

1. Process Addictions Are Invisible and Celebrated

Unlike substance addictions, process addictions—to work, money, love, fame, control—are often applauded by society. We throw accolades at people who are fundamentally sick, telling our children to emulate them. Love or SEX addiction manifests as an inability to be without a partner, excessive control, and making someone your entire oxygen supply. *The addict pours so much energy onto partners that they suffocate, yet the addict believes they're expressing love.*

These addictions are insidious because they're rewarded rather than recognised as a dysfunction.

The very qualities that make you successful in corporate life—fixing problems, controlling outcomes, walking through walls, never showing weakness—make you completely dysfunctional in relationships and with yourself. What Aldo shared is that you cannot be in a relationship when there's no "you" to relate to. Partners don't want to be fixed; they want to be heard. The alpha male is all external projection, a mechanism covering up internal emptiness. "Boys don't cry" and "grow up" create men who are vacant vessels wandering, not present, engaged human beings.

Fast forward then to our 40s, 50s etc and what we call midlife crisis is actually the real you trying to emerge. It's not a breakdown; it's a breakthrough in the making. We heard this in an earlier episode with Ben Larke.

When we medicate this with anti-depressants or frantically seek new relationships or cars or career changes, we suppress the very person trying to come alive. The crisis is your authentic self saying "this is not okay"—**it's an invitation to stop performing and start living.**

2. The Body Keeps Score—Listen Before the Hammer Falls

This is a small but phenomenally important message for us men.

When the body is young and dysfunctional (bad back, rashes, unexplained ailments), it's telling you (maybe, spiritually) that something is not okay. Cancer at 42 was a signal Aldo ignored. He uses a metaphor of the universe having a series of hammers, that it uses to get our attention. By starting small and getting bigger, we eventually wake up.

Some people require the biggest hammer—losing everything—before they stop white-knuckling their way through life. The goal isn't to avoid the bloody nose but to ask why you have one, rather than immediately walking into the next wall.

The message is listen to our bodies as they often have an important message.

3. Surrender Is Not Giving Up- Learning From the 12 Steps

The first step of 12-step recovery—admitting your life is unmanageable, and you don't have the tools to fix it—is the hardest for high-achievers. It took Aldo six months to work through 30 questions because his entire identity was built on being the fixer. Surrender means acknowledging you cannot solve this alone, which paradoxically opens the door to actual transformation. Giving up means abandoning hope; surrender means accepting reality and opening to help.

Step nine isn't a one-time event; it's a lifelong practice. You will fall, make the same mistakes, struggle with the same issues—this is being human, not failure. The difference is now you know who you are, you recognise when you fall, you talk about it honestly, you make amends, and you keep going. There is no perfection, only continuous growth through acknowledging mistakes. Like gym training, if you're not experiencing pain, you're not growing.

Aldo's connection with his mother transformed only after he did the brutal work of honestly examining how her well-intentioned actions had harmed him. His father's life, his relationships, his career, his health—every catastrophic loss was necessary for him to find himself. The "grace" he speaks of is losing everything because that's what stopped the white-knuckling.

We cannot appreciate surrender's power until we actually surrender something truly important. The wound isn't something to avoid but the very place transformation becomes possible.



Two Practical Experiments For Listeners

Experiment One: The Three-Month Relationship Fast

Duration: 90 days

Purpose: To discover who you are when you cannot medicate with romantic connection

Many of us use relationships the way others use alcohol—to avoid being alone with ourselves. This experiment, borrowed from Aldo's 12-step work, requires abstaining from romantic relationships, including physical intimacy, for three months. For those of us who use dating apps and need to be in one or several relationships all the time, this one may be for you.

Instructions:

1. If currently single, commit to 90 days of no dating, no romantic pursuit, no physical intimacy
2. When you feel the pull toward connection, stop and journal: "What am I avoiding feeling right now?"
3. Create a daily practice of sitting quietly for 10 minutes, attempting to feel your body—heartbeat, stomach, toes—without immediately moving to thinking or fixing
4. Notice when you're about to call/text someone out of loneliness rather than genuine connection
5. Use the energy you'd normally invest in romantic pursuit to explore: What did I love doing before I learned to seek external validation?

Warning: This will be profoundly uncomfortable if you have love addiction tendencies. The discomfort is the point. You're meeting yourself, possibly for the first time.

Expected Outcomes:

- Discovering interests and passions that aren't about impressing someone
- Recognition of how much energy goes into seeking external validation
- Identification of the "wounded child" patterns driving relationship choices
- Increased capacity to be alone without being lonely
- More authentic connections when you do re-enter relationship space

This experiment isn't about never having relationships—it's about ensuring you have a "you" to bring to the relationship.



