

Ep #2: Who Are You Without Roles or Titles?



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

C. René Washington

[Midlife Woman Redefined](#) with C. René Washington

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“As long as you’re being true to yourself, you will always find happiness”
Amber Riley.

Welcome to Midlife Woman Redefined, a podcast for women near retirement who are ready to step into a new chapter of freedom, travel, and fulfillment. If you’re ready to focus on figuring out who you are and what you really want, this is the place for you. Here’s your host, master certified life coach, travel addict, and midlife maven, Rene Washington.

Welcome to episode two of Midlife Woman Redefined, the show for women who are ready to let shit go, flip the script, and begin living life in redefined purpose and passion. I’m your host, C. Rene Washington, your midlife maven and a woman who’s committed to moving through this best life chapter freely, deeply, and passionately and helping as many women as possible do the same.

Listen, I’ve been coaching people for over 30 years and through that experience in my own life, I created a coaching framework for clients based on three questions; who am I? What do I want? And how do I get it?

Today, our focus is on your, who-am-I. It’s the key to getting what you want and keeping it. Before we delve into that though, I want to start a weekly show tradition of you pausing to celebrate a personal accomplishment win, or, “Yes, I did that thing.” Remember, I said a personal, “Yes, I did that thing,” not something your child, your grandchild, your bestie, or your honey did; something you did.

When I do this with women, I have to remind most of them to only think about themselves because what we tend to do, as women, what we’ve been conditioned to do, is to acknowledge how well other people are doing. This is why we’ll brag all day about our family members and friends but deflect and minimize the smallest of compliments directed at us. Building your, “Yes, I did that,” muscle is an important piece of stepping into the fullness of who you are and the life you want to live.

What am I celebrating? I’m celebrating challenging myself to get on a stage at The Moth, Birmingham. I live in Birmingham, Alabama. And if you’re not

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familiar with The Moth, you should be. It's a wonderful national public radio show about telling personal stories.

They give a theme and you put your name in the hat to get on the stage and tell a five-minute story about that theme. The theme the night I did it was about a time when you were bold. After you're done, three groups of volunteer judges from the audience rate your delivery on a scale from one to 10. Scary as crap, right?

Why did I do it? Because I'm an introvert at heart and I'm always looking for ways to push through my fears and build my courage muscle. So I got myself up on that stage and even though halfway through my talk my only thought was, "I have got to get off this stage," I'm still celebrating myself for making it to the end and for being able to stay focused on having done it as the true win, regardless of what I was scored. And it was a very embracing audience and vibe, but still, you were being judged.

Now, I'm sure you're curious, so I'll share that my score wasn't the highest or the lowest. And again, it wasn't about the score. It was about my getting in the arena. Some of you may be familiar with researcher and amazing storyteller Dr. Brené Brown's TED Talk on why your critics don't matter.

In a nutshell, it boils down to people who aren't in the arena getting their ass kicked having no right to criticize those of us who are. Now, ain't that the truth? I'll share her talk in the show notes.

So, what are you celebrating? It could be something as simple as your carving five minutes out of your day to just breathe and re-center. Or maybe you took a stage. Or maybe you had a difficult conversation. Whatever it is, take a moment to honor yourself for having done it.

Now, it's time to break down the path to your who-am-I. I began this show with a quote because I love intentional positive messaging and collecting great quotes is one of my jams. The quote was, "As long as you're being true to yourself, you will always find happiness."

That's it, women. This is the foundational question I ask women I coach; who are you? Now, you're probably thinking, "Well I know who I am. I'm a

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mom. I'm an executive. I'm a community leader. I'm a life partner. And that's not giving me the life I want."

My question is about your looking yourself in the mirror and asking, who am I without the roles or the titles? Oh, and a side note, now when I talk about stepping into being true to yourself as the path to you finding happiness, I'm talking about positive intentional messaging, remember. So you can be true to yourself and be evil or be someone who wreaks havoc on the planet; that's not who I'm talking to.

Okay, I just wanted to be sure we're on the same page because when you can answer the who am I question from the essence of who you truly are, not who you've been told you should be or who you think you ought to be but who you are, with certainty and without apologizing, dumbing yourself down or suppressing, that's the key.

And this is an inside job, sisters. It requires examining the story you've been telling yourself about yourself, dropping the lies, and owning the truth of who you are at this stage of your life.

Earlier, I told you about my sharing a personal story of boldness on a stage. The story was about how I left a successful corporate career two years before I could officially retire and with no concrete plan for my what's next. Being bold equated to my being honest with myself. I'd been on fumes for years and maintaining the façade was becoming more and more painful.

