

Ep #7: Escaping the Comparison Trap



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With Your Host

C. René Washington

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“Trust yourself to create a life you want to celebrate.” C. René Washington.

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, René Washington.

Hello, hello, hello. This is C. René Washington, your life coach and midlife maven. And we are here for episode seven of the *Midlife Woman Redefined*. Episode seven. I'm so excited.

So today we are talking about comparison traps. In last week's episode, episode six, I talked about this epic adventure that I just experienced in Europe and North Africa, and I still have more to share from that. Lessons learned and how transformational travel truly is. But I want to take a pause on that because of a couple of things that have come up recently.

Yesterday I saw someone post on social media something to the effect of they were really kind of low rating self-help and why self-help isn't the path. This was a person of faith, a Christian, and that Christianity is the way. Now, I am a Christian and Christianity is my foundational faith. My relationship with god is the foundation for everything that I do.

However, I don't look at self-help from a Christianity versus self-help perspective. Something else that happened as a side note, I live in Alabama and it was in the news yesterday that Alabama is one of the states that does not allow – I can't remember if it was the only state, I wouldn't be surprised, that yoga cannot be a part of public education.

And it's because it connects to Eastern religion and meditation and those things connect to Eastern religion and I'm in the bible belt, Alabama is strongly in the bible belt, which is fine. But this is why they have prohibited yoga and meditation being taught in public education.

And it was interesting to me that I saw that on the same day that I did see this post about why self-help doesn't really work. And I wanted to talk about that from the perspective of the comparison trap because I think we do

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follow these traps of always having to put something versus another thing. And the other reason I wanted to talk about the comparison trap is because I often hear women say to me, oh I want to be like you when I grow up, or I could never do that.

So I'm going to talk about three aspects of the comparison trap. But before we do that, let's get back to our weekly moment of celebration. And I want you to take a moment to think about something that you can celebrate that connects to something that you have achieved or accomplished, or you're very proud about that connects to you. Not something someone else did in your life. A family member, a friend, or whatever, but something that relates directly to something you have done.

This is a muscle that we need to build as women to be able to celebrate ourselves on a regular basis. Daily. Every day, you should stop and pause and just as we have gratitude moments, have a celebratory moment. Yes, I did that. And be glad about it.

So just take a moment to think of something that you are celebrating. I'm celebrating I was a substitute facilitator for a very dear friend of mine who has a local group called Radiant Wise Women, and she trusted me to substitute for her. She's leading a retreat and I did that for her and it went great. I had such an enjoyable time with that group of women.

We learned from each other, so I'm very, very grateful for that and I am celebrating the fact that I was able to positively influence the lives of others because that is a mission for me in life. So now, let's get back to our topic of the day, which is the comparison traps.

And there are three that I want to talk about briefly. Compare and declare, compare and despair, compare and disparage. Now, compare and declare is simply what I referenced a minute ago when women come up to me and say oh, I want to be like you when I grow up. And my response is always you're grown. You're fully grown. Whatever it is that you want to do, do it now. Stop waiting.

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And it connects to compare and despair. The difference is compare and despair, you go a little deeper down that path of one day. Compare and despair typically is that I can't. I can't do that. I'm not good enough. I'm not good enough to do what you're doing. I'm not good enough to have what you have. I'm not good enough to live the way you're living.

You know what I'm going to say next. Let that shit go. And then compare and disparage connects to this false superiority about your way. And that's what bubbled up for me when I saw the post about self-help, you know, Christianity. Okay, fine. You want to really be careful about that judgment about another path, another way, or even thinking that it has to be either or.

Now, my faith is foundational, my faith in Christ, in god is foundational for me as I said. And it's non-negotiable. It's non-negotiable. But what I've found is that when I am so focused on my way being the only way, it closes me off to a lot of opportunity.

So I wanted to just briefly share my thoughts on how you can free yourself from these comparison traps of compare and declare, compare and despair, or compare and disparage. And believe me, I have found myself in all of these too, so I am not speaking from some mountain looking down at you. No, I'm right there in that valley with you.

And the way that I have found is a good way to focus on this and pull yourself out of these traps is to start paying attention. Start paying attention. Sherlock your shit. Start spying on yourself. So pay attention to what you're saying, what you're making things mean, and who and what you're judging.

Start becoming aware of that. Listen to what you're saying as you go through your day. Pay attention to the thoughts you're having about what you're experiencing. Start being aware and the second thing is to document it. Take a week and document your thoughts, conversations, so that you can start looking for patterns.

So you may look at a week of documentation and see that oh my gosh, I'm continuously comparing myself to this person and I'm coming out on the

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short end of the stick. Or I am a very judgmental and critical person. So start paying attention to what you're saying, what you're doing, what you're thinking.

