis is a first world problem of course, but it definitely messes with your head for a while. Be gone crabby woman. I am back.

This is an easy read and written in an engaging style, but touches on some deep issues. It is not depressing, and whilst not a self help book, it does help you make some sense of where you are. I would recommend.

Hayley Gullen says

This was more thought-provoking and insightful than I initially expected. I got a bit annoyed at the start, when it was all about how glamorous her youth was - how many normal twentysomethings get their first job writing for a music magazine and then spend all their time getting into the best parties and clubs? It felt like a bit of a boast.

Due to her privilege I expect that many will find this hard to relate to. However, many of the themes explored were interesting, and in many ways it was reassuring to hear that even someone who has 'lived the dream' gets self-doubt and anxiety about ageing, and death.

She is a good writer, and it made me think.

Adam says

An insightful think piece about being middle-aged, at the bottom of the u-bend of life and what ultimately should be important. This is not a self-help book so much as a review of one person's life having reached that middle period whereby death maths means you (probably) have less time before you than behind. As this is a personal account, not everything resonates, but it does enough to help all of those (like me) who spend a little too much time being introspective.

Alan says

Funny, sad wise and warm. This book has welcome and unwelcome truths within.

Mat Davies says

Immensely readable, occasionally funny as hell, this is the sort of book that you will find yourself muttering away to yourself "yep, that's me", "oh God, I soooooo do that" and other similar phrases of self recognition. Sawyer is a terrific writer: humane, humble, smart but always warm and welcoming. Sawyer describes this as a non-self-help book but, to this reader, it's like having the best big sister and sensible mate around; the one that won't preach or provoke but will listen, observe and make it all right in the end. Lovely.

Kim Plowright says

So yeah it turns out I'm having a mid life crisis. Smart, funny and honest book about mid-life: how being in your 40s makes you question your assumptions about your life. Contains wisdom and excellent jokes.

Tronikyouth says

great look on how the mdma generation move towards oap

Gervy says

Snippets of this were great, but most of it seemed disjointed and bitsy.

Colin says

Miranda Sawyer had a wild time in her 20's doing drugs, getting drunk and staying up all night. A former rock journalist now with kids and a partner she finds herself in an existential crisis.

Mid life crises is often the staple of jokes like buying a sports car or having an affair with your personal trainer. Really this book is a very middle class, metropolitan angst. Most mental illness starts at adolescence. Breakdowns are common in your twenties like I experienced. Miranda Sawyer can write, I enjoyed this book especially the chapter's on music the and exercise.

Richard says

Like a long chat with someone where you talk about everything and nothing.

Joe O'Donnell says

“Out of Time” is arts journalist Miranda Sawyer’s examination of the modern midlife crisis – that feeling when you wake up in your 40s and wonder where the first half of your life went. It is about the changing nature of life, money, health, sex and death as Generation X tries to navigate middle age, supposedly having had to put away the childish things of their decadent, carefree 20s and 30s. “Out of Time” is about how we deal with the realisation of middle age – with “the fear – of everything you have become, and everything you will not”. As Sawyer drily notes, this attempt to get to grips with the passing of one’s youth frequently results in buying an expensive bike and kitting yourself out in lycra (if you’re a midlife crisis man), or having an affair with a personal trainer 20 years younger than you (if you’re a midlife crisis woman).

I can see why some readers might find Sawyer’s frequent harking back to her globetrotting, hedonistic 20s irritating and a little ‘too cool for school’. Yet, she is a humane and self-deprecating writer, all too aware of the absurdity of what it is essentially a ‘first world problem’ (i.e. middle class gripping about reaching middle age). And, for somebody like myself who is currently staring down the barrel of 40, I found “Out of Time” reassuring and calming about how it is still possible to reinvent yourself long after the last traces of your youth are receding in the rear-view mirror.

DJ says

Whilst this wasn't quite the book I was expecting, there were glimmers of what led me to it.

Other people who have read it seem to find the anecdotes of the Authors youth annoying and prefered the second half - not I! I loved the first half of this book the " guts and the glory ", although possibly it resonates better with someone who flew the Parental coop at 17! My Birthday Gift to my Parents was not to announce that I had recievied my Provisional Driving Licence in the Post but to ask what of my Bedroom furniture I could take with me when I left in 3 weeks...

(all, including the carpet).

The second half of the book was fractionally more basic than I expected but as I don't have (human) children - this may make life more flexible.

When I reached the end the Author says " remember what you loved to do when younger... 17, 19... and remember what you wanted to do..."

Strangely, I have been thinking of this very thing... I've joined a local action group and decided to go back to Art after an unforseen change in my employment status.

It's less scary to stand up for others and our community than gut my studio to start work - this I could fail at, have I left it to late... oh, a bag of mini tulips - it's dry out I may just go and plant thise up and check the fences...

I need to plunge back to me... has this book helped?

Ask me in a year.