Experiment Two: The Weekly Inventory Practice

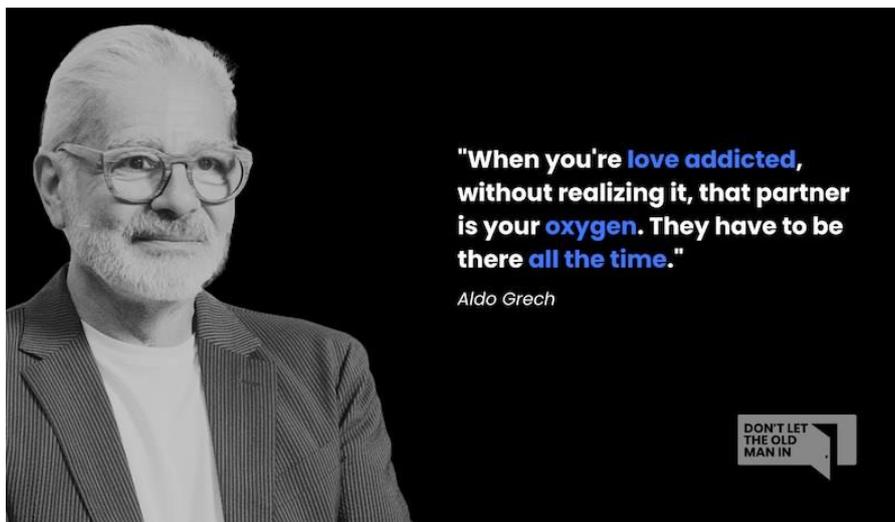
Duration: Ongoing weekly practice

Purpose: To shine light on behaviours before they require a hammer

Aldo emphasises that his addictive patterns don't disappear—he still falls, still makes mistakes, still struggles. The difference is he now recognises it quickly, owns it, and makes amends rather than white-knuckling through denial.

Instructions:

1. Choose a consistent weekly time (Sunday evening works well) for 30-45 minutes of reflection
2. Create a private document or journal with four columns:
 - a. What went well this week (where I was authentic)
 - b. Where I wore the avatar (performed rather than lived)
 - c. Who I may need to make amends to
 - d. What my body is trying to tell me
3. For each entry in the "avatar" column, ask:
 - e. What was I afraid would happen if I showed up authentically?
 - f. What would the 7-year-old version of me have done in this situation?
 - g. Did I prioritise being respected over being real?
4. For physical symptoms (bad back, headaches, digestive issues, skin problems), ask:
 - h. What am I not dealing with emotionally that my body is expressing?
 - i. Where in my life am I walking through walls rather than finding doors?
5. Make actual amends: If you identified someone you harmed (through control, fixing them without permission, making them responsible for your happiness), reach out with genuine apology
6. Share your inventory with someone trustworthy—a therapist, close friend, or men's group—at least monthly



Conclusion

Aldo's story demonstrates that the qualities making us successful in midlife careers often make us completely dysfunctional in our inner lives. The avatar that achieves and performs leaves us vacant, wandering, desperately seeking external validation through partners, accolades, or acquisitions.

True transformation requires what Aldo calls "white-knuckling" to stop—the desperate holding on to identities, relationships, careers, anything that prevents us from facing the wounded child within. Sometimes this requires the universe's biggest hammer: losing everything.

But the message Aldo leaves us with is ultimately one of profound acceptance: "There's nothing wrong with you. You're okay the way you are." This doesn't mean we stop growing or making amends. It means we stop performing, stop trying to be who we think we should be, and start living as who we actually are.

For men in midlife navigating burnout, relationship breakdowns, or that persistent feeling that "I seem to be doing really well over here, but it's not working for me at home," Aldo's journey offers a roadmap. Not an easy one—it involves therapy, community, brutal honesty, and the willingness to be broken in front of others. But the alternative is continuing to walk through walls until you run out of walls—or life runs out of you.

His final question for himself, imagining his 85-year-old self looking back: "Have you made sure that from your lessons, you have allowed your son to teach you and to be the best of who he is?" This reversal—from parent as teacher to parent as learner from the child—captures the essence of his transformation.

The vault of wisdom Aldo shares isn't about avoiding pain or finding shortcuts. It's about recognizing that the wound is where the light enters, the crisis is actually creativity trying to emerge, and the community we find when we finally admit we're broken is where we discover we were whole all along.

Until next time, don't let the old man in.

— Pod O'Sullivan



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!



LISTEN ON YOUR FAVOURITE PLATFORM

