

## Ep #11: Is Your Life a Should Show?



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**C. René Washington**

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“There are two paths in life; should and must. We arrive at this crossroads over and over again. And every day, we get to choose,” Ella Luna

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, midlife mavens. I am C. René Washington, your life coach and your midlife maven. And we are here for episode 11 of *Midlife Woman Redefined*. Thank you for being here.

Today, we are going to talk about your should show, the shoulds and oughts that are keeping you stuck. Before we delve into that, what do we do? We celebrate. So take a moment to pause and think of something that you have personally accomplished and can celebrate.

I am celebrating making a decision to not take any more coaching clients for the rest of the year. I am in the midst of coaching some amazing, amazing wonderful women. And when that ends, they were the women that took advantage of a really incredible coaching offer that I did related to my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.

And when that ends, I'm just going to regroup and redefine myself. So I am celebrating making that decision for myself and not pressuring myself to keep rolling on a train that I really want to step off of for a moment. So that's what I'm celebrating. So what are you celebrating? What's that thing that you can say, yes, I did that?

Okay, so the reason I wanted to talk about your should show is because I am coaching some amazing women, and the one thing most of the women that I coach have in common is living under the tyranny of shoulds and oughts. And that's what keeps you from getting to how you truly want to be living your life on a day to day basis.

And the quote that I read at the top of the show is from Ella Luna, the woman who wrote my favorite coaching resource book, the book that I pull

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from and the book that I recommend to clients, *The Crossroads of Should and Must*. And so as I go through this show, I will be sourcing a lot of what I say from that book. And to get us started, I want to give you the difference between your should and your musts.

Should is how other people want us to live our lives. And this can be really innocent. I mean, this is a big should for me that I will say to people, “You should really try blank-blank dessert.” And if I tell you to try a dessert, you really should do it because that’s one of my zones of genius. I know good dessert.

And so that’s an innocent innocuous little thing. But then there are much bigger shoulds that are really impactful in our lives, and not in the best of ways, and sometimes even in ways that are destructive. One that comes to mind is how women can be shoulded into staying in emotionally or physically abusive relationships, by family dynamic, by religion, by societal pressure. And that’s the end of that continuum that we know is very destructive.

So shoulds can run the gambit, but wherever they fall on the continuum, shoulds represent our choosing to live our life for someone else. If I tell you, you should try this dessert and you’re doing that because I told you to do it, so you’re doing something for me in that moment.

Must is different from should because must is who we are, what we believe, and what we do when we are alone with our truest most authentic selves. It’s what we really feel deeply in the essence of who we are. That’s why I talk a lot about body compass, because that’s how you connect to your must; by paying attention to that inner knowing, that intuitive knowing. And it’s where our passions lie, our convictions, our deepest urges and desires. And we can’t deny them, particularly at this stage of life that we call midlife.

Shoulds carry us a long way when we are in those early years of striving and driving and raising families and building careers and making our stamp on this world. But when we come into these years, the renaissance years, where we are dealing with the impact of menopause, hormones flitting

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around, then this is when our must begins to bubble up and it gets louder and louder.

Those urges and desires become louder and louder and they will not be denied. What I've said before about what I learned from Dr. Christiane Northrup's book *The Wisdom of Menopause* is that suppression ends at this stage of life. What has been suppressed must be addressed. And that's the work that I'm doing with women.

I'm helping them confront what they are suppressing and deal with it. Clear it out and get to what they really want at this stage of life. And so must is when we stop conforming to other people's expectations, other people's ideas and we start connecting to our own, which allows us to fully self-actualize. And what I always tell you, you know, this is not a cake walk. Getting to your must is hard work. It requires vigilance, constant effort.

I said to a woman the other day, you have to do this work every day. You have to message yourself every day because this requires overlying – or is it overlaying? I have a girlfriend who I love dearly and she is the expert in all things grammatical. So she'll let me know which one it should have been.

But anyway, this is when we override – I'll say that – this is when we override all the negative messaging, that some of it is, as I said before, DNA coded. It's just a part of that self-protective mechanism that we live with. And some of it is external, that we've gotten from external sources. And it is on repeat.

And this is why I repeat a lot of what I'm telling you, because repetition, remember, is our most powerful tool. And to override all of that negative messaging, you have to be vigilant. We have to be vigilant in gathering and sourcing the messaging that works for us, not against us, and drowning ourselves in it daily.

This is how you move from your shoulds and oughts to your must. And choosing must is the greatest thing that you can do for yourself. It's not selfish to connect to your passion. It's not selfish to connect to your desires.

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A few examples from my life on moving from should to must – and I'm going to use the two marital relationships. My first marriage, I was 25 when I got married. I met a wonderful man when I was 24 and he was in between jobs and had moved back home.

And because he was living at home, we would be on the phone – you know how it is when you first meet somebody. You got so much to say and you can talk all through the night. That's how we were. Well, he was at home with his parents and they didn't appreciate that.