And then the third thing is to start flipping those scripts. Ask yourself if these thoughts and this messaging, does it serve you? Is it serving you? Or as I said, are you closing yourself off from experiences and connections that could actually broaden and enhance your life? Are you missing opportunities to positively influence the lives of others?

And what replacement thoughts would better serve you? So as I said, my faith is non-negotiable and I also have strong connections to people who believe very differently than I do. And I will hear people say that they have to have some kind of medical intervention and my doctor is a Christian.

Now, that's great. However, that has always felt limiting to me because I don't limit god. I believe that god can work through anyone. And god working through anybody on my behalf, then that's not my business as to how god chooses to do that.

And I also know how limiting it is for me to compare myself to other people. Because we never fully know another person's story. What's real, what's true, what's Memorex? If you're my age group you know what that means. What's real or what's Memorex.

And what I do know though is that bettering myself is an inside game and if somebody has had something or does something that I want for my life, that's useful information for me to explore and that exploratory light is shining on me. Not that other person. That's just a flag for me to say I'm paying attention to this person. What is that about for me?

And all that person came through my life to do was to raise that flag for me. It's not for me to rest my time and attention on that person. It's for me to ask myself why did that resonate for me? Why am I paying attention to that? Is that signaling a gap in my life?

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And it's not necessarily about the thing that that person has or the thing that that person's doing. It could be about the feeling that I'm seeing them experience behind it. That feeling is what's missing from my life.

So if somebody gets a new car and they're just so excited about it and oh my gosh, they're going on and on and on, and then I focus on man, I want a new car, my car's kind of crappy, I've had it for a long time, but I can't afford a new car, then I just start focusing on this person. They can afford something I can't, blah, blah, blah. Then I'm going down this rabbit trail that is not serving me in any shape, form, or fashion.

When what can really be going on is that this person has treated themselves to something they wanted. And there may be something completely different in my life that I want but for some reason, I'm not allowing myself to have it. And so what I'm connecting to is that feeling that they are experiencing from having allowed themselves to have it.

And I need to do some self-examination, some exploration into what's really at the bottom of this, and am I denying myself something that I could be allowing myself to have? So that's where you want your focus to be, and the purpose that whatever this thing is, this person or whatever has come through, it can connect to an internal conflict that you need to address. Nothing more.

And so that's a place of gratitude. I believe that that's a place of gratitude. Not despair or disparagement. Just a place of thank you. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. So then finally, now that you have awareness as to what's really going on, can you work through it on your own?

And this is why I don't have a problem with self-help books or listening to motivational talks or whatever the path is because I filter everything through what works for me. So when I meditate, I'm meditating from a faith-based perspective. If I listen to a speaker and they are laying down principles and they are doing it from their perspective of a path that doesn't work for me, then I don't have to go down that path.

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But that doesn't negate that whatever the formula is that they're using, that maybe I can work that into how I approach life for myself, in what ways work for me. An example of that is the Oprah Deepak Chopra meditation series. I love those. Deepak Chopra comes from that Eastern religion background and so some of the things that he does in the meditation, some of it I do, some of it I don't.

Sometimes I replace scripture with his mantras. I make it work for me. I don't have to throw out the baby with the bath water. Now, you have to know yourself and if that's a weakness for you then yes, there are some things that you need to avoid. But I don't just look at something and say oh, unless I know that it truly is something that does not work for me.

So can you do this on your own? Maybe. Maybe this connects to some deep trauma that you need to address. Maybe you need therapy. If it's not a clinical issue, then a great coach can help you close whatever this gap is.

So that is how you can work yourself through the comparison traps. First, you have to be aware that you are in the trap. Then start paying attention to yourself again, to see which trap you're in. Track your patterns. And then make a decision about how you want to work yourself through that, and there are different options and different ways that you can do that.

But just be really honest with yourself about how you are looking out and how that looking out is affecting your internal. It serves me in no good way to disparage other people for their path, or to compare myself to other people, or to delay living my life. Why? There's no good reason. So let all of that shit go.

Okay, so that ends episode seven. As I say, I know I'm a broken record but it's so important that you do take a few minutes to rate and write a review about this episode or this podcast. The *Midlife Woman Redefined*. And do what helps this show become discoverable, and which helps me to continue to show up helping you and as many women as possible.

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computer. If you're not sure how to do that, somebody around you can help you. So let them help you.

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Remember, I'm here every week to help you make your dreams become reality. And every week I'll be sharing tips, resources, tools, real life examples of your doing just that. So come on back and 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.