

Hey there, beautiful! 🌈 Before you dive in, a quick heads-up: this transcript is a super close-to-verbatim buddy from our podcast, but it's got its quirks! We didn't call the grammar cops on it, so you might bump into a typo or two. But hey, that just adds character, right? 😊 Embrace the wild side of language and enjoy the read! Happy exploring! 🚀



How to Overcome Empty Nest Syndrome

Carmen Hecox: Hello, and welcome to Create the Best Me. Where we journeyed together through the transformative chapters of midlife. I am your host, Carmen Hecox, today we'll delve into a topic close to my heart, SURVIVING empty nest. As I stand in the quiet of my home, I'm reminded of the laughter and the chaos that once filled these halls. My oldest daughter now basking in the warmth of Hawaii, and my youngest son thriving in the bustling Bay Area, have flown far from our once crowded nest, leaving their bedroom silent and my heart aching with a mix of pride and sorrow.

I found myself wandering through this oversized home, questioning the choices of the past. Why such a large space when the very souls that brought it to life have embarked on their own journeys? This empty nest, this echo of memories marks a beginning of my own pivot - a pivot that many of us face at midlife. It's not about empty rooms or the stillness of a home that once bustled with energy. It's about rediscovering ourselves, igniting new dreams, and embracing the vast expanse of possibilities that midlife offers.

So, if you're standing at the threshold of your empty nest, wondering "What's next?" You're not alone. Together, we'll explore how this isn't the end, but rather a beautiful beginning, a chance to pivot, not pause, a moment to transform the empty nest into a canvas of dreams waiting to be painted.

Understanding Empty Nest Syndrome

Carmen Hecox: As we step into the next chapter of our journey, let us pause to understand a common yet deeply personal experience known as Empty Nest

syndrome. This term might sound clinical, but it's a very human response to the significant life transition - watching our children grow up and move out and build their own lives.

Empty Nest Syndrome isn't a medical condition, but rather a complex of mixed emotions that many parents face. It can encompass a range of feelings from sadness and loss to confusion and uncertainty about the future. You might find yourself missing the daily interactions and the bustling energy of a full house. Or perhaps, like me, you're questioning the decisions of the past, such as the choice of a large, now quiet home.

Facing the Empty Nest: Challenges and the Path Forward

Carmen Hecox: This syndrome reminds us that change is only constant. It challenges us to confront our feelings of loneliness, loss of purpose, and the fear of the unknown. But here's the silver lining - acknowledging these emotions is the first step toward transforming them.

Understanding empty nest syndrome means recognizing that it's okay to grieve. It's okay to feel lost. It's a testament to the love and the care we poured into our roles as parents. But it's also a signal, a beacon calling us towards self-discovery and adventure.

Rediscovering Joy & Purpose Beyond the Empty Nest

Carmen Hecox: Remember experiencing these emotions does not mean we're stuck with them. With understanding comes the power of navigating through this phase, armed with the knowledge that lies ahead. is ripe with potential. Our nest may be empty, but our lives are far from it. This is our time to explore, to grow, and to redefine what happiness means to us in this next act of our lives.

Having navigated through the waves of empty nest syndrome, we've arrived at the shore of the immense potential a chance for rediscovery. This phase of our life offers a unique opportunity to ask ourselves, "Who am I beyond my role as a parent?" It's a powerful question that opens doors to rooms within ourselves yet to explore.

Rediscovery is about peeling back the layers of our identity that have defined us for years. It's about reconnecting with the dreams and the passion that were, perhaps set aside to the hustle of raising a family.

Reignite Your Passions: Dreams Don't Have Expiration Dates

Carmen Hecox: Did you once dream of painting or of traveling the world, or maybe starting your own business? Now is the time to dust off those dreams and give them wings.

Start small. Rediscovery doesn't mean making drastic changes overnight. It could be as simple as picking up a book on a subject you've always been curious about, enrolling in a dance class, or even exploring the culinary arts by trying new recipes at home. The key is to follow your curiosity - let it be your guide.

Embrace the freedom to experiment. Without the constant demands of parenting, you can afford to be a little selfish, to prioritize your desires and interests. It's not about being perfect or achieving mastery level right away. It's about the joy of learning, the thrill of new, and the satisfaction of growth.