This was before cell phones were a thing, and so he was on the house phone and the house was not a really big house – a nice house, but not an overly big house. And so they didn't appreciate him being on the phone at all hours of the night. And this became a bone of contention between them.

So me, miss driver that I am and was, particularly in that relationship, I told him, well, just come live with me. And he did. And once he moved in, I told him, now, we can't just live in sin, you know. I'm a good Christian girl, so we can't live in sin. We have to be planning to get married. This is how we decided to get married.

There was no romantic proposal. I decided that we needed to be married and he agreed. And we were in love, and so a year later, almost a year to the day from when he moved in, we were married. And we were married for 21 years.

Toward the end of those years – and most of those years were great, however, I began to feel differently. I began to feel that something was going on with me, that I was changing. I didn't understand what was going on. I was really confused. I thought it was something temporary that I would just get through, oh, this is just a stage, marriages go through ups and downs and so this is just something that I just have to endure and it will pass.

But it didn't. It did not pass. And no matter how hard I tried, and I was praying continuously, I tried to go to counseling, I tried to do all these different things to get over it. And I found out in the midst of that that I was

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in full blown menopause. And that's how I got to the book, *The Wisdom of Menopause*.

And as I've told you before, in the book, she talks about, at this stage of life, we have to renegotiate relationships. Well, that works a lot of times. Sometimes it doesn't because the renegotiation is about the two people accepting the new iteration of one or both people.

There's a show on the OWN Network, Oprah's network, called *Black Love*; wonderful, wonderful show. I highly recommend you watching it. It's just several couples that sit around talking about their relationships. And one of the guys who used to be a character on another wonderful show, *Queen Sugar*, that's also on the OWN Network, he talked about his relationship with his wife and how people change.

People change, yeah, people do change. People actually can change, and in a marriage, you have to be aware of that and pay attention to that and accommodate yourself to that. And what happened in my marriage is that the accommodation couldn't happen – not because either of us were bad people. It's just that he was who he was and I had become – as Michelle Obama says, I was becoming somebody so different that the marriage could no longer accommodate it.

That was a shock to me. It was a shock to him. It happened to both of us. In that situation, of course, because as people do, we judge, and so somebody has to be the bad guy when a marriage breaks up, and so I was the bad guy. I was the bitch because I didn't go around trying to explain what was going on to people.

And so, when I ended that marriage, I made a decision at that time that I would never get married again – not going to happen, you know. I wasn't built for marriage even though I had been in a mostly good marriage for 20 years. But I decided I wasn't built for marriage. That was not for me.

But as we know, life has other plans for us. And eventually, I did meet somebody new, but he wasn't new. So this was my next should. In my first marriage, the should was I got married because you shouldn't live with a



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man without being married. And that's how I ended up being married, which I don't regret that. I don't regret my first marriage. Like I said, most of the years were good years.

But that's how I got married, on a should. In my current marriage, in my final marriage, this man was someone I knew and we connected at a New Year's Eve party. He not only knew me, he knew my ex-husband. And I knew him through his wife. His wife and my husband – stick with me, it's not a reality show but it was very real – his wife and my ex husband worked together, and that's how I got to know his first wife; an incredibly wonderful woman.

And what happened was, you know, she and I were friends and we became friends, I met her through my husband, and we became friends. I met her, she got married and I met her then husband. But I just knew that he was her husband and we weren't really connected. And it was so interesting because I used to wonder why they were even married because I thought he was a little crazy.

But the good thing about that was a bad thing happened. The bad thing was that she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. And for the next, I think, about 16 or 17 years, they fought that illness. She fought, she fought, she fought. She had several brain surgeries, fought that tumor, eventually succumbed to it in her early 40s. and so her husband was a widower.

And this is the man that I "met" at a New Year's Eve party. He'd heard that I was divorced and was really shocked about that – a lot of people were. A lot of people were shocked about my divorce – and asked me what happened. And he had been a widower for about five or six years at this point.

And in having that conversation, we just kept talking. We just kept talking to each other and they had actually been in New York City. They had moved. I live in Birmingham, Alabama. They had moved to New York City for work, probably 20-plus years ago, prior to that. And so he was just home for the holidays.

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And he extended his stay and we went out during that holiday time and the rest is history. We ended up in a long-distance relationship for about six years and then we were married. And this is who I'm married to now.

Now, a lot of people had stuff to say about that. This was another should. You should not get involved with your friend's husband. And even though my friend was deceased, this was still a thing in my community, a thing with his family, a thing with some of his friends, even some of the people who knew me – not my close friends. But even some of the people who knew me were judgmental about that.

And I had a little angst about it too. Both of us had to walk through that process of coming to terms with how we got together. And it was perfectly legitimate. He was single by widowhood; I was single by divorce. But still, there was this judgment that we had to deal with. And when we live under the hammer of shoulds and oughts – remember, shoulds come from external sources and not examining those shoulds is why we can stay stuck in misery, in unhappiness, in less-than living because this man, Mr. Washington, he's the love of my life.

