

## Midlife Metamorphosis: I Choose Music

**Ekaterine Mrelashvili**

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*A rounded psychological guide to self-reflection, Midlife Metamorphosis models entering one's fifties with intentional positivity.*

Part memoir, part self-help text, Ekaterine Mrelashvili's book *Midlife Metamorphosis* concerns the self-reflection and self-actualization that occurs in middle age.

After an ordinary, loving childhood in Georgia, Mrelashvili earned a master's degree in music. She married and had children, later working as a high school music teacher. Later still, she served as a diplomat. And through periods in which she changed careers and worked to make more time for her family, she also entertained a bevy of interests as a means of living a broad and authentic life. These included learning five languages and practicing kung fu. In midlife, she gazed upon her past with an attitude of spiritual transition and a desire for new challenges.

Mrelashvili's book and its advice are representative of her positive midlife perspective. Anecdotes from her academic musical career and regarding her challenges to herself are used to illustrate the general ideals she touts. Indeed, each chapter prescribes values deemed pivotal to the second half of one's life, beginning with intentional positivity. The book's encouragements include aligning one's attitudes with one's values, loving one's family members without condition, understanding the realities of cognition and memory in middle age, and recognizing that people often keep secrets in order to control others. The myriad principles include social, personal, and financial foci, resulting in a rounded psychological guide to self-reflection.

There are New Age elements to this work, and rarefied suggestions as well, as with the prompt to take a year off from work to travel. But much of the work is more empathetic and accessible: Mrelashvili acknowledges that not all struggles, accomplishments, and desires are universal. Still, the book is prone to presenting its philosophical notions as truths. These are paired with layered metaphors that, while stylish, jumble the text's meanings at times: solitude is a mirror, a sacred vessel, and a stream; and symphonies, mosaics, maps, and mountain summits stand in for definitions of humanity, relationships, adventure, and midlife. Further, the book includes some vague suggestions, such as to "embrace discomfort" and "explore new paths," that render the connected advice less than actionable. And ideas including truth, empathy, generosity, solitude, and memory are left in the abstract. The book's arbitrary use of italics is an additional point of distraction.

*Midlife Metamorphosis* is an empathetic, heartfelt self-help book that offers guidance for people entering their fifties on finding a renewed sense of purpose.

AIMÉE JODOIN (February 5, 2024)

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