Especially since I was an HR manager, whose role it was to motivate and inspire people to give their best every day. I was holding onto an old script. The company had been wonderful to me. Grew me up, compensated me well, and I'd built a successful career. But the fall-in-lockstep script of corporate that I'd walked and taught so well for so many years was not choking the life out of me.

What I know now that I didn't know then is that we continue to grow and evolve and that evolution doesn't always happen on a prescribed timetable. Three things served to push me out of the door. One, my beautiful beloved

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mom died unexpectedly. She died suddenly from a pulmonary embolism without my sister and I getting the chance to say goodbye.

I used to say life is short, but now I say that life is arbitrary. You would have never looked at mom and suspected imminent death or even illness. Her death made me realize how arbitrary life can be. People who look like the walking dead, the Rolling Stones live on and beautiful people, beautiful, vibrant people die.

It also made me realize that the retirement criteria for my company had changed three times during my 28-year tenure. Three times. I asked myself, why was I letting an external and arbitrary decision be the decider for my life timetable?

Two, I'm a woman of strong faith. As my misery grew, I petitioned god to change my heart, my mind, and my spirit to be able to stay and hold out those last two years, and yet, it only got worse. My then fiancé, now husband said that it was start raining in the house on Sunday afternoons, and that maybe god was packing my bags.

Bingo. That was it. I was asking the wrong question. Instead of asking how to stay, I started asking how I could go. Finally, I believe in living your passion, and I also believe in marrying the practical to the passion as much as possible. I'd been seeing my financial planner for a few years, and whenever I mentioned leaving, he'd say it wasn't a good time.

I went back to my planner after my epiphanies, ready to fight. You can't ignore epiphanies, right? Well, the stars were aligned because this time he said yes. Hallelujah. It was time to redefine my who-am-I. I was no longer a woman happy, living in the prescribed box and occasionally pushing the lid. I'd become a woman ready to explore all my suppressed dreams and desires. A woman who knew I was living at the edges of purpose and I was ready to discover and embrace my purpose and fully flow in it.

There are three components to my framework for connecting to your who-am-I. This is your life work piece from the show. Not your homework. Your life work. One, tell your story. Write down everything you believe about

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yourself, including the roles and titles. Two, drop the lies. Go back through the list and identify the top one to three roles that light you up. Really make you feel good about yourself. List the top one to three roles or titles that drag you, that just seem to be sucking the life out of you.

You're not sharing this, so be honest. You can be a good mom who loves her children without loving the role. I had a client once who loved her two beautiful girls, but what she didn't love was the toddler stage. The little girl stage. You know that stage where children can do the same thing over and over for hours. It drove her crazy and she was feeling guilty about it.

Finally, we worked through that and she decided to hire someone to come in and be with her children. She was at home because she could work from home at that point, and she has an office too, but the main thing was that she didn't want to feel guilty about not wanting to play those repetitive games over and over and over, and to be able to spend the time with her girls that she truly enjoyed.

And so that's what she did. She hired someone who could do that, who could play the games over and over and over. And that made her happier, which made her time with her girls better, and made everybody happy. So don't feel guilty about not loving the roles that you're in.

And three, own your story. Write down who you are now and who you want to be. This time, dropping the roles and titles. In my intro, I told you that I'm a woman who's committed to moving through this best life chapter we call midlife freely, deeply, and passionately, and helping as many women as possible do the same. No role or title in that. It's about living life on my terms and not boxing myself in.

What are the terms you choose to live by? That's your who-am-I. Two suggestions for helping you with your who-am-I work. There's a wonderful book that I send my clients titled *The Crossroads of Should and Must* by Elle Luna. It helps you break down the should and ought lies you've been living as facts, or maybe they were true at one time but they are no longer true, and get to the life you must live.

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My other suggestion, you know that question that periodically cycles around about what would you tell your 20-year-old self or whatever young age is chosen? The question I decided to ask is what will I tell my 99-year-old self? Midlife is about a state of mind. Not a number. And I plan to celebrate with my 90-year-old self, that yes, I did all the things.

Well, we've come to the end of episode two of *Midlife Woman Redefined*. If you heard something that really resonated with you in a good way, please take a few minutes to rate and write a short review about the *Midlife Woman Redefined*. This helps the show become discoverable, which helps me continue to show up helping you and many more women.

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The link is provided in the show notes. If you have a dream and you just need a plan, each week I'll be sharing tips, resources, tools, and real-life examples on how to make your dream life a reality. So come on back and let's do this. Remember, living well is the only option.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Midlife Woman Redefined*. If you're ready to learn more and reclaim your time, head over to crenecoach.com.