



Help! My husband has embarked on a mystical midlife reboot

He keeps referring to his 'journey' and 'finding his truth' – and I'm finding it really annoying

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Dear A&E

Since turning 50 and losing his mother, my husband has embarked on a serious spiritual reboot, including therapy, meditation and most recently a silent retreat.

I'm all for it and glad that he is trying to look after himself, however he has started referring to it as his journey and talks constantly about finding his truth. I'm finding it really annoying. I want him to live a happy and healthy life, but I also want him to stop discussing his auras. What do I do?

– *Bored*

Dear Bored

One minute you are on the same page, complaining about the neighbour's dog/fencing/hedge, trying to have sex, feeling tired, commuting, watching *Slow Horses* while marvelling at Gary Oldman's glorious decrepitude; and the next you are sitting opposite an almost-fledged yogi, blocking out the sound of his special breathing as he prepares for his daily cold-water immersion and glazing over as he describes his moon meditation. Spiritual life has come at you fast, dear Bored.

Broad brush strokes, and you say this yourself, this a good thing. Actually, it's a brilliant thing. Your husband is acknowledging that he is in, or has been in, a period of crisis, ignited by the death of his mother and his turning 50. We often mock the midlife crisis – in particular the male midlife crisis – an appalling cliché involving secretaries and sports cars.

However, we have worked with therapists such as Donna Lancaster and Dr Julia Hannan who make compelling cases for the midlife crisis being a time of extraordinary potential rather than pointless navel gazing.

In her book *The Midlife Crisis Handbook*, Hannan argues that the midlife crisis is caused by people feeling that their lives are out of sync with their values and that the process is an opportunity to “update their life choices to reflect the person they currently want to be”.

Lancaster, in her book *The Bridge*, suggests that self-care is not a selfish act but rather one of generosity, because the happier and more content a person is, the more that person has to offer to others.

You will see that we have yet to use the words “truth” or “journey”. Because the problem with those big, beautiful words is that they have been *Love Island*-ed and bounced around meaninglessly in Instagram posts until they are utterly devalued.

One mention of someone's “journey” automatically triggers an involuntary eye-roll. That language, combined with the zeal of the converted? Well, it's almost unbearable. There's an old joke that says “How do you know someone is a vegan? They'll tell you.”

It's annoying, but we should recognize that we've probably all been guilty of some kind of oppressive zeal at some point in our lives. You should hear Emilie on the subject of cold-water swimming. Actually – if she starts – walk away while you still possess the will to live.

But, dear Bored, perhaps there are some things you should hold on to. Some considerations that could help prevent you from slipping into an awful apathy around your husband's inner investigations.

It might not seem so right now – as you are rendered immobile with the monotony of his rebirth chat – but he's trying to show you who he really is.

The fact that he is sharing all the mental minutiae with you is powerful – he clearly wants you to be a companion to him on this 'journey' rather than seeing it as a solo voyage.

He's not hiding in a metaphorical man cave. He's trying to make changes that could put him, you and your marriage in a stronger place for the next stage of your lives.

We would also remind you that it's very easy to mock things we don't understand. Perhaps you might find a more heartfelt way of connecting with his experience if you ask him to explain it in layman's terms.

If one puts aside the dreadfully resonant "live, laugh, love" language, one is free to ask perfectly reasonable questions: What are auras? How do they work? What do they mean? We are not asking you to start manifesting or vision-boarding, but perhaps some proper insight might help you manage your reaction to it all.

Because, dear Bored, your response is a little childish. Yes, it can be grating when people start banging on about their processes. But is it also a little too easy to make him the target of ridicule.

There is something magnificent about someone trying to heal or mend an inner conflict. It is gloriously brave to recognise that something inside you is misaligned or just sad and committing to spend some time investigating that.

Better this, than a bruised soul pinballing painfully through the next 30 years doing harm to himself and others.

And it could be worse, Bored: he could have taken up cycling.

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