

“Be a soul, not a role.”

In caring for her dying husband at 23, Merran discovered the power of dropping the mask — not being the “strong partner,” the “fixer,” or the “brave one,” but simply being human.

Midlife reflection:

Coaches, consultants and therapists are taught to learn their lessons and theories well, but put them aside in the face of a real person, i.e. being a great human with another human is what truly works in any helping role.

We spend decades performing roles — father, provider, husband, boss — but the most healing and liberating work often comes when we strip those away and show up as our whole selves or as a great human happy to help another human.

Grief is messy — and that's okay

After her husband's death, Merran “fell into a hole” and realised there are no clean stages of grief, only waves and fragments. Reading C.S. Lewis's *A Grief Observed* showed her that even the wise are a mess in loss.

 **For men:** Don't rush to “fix” your grief. There's no tidy sequence. You're not weak for being disoriented — you're human. Sit with it. Sit in it.

Know that grief takes time to dissipate.

It does so at its own pace, not your pace.

It often feels like a large cloak that is wrapped around you and gradually gets smaller over time. Let it do it so. There is nothing to fix.

It's never too late to start again

At **age 50**, she began studying medicine, 32 years after she was first offered a place. Surrounded by 21-year-olds, she learned to “shut up and listen” and discovered she still had enormous curiosity and stamina. She became a palliative care doctor in her late fifties and a new business owner in her 60's.

👉 **For men:** The reflection is - **It's never too late to start again.**

Reinvention isn't about chasing status — Reinvention is about staying awake to what still excites you. Curiosity keeps you young. Experimentation allows you to try stuff and if you don't like it, so what! It was an experiment. But it opens the door to a new opportunity, a new way of thinking, a new way of being, a new way of living life, a new way to do something you always dreamed of.

This whole podcast emerged from a Covid experiment that I ran. I was in lockdown in Sydney. I had sold my shares in a global business I was involved in and now had time in my hands. Then Covid came along. I did a few courses to learn about podcasting. I played with some ideas and eventually set up a podcast all about Leadership, where I interviewed a whole range of leaders on how they learned to be a senior-level leader. I had fun! I put a lot of time into that podcast, but I had the spare time, so it became fun.

It ranked in the top 10 business podcasts in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Denmark.

But here is the point. It pushed me to consider a reinvention.

That is what I am doing now, and you are listening to...

Advanced care planning is an act of love

Her company, **Touchstone Life Care**, helps people express their medical and end-of-life wishes. She calls it “*a love letter to the people who matter most to you.*”

That really hit me as being so important.

👉 **For men with ageing parents** (or their own ageing bodies): Have the hard conversation. It's not about death — it's about sparing your family confusion,



guilt, and conflict when the time comes. And it doesn't have to be a hard conversation.

I loved that she says *"Talking about death is like talking about sex — start at the edges."*

Begin with a gentle opening: *"Mum, if you had a fall, what would you want me to tell the doctors?"* Big conversations don't have to be heavy — they just need to be real. Authenticity opens doors.

For everyone else, whether you are 30, 40, 50, 60, start to have a conversation with yourself. How might you want to be treated in the event of a serious illness or accident? I know for me I am happy to have certain organs donated if I ever get involved in a serious accident. But I also know there are certain medical interventions I do not want.

I will document that so everyone else knows.

Self-care is not selfishness — it's stewardship

Merran redefines selfishness: *"If I take care of me, I have more to give others."* Her energy comes from focusing on her own story, not fixing everyone else's.

👉 **For men in midlife:** Stop pouring energy into other people's battles. The most generous thing you can do is stay healthy, curious, and engaged yourself. We need to make sure we are healthy as we get older. We've got to make sure our last decade is as enjoyable as it can be. Longevity and Lifespan are only as good as how our health span is, and ideally, they are the same thing. I have recently undertaken a proper health review with a proper scan that gives me body fat percentages, visceral fat percentage, even a biological age score (it was one year older than my real age, btw!).

I am not training to change those numbers.

It is not selfish; But I sure am taking care of myself. No one else will do it.

Make sure you are too.



DLTOMI is a podcast brought to you by Pod O'Sullivan, where he has real and candid conversations with experts, celebrities and ordinary men about navigating midlife. The ups, the downs, the surprises, the opportunities, the secrets and how to do it on your terms, gracefully or even disgracefully!



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