And I don't want to think about him not being in my life. And if I had followed the dictates of should, then he wouldn't be in my life. We wouldn't be together. And so you want to really pay close attention to why you do the things you do, why you keep yourself from doing things that you want to do.

Now, there are legitimate shoulds. I should not step in front of an 18-wheeler. I should not do that, if it is moving. So I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about the shoulds that really are based in judgment or – if you examine a lot of things that we operate under and you really take it back from a historical perspective, then you find out, it's really about somebody's personal preference, something that worked for them.

And a lot of the shoulds we operate under track back to male control and dominance. If you read the history of marriage, it tracks back to male control and dominance. So I'm not bashing marriage, I'm just saying, a lot of the way we do things, a lot of the reason why we do things tracks back to



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somebody's preference, somebody's idea, somebody's need to control. So that's why these shoulds and oughts bear examination.

I'm going to read you an excerpt from *The Crossroads of Should and Must* about how we imprison ourselves. And this is an example that she gives in the book.

"Are you familiar with Gurdjieff?" asked a friend. He was a spiritual teacher around the turn of the century. And one day, he posed a question to his students. If a prisoner wants to escape from prison, what's the first thing he needs to know? You need to know the guard, one student said. You need to find the key, said another. No, Gurdjieff said. The first thing you need to know if you want to escape from prison is that you are in prison. Until you know that, no escape is possible."

Is that not deep? Think about that. You've got to know you're in prison before you can escape from prison. And so if you want to know your must, you must understand your shoulds. If you want to know your musts, get to know your shoulds.

And as I said, this work is not easy. This is really hard work because our prisons are constructed from a lifetime of shoulds and oughts. Our shoulds, that's the door key to must. And just as you create your prison, you can set yourself free. Free yourself.

So the rest of this year, I want to help you rid yourselves of the shoulds and oughts that are not serving you. This is the should show. Next week, I'm doing the shit show. And then, the rest of the year, I will be doing a seven-part series on how you can leave your crap in 2019 and step into your must for 2020.

So, come back, tell your friends, tell any woman you know that would benefit from doing this work with us. I want you to get a notebook, get your favorite pen, and I want you to use the rest of these podcast episodes, and go back to the ones before this because they all are about your connecting to who you really are, figuring out what you really want and then how you can get it.

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The seven-part series is going to be some highly practical accessible work that you can do. Maybe you do it with a friend. Maybe you do it with a group of women, or you do it on your own. However you choose to do it, do it. Don't end this year carrying a lot of crap into the new year.

I gave you a couple of big should examples and there are smaller versions of that. A smaller version for me, I think I mentioned this on another show, was needing some plumbing done. I had a plumbing repair that needed to be done and I was just waiting and dealing with that, waiting for my husband to take care of it. And it just wasn't rising to his level of concern. And it just hit me, you know, what are you waiting on to get this fixed? Call the damn plumber.

But it was because I had a should that the man should handle these types of issues. The man should handle household repair because my dad did that. and because my dad did that, my husband should do that, not focusing on all the other things that my husband does do, a lot of which, my dad didn't do.

So these are the things that we tell ourselves and there are three questions that I want to leave you with that will help you begin to examine your shoulds. When a should comes up for you and it is connected to some type of frustration or resentment, something's not being done in the way you think it should be done or you're feeling some kind of pressure that's causing you angst. When that should bubbles up, these are the questions to ask yourself.

One, where did it come from? My shoulds came from just societal expectations, peer expectations, community expectations, even some piece of religious expectations. You shouldn't live with a man without being married to him. You shouldn't date a man who was connected to one of your friends, even if that friend is no longer here.

The second question is, are you true for me? Is this should true for you? Maybe it was at one time and it no longer is. Or maybe it was never true. Really examine where that messaging is coming from. And if it's true for

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somebody else's life, your mom, your friend, whatever, that doesn't make it true for you.

And the third question is do I want to keep holding onto this should? Do I want to keep holding onto it? And if the answer is no, be honest with yourself. Do the work to release it. Let it go.

Shoulds bubble up in all areas of our lives, jobs, friendships, family relationships. You should do this because this person is related to you by blood. Who said? Shoulds show up everywhere and we can release ourselves from those shoulds and get to our must, our deepest desires.

Okay, so get to working on your shoulds. Come back next week for the shit show and remember, share, share, share *Midlife Woman Redefined*. These last several weeks, we're going to be in redefinition mode. So come back with your favorite notebook, your favorite pen, your favorite beverage and let's do this. Share, share, share the show with your friends, with your besties. Leave a rating and review. The instructions for that are in the show notes.

And remember, this is the show for you to bring your deepest dreams and desires because every week I'm coming in with tools, resources, real life examples as to how you can make those dreams come true, because 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](http://crenecoach.com).