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Mid-life crisis? No worries!

Johanna Castro decides to take the gap and ditch her domestic responsibilities in favour of an ashram and Tantric sex.

I'm cheesed off. Not seriously depressed, you understand, but edgy and questioning these crazy mid-life years. I seem to be spinning like some whirling dervish in an out-of-control way. Entities associated with the inner me keep going missing, never to return. Are they being sucked into the Bermuda Triangle, I wonder? My memory sneaks off, my humour often goes AWOL and my moods rise and fall faster than the rand.

How I long to get away from it all. Tropical beach? I don't think so! Too much has gone missing. My figure, for example, has migrated south and sags in unsightly places. Teeny-weeny bikinis? No way! Do robust support panties ring a bell?

But it's natural, they say, to be in an emotional state of uncertainty and anxiety at this time. HRT may soon be touted as the salve to ease my stress over a life that's bolting and to soothe my panic about everything else, but it's not meant specifically to reignite a libido that might (I have been reliably, but reluctantly informed) become as elusive as the Holy Grail.

Doesn't it strike you as odd, then, that men, whether their weather vanes are pointing south or not and whether they face mid-life problems or not, are being hounded – mostly via e-mails – to stand up and deliver and try Viagra instead?

It's also apparent that women are programmed to DOS. The Domestic Operational System. Either due to a historic sense of guilt at sending our cavemen out into the dangerous world of the hunt, or because of a deep personal insecurity, women have to prove they can work, multitask and perform as superwomen. For even as our hormones flee, we're inclined to be sandwiched between the demands of three generations as we balance a complex range of domestic tasks around any so-called 'proper' work we do. It's no wonder our oestrogen's going haywire. My mid-life DOS is so overloaded it's ready to crash.

We work, organise, multitask, hold several conversations at once with ourselves, service providers, partners and children, as well as assimilate and retrieve a complicated household filing cabinet full of important domestic facts.

These facts may appear petty, but peace at home is entirely dependent on them:

- ❖ The remote control's current location (stuffed deep between sofa cushions).
- ❖ Fairies don't change loo rolls.

- ❖ Washing up does not levitate overnight from the sink into the dishwasher.

- ❖ The phone does not answer itself.

- ❖ Teenagers have evolved into genetically modified beings with cellphones attached to their thumbs. Note: No amount of yelling will prove otherwise.

It's different for our hunters – they're programmed differently to us gatherers. They focus. They can sashay out of the door into the filter-coffee'd morning and, along with the hunting pack, join the world of The Job. Anything to do with their home life recedes from centre stage, they concentrate on one task at a time, though probably not on their children's complex lifting arrangements.



By mid-life they think we're going completely nuts but then some of them are hit by a nasty thunderbolt. They wake up one morning and, out of the blue, decide they hate work, buy a Harley, strap a 22-year-old blonde onto the back and vanish with a dramatic 'whooff' straight from the fat into the fire.

To women, though, the mid-life crisis offers a time to dream again. We face menopause and empty nests, but we eventually accept the change as a gift, seeing it as a time of reinvention. I think then we're likely to abandon DOS and head away from the fire to find ourselves, perhaps south, to where all our bits have migrated.

So I'm casting aside my worries and booking my mid-life crisis into an ashram in India. I reckon I'm better off with yoga and Tantric sex and, ooh, maybe I'll meet up with Sting. ☺