Remember, self-discovery is a journey, not a destination. It's about giving yourself permission to dream again, to redefine success on your terms and to embrace the person you're becoming. This journey is as much about finding new passions as it is about rekindling old ones that have lain dormant.

As we embark on this path of self-discovery, let us do so with an open heart and an adventurous spirit. Let's celebrate every discovery, every step forward as a victory. Because in this chapter of our lives, the most important discovery we'll make is the boundless potential that lies within us.

Reconnecting: Partner, Friends & Family

Carmen Hecox: In the quiet that follows the departure of our children, we're presented with a precious gift - the space and the time to rekindle the relationship that matters most. This chapter, Rekindling Relationships, invites us to reflect on

the bond that have supported us, perhaps have taken the back seat, and now awaits our renewed attention.

For many of us, parenting consumed a bulk of our time and energy, leaving little room for romantic pursuits or deep conversations with our partner. Now, we have the chance to rediscover each other anew. Schedule regular date nights, embark on adventures together, or simply enjoy the quiet moments at home. It's about finding joy in each other's company again. Learning about the people we've evolved into over the years. Similarly, friendships may have faded into the backgrounds amidst the demands of family. Reach out to old friends and make an effort to forge new ones. Attend social gatherings, join clubs or groups that align with your interests, and be open to connecting with people from different walks of life. Remember, it's the quality of friendships, not the quantity, that enriches our lives.

Equally important is the relationship we have with ourselves. This might be a perfect time to practice self-compassion and kindness. Engage in self-care practices that nourish your body, mind, and soul. Whether it's through meditation, journaling, or physical activity, find what makes you feel centered and balanced.

Lastly, this period allows us to strengthen our connections with other family members, be it siblings, parents, or even grandchildren. These relationships offer unique comfort and understanding, enriching our lives in profound ways.

Rekindling these relationships doesn't fill the void left by our children departing; it transforms our lives into a rich tapestry of human connections and shared experiences. It reminds us that while one chapter ends, another begins, filled with opportunities for growth, love, and deeper connections.

As we move forward in our journey, we encounter a powerful ally in our quest for fulfillment - Lifelong Learning. This chapter isn't just about expanding our intellects; it's a celebration of our unyielding capacity to evolve, adapt, and flourish at any stage of our life.

Carmen Hecox: Rediscover the joy that comes from learning something new. Whether it's a language, an instrument, or a craft, each new skill we acquire opens our minds and enriches our lives. It's not about the pursuit of perfection, but the thrill of exploration and the satisfaction of personal achievement.

Lifelong learning encourages us to step out of our comfort zone and challenge our preconceived notions. It broadens our perspective, fosters empathy, and connects us with the diverse ideas and cultures. Attend lectures, join book clubs, or participate in community classes. The world is your classroom, and every experience is a lesson waiting to be learned.

Carmen Hecox: In today's digital age, the opportunity for learning are boundless. Online platforms offer courses on a variety of any topics imaginable, providing flexibility to learn at your own pace, on your own terms. From YouTube tutorials to university-led online courses, the key to the kingdom of knowledge are at your fingertips.

Engaging in lifelong learning has profound benefits for our mental health and cognitive abilities. It keeps our minds sharp, improves our memory and even boosts self-confidence. By challenging ourselves to learn, we're not just acquiring new skills, we're nurturing our mental agility and resilience.

I invite you to set a personal learning goal. It could be as simple as reading a book on a subject you know nothing about, or as ambitious as earning a certificate or a degree. Whatever it is, let it be a testament to your commitment to growth and your belief in the limitless potential of midlife and beyond.

Lifelong learning is more than a chapter of our lives; it's a mindset that transforms the way we view the world and ourselves. It reminds us that no matter our age, we are perpetual students of life, eager to learn, grow, and contribute to a world around us.

In the narrative of our lives, the chapter we write together often holds the most meaning. "Community Engagement" is about weaving our threads into the large tapestry of society, creating a pattern richer and more vibrant than any of us could achieve alone. It's in this collective effort that we find not just belonging, but a deeper sense of purpose and joy.

Community Engagement: Finding Your Tribe

Carmen Hecox: Find your tribe. The beauty of community lies in its diversity - there's a group for every interest, passion, and pursuit. Whether it's a book club,

gardening, or a volunteer group, finding people who share your interests can transform the empty nest into a nest of opportunities. It's about connecting, sharing, and growing together.

One of the most fulfilling ways to engage with your community is through volunteering. It offers a chance to give back, to make tangible differences in the lives of others, and to model the values of generosity and compassion. Whether you're feeding the hungry, tutoring students or caring for the environment, volunteering connects you to the heart of your community and its needs.

Social clubs and organizations: Joining a club or organization not only provides social interaction but also opens doors to new experiences and learning opportunities. From photography clubs to local history groups, these organizations bring together like minded individuals in the pursuit of common passion.

Embrace in the rhythm of your community by participating in local events. Festivals, markets, concerts, and workshops are great places to meet people, support local artists and businesses, and experience the unique culture of your area.

Your engagement in the community doesn't just enrich your life, it creates a ripple effect, inspiring others to take part and contribute. In these connections and shared experience, that we build a stronger, more resilient community.

As we venture into the world of community engagement, let's do so with an open heart and mind, ready to contribute, learn, and grow. The strength of a community lies in the hands of its members, and your hands are capable of incredible work. Let's join together, support one another, and celebrate the power of community.

Well-being Focus: Nurturing Mind & Body

Carmen Hecox: In the tapestry of life, each thread of our well-being, physical, emotional, and spiritual - intertwines to create a picture of holistic health. As we navigate the unique halls of an empty nest, nurturing our physical and emotional well-being becomes not just a practice, but a profound act of self-love and resilience.

Embrace physical health: The vitality of our body supports the endeavors of our minds and hearts. It's essential to cultivate practices that enhance our physical well-

being, whether it's rediscovering the joy of movement through yoga, dancing, walking, or exploring a new fitness routine, these activities do more than strengthen our bodies; they uplift our spirits. Nutrition plays a crucial role too - feeding our bodies with nourishing food is akin to tending a garden, ensuring it flourishes.

As we nourish our bodies, we must also tend to our emotional landscape. Practice such as mindful meditation, journaling, and deep breathing exercise are tools that can calm our minds, allowing us to connect deeper with our inner selves. Seek support, whether through therapy, support groups, or conversations with trusted friends, provides a safe place to explore our feelings and challenges, reminding us that we're not alone in this journey.

Establish a wellness routine can anchor us amidst of life's changes. A morning or evening routine that incorporates elements of physical exercise, meditation, and reflection can set the tone for our days, providing stability and focus.

Our emotional health is deeply tied to connections with others. Nurturing relationships, engaging in meaningful conversations, and spending time with loved ones can significantly boost our emotional wellness, filling our lives with joy and purpose.

Remember, the pursuit of physical and emotional well-being is a lifelong journey, not a destination. It's about making small daily choices that honor our bodies and our minds, leading to a richer, more vibrant life.

As we explore the dimensions of our well-being, let's do so with compassion, curiosity, embracing the changes within and around us. Let this chapter remind us that taking care of ourselves is not just a personal responsibility, but a profound source of strength and renewal.

In the vast landscape of life, our careers and passion play a pivotal role in defining our journey. As we embrace this chapter of career and passion projects, we recognize that midlife is not just a season of reflection, but also one of action. It's time to harness the wealth of experience we've accumulated and channel it into avenues that bring us joy, fulfillment, and a sense of purpose.

For some of us, it may mean seeking advancements in our current career, leveraging their depths of knowledge and experience to climb the new heights. For

others, it could signal time for change - pursuing a new direction that aligns more closely with evolving passions and life goals. Remember, it's never too late to redefine your professional path. The wisdom and resilience gained over the years are invaluable assets in any field.

Beyond the confines of traditional career, midlife offers the perfect opportunity to embark on passion projects. These are ventures born from the heart, driven by interest, hobbies, or causes that stir our soul. Whether it's writing a book, starting a blog, launching a business or advocating for a cause close to your heart, passion projects provide a unique sense of accomplishment and fulfillment.

In pursuing these ventures, don't underestimate the power of networking. Connect with like-minded individuals, seek mentors, and engage with communities that share your interests. These connections can offer invaluable support, advice and opportunities to grow your career or passion project.

Equip yourself for success by embracing lifelong learning, whether it's through formal education, workshops, or self-study, expanding your skill sets will not only enhance your projects, but also keep you mentally agile and open to new possibilities. The most important step in this journey is the courage to begin. It requires stepping out of your comfort zone, facing fears of failure, and embracing the unknown with optimism and resilience. Remember, every great achievement starts with the decision to try.

As we embark on this path of career transformation and passion projects, let us do so with the knowledge that our potential is limitless. The experiences we've gained are not just memories; they are the foundation upon which we can build a future that reflects our deepest aspirations and desires.

Future Forward: Planning with Vision

Carmen Hecox: As we stand at the crossroad, looking back on our journey of rediscovery, rekindling relationships, lifelong learning, and the pursuit of passion, we're reminded that the essence of life is not just in living. but in moving forward. Planning for the future is our guide to setting our sights on new horizons and charting a new course towards them.

Begin by envisioning the life you wish to lead. What does it look like? Who are you in the future? What are you doing? Allowing yourself the freedom to dream big, beyond the confines of your current reality. This vision will be the compass that guides your steps.

With your vision clear, it's time to set tangible, achievable goals. Break down your vision into manageable steps, whether it's personal development, career advancement, or passion projects, your goal should inspire and motivate you. Remember, the power of goal setting lies not just in the outcome, but in the person, you become through pursuing them.

As much as planning is about setting goals, it's also about staying flexible. Life is unpredictable and part of planning is adapting to the twist and turns with grace and resilience. View changes not as setbacks, but as opportunities to grow and redefine your path.

A key aspect of planning for the future is financial security. Consider speaking with a financial advisor to explore how you can align your financial plans with your life goals. Whether it's saving for travel, investing in your passion projects, or securing your retirement, financial planning is the foundation that supports your dreams. Planning is not only as effective as the action it inspires. Commit to taking small steps, consistent steps toward your goals. Celebrate each milestone, no matter how small, and stay committed to your vision. The journey of thousands of miles begins with one single step.

Remember that planning for the future is an ongoing process of envisioning, actions, and adaptations. It's about setting the stage for the next act of your life, one filled with purpose, joy, and fulfillment. The future is not just a place you're going to; it's a place you're creating movement by movement with each decision and action you take.

Reflections: Journey Through Empty Nest

Carmen Hecox: As we reach the end of our journey together, I'm filled with gratitude and hope. Through understanding empty nest syndrome, self-discovery, rekindling relationships, lifelong learning, community engagement, physical and emotional well-being, career and passion projects, and planning for the future, we've transversed a landscape rich with challenges and opportunities.

This journey has been more than navigating the empty nest phase; it's been a voyage toward becoming the best version of ourselves. We've explored the depths of our emotions, celebrated the joys of rediscovery, and embraced the promise of what lies ahead. Each step has been a testament to our resilience, our capacity for growth, and our unyielding pursuit of fulfillment.

As we part ways, I encourage you to carry forward the insights and inspirations from our time together. Remember, midlife is not a pause but a pivot - a chance to embrace new dreams, to redefine our paths, and step into the best half of our lives with courage and optimism.

Your next steps: Take a moment to reflect on the journey you've embarked on. Which areas sparked a fire within you? Where do you feel called to dive deeper? Set an intention for one action you will take in the coming days to move closer to the version you have for your life. Remember, the smallest steps can lead to the greatest change.

Stay connected: This may be the end of this episode, but it's not the end of our journey. Stay connected, share your stories, and let's continue to support each other in this community of incredible women. Together, we're unstoppable.

Next Episode Preview

Carmen Hecox: Thank you for allowing me to share this journey with you. Here's to the adventure that awaits, to the dreams of waiting to be realized and to the unwavering beliefs that the best is yet to come. Remember, midlife is not the end of the story; it's the beginning of a new chapter, written by you, for you.

Additional information and today's transcripts can be found at createthebestme.com/ep055.

Don't forget to join us next week as our guest will be Dr. Mary Alice Mina, a Harvard trained double board-certified dermatologist and dermatologic surgeon, and the host of The Skin Real YouTube and podcast. Dr. Mina will be here to discuss skin changes during pre-menopause, menopause, and post-menopause, and provide us helpful advice to help us combat these changes. Trust me, Dr. Mina is not just providing information she is giving away effective strategies for aging gracefully. So, you'll have to come back next week.

Until then, keep dreaming big, take care of yourself, and remember you are beautiful, strong, and capable of creating the best version of yourself. Thank you for watching. Catch you next week. Bye for now.