



Ask and Achieve

Workbook

So you can keep asking
questions and accomplish
more each day.

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*It sounds so cheesy, but
there's something very
powerful about looking in
the mirror and asking
yourself a question.
Because I think it's really
hard to lie. Kristen Wiig*

I spent the summer of 2016 writing a slim volume called, *Ask and Achieve: Questions in the Middle of a Woman's Life*. The book delved into the questions I hear most from clients, students, friends, and family. These are also the questions that I struggle with, turn over in my mind, and return to again and again. If you haven't read the book, you can find it here: <https://www.amazon.com/Ask-Achieve-Questions-middle-womans/dp/1537358375>

Whether you've read the book or not, you can use this workbook to think about and process some of the most common mid-life questions we all face.

Who are you?

When you meet people do you define your personhood in terms of a job title? Motherhood? Relationship status?

Who will you be when that definition of you changes?

Remember: Spouses leave or die and children grow up, and new relationships are forged. Jobs can be snatched away in the fallout of larger economic forces. (*Ask and Achieve*, p. 12)

Are you overly invested in being right all the time? For the last few months I've been attending some community philosophical conversation circles. Sometimes there are attendees who seem to want nothing more than to pound their opinions into everyone else's heads. They need to be right. Needless to say, this sucks the enjoyment out of the discussion for the rest of us.

Asking questions is powerful, and we've known this for thousands of years. (*Ask and Achieve*, p. 15) Yet, if you must be "right" or "smart" all the time the process is less fruitful.

Double check your recent behaviors. Do you?

- ❖ Raise your voice or talk over others to prove a point?
- ❖ Point your fingers or gesture into people's faces?
- ❖ Shy away from topics or questions if you don't know everything?

What are you willing to do to make yourself more open to the questioning process?

Who can you turn to for support in being more open-minded?

Mid-life is a time when we're confronted with mortality and sometimes regret. We begin wondering what we're going to do for the "second act" of our lives. Have you had any recent reminders that life is short?

Yet figuring out what you want to do in life cannot be just a process of eliminating and discarding negative experiences. (*Ask and Achieve*, p. 23)

What are the positive, wonderful, creative and inspiring activities or people you want more of in your life?

What are you prepared to do to have more fulfilling experiences?

A new job, more schooling, your own business? What's next on your professional horizon?

Each of these options gets its own chapter in *Ask and Achieve*. However, to get you started here's a quick check list.

- Review your personal finances; figure out your monthly budget and how much savings you have in case of emergencies.
- Reconnect with your professional network.
- Talk to a mentor or someone already pursuing the degree, job or business you're considering.
- Update your resume or your personal skills/talents list.
- Practice for interviews, presentations and networking small talk.

What in the world makes us dither around until the window of opportunity closes? (*Ask and Achieve*, p. 59)

The answer is often fear. In the book I outline several specific fears and how you might face them. For now, take a moment to at least name your fears. This is the first step to conquering them.

I'm afraid that...

Remember, Plato said, "Courage is knowing what not to fear."

Speaking of fear...don't be afraid to examine your relationships.

Who's hanging around in your kitchen, Facebook feed, and brain?

As I move through mid-life, with the clear realization that my years are not infinite, I've realized I don't want to waste any of those years on toxic people. (*Ask and Achieve*, p. 73)

Take some time to ask yourself how the key people in your life make you feel. Loved? Valued? Respected? Abused? Ignored? Cheated? Then consider whether you need to have some honest conversations.

How do they make you feel?

- ❖ Spouse or significant other
- ❖ Parents
- ❖ Siblings
- ❖ Co-workers
- ❖ Friends
- ❖ Business partner

When was the last time you said "no" and meant it?

When was the last time you said "yes" when you wanted to say "no"?

Are you confident in your ability to say "no" the next time you need to?

Who can you practice with as you learn to say "no" confidently?



At least it's not raining...the subject of gratitude

Most of us have been schooled by parents, spiritual texts, or television gurus to practice gratitude every day. I discuss several gratitude practices in *Ask and Achieve*. However, I also understand that the realities of mid-life and the world at large sometimes make feeling grateful a bit of a challenge. **This next piece of advice is all new and not in the book! I suggest and encourage you to create or join a gratitude group.**

What's a gratitude group?

This is a group of people who meet in person or through digital means to talk about what's going right in their world and encourage each other. How the group practices gratitude is totally up to you and your group members. Here are some suggestions:

- ❖ Support/accomplishment groups (writers do this a lot) – members report on what they've accomplished and get support to keep working and striving.

- ❖ Prayer groups – members offer prayers of thanksgiving when together and discuss how to incorporate grateful prayer into their daily lives.
- ❖ Social justice groups – members not only talk about what they are grateful for in the world, but also discuss how to make positive changes in society. Gratitude is only one foundational pillar for this type of group.
- ❖ Meditation groups – members participate in various types of meditation (guided, silent, or walking) with gratitude as a focus. The group also encourages members to incorporate meditation into their lives outside of group meetings.

All of these ideas fall under the concept of talking about gratitude from page 87 of *Ask and Achieve*. I am sure you can think of even more.

What makes me feel healthy, strong, and beautiful? (*Ask and Achieve*, p. 96)

The chapter of my book that I wanted to write the least, about making peace with my body, turned out to be one of the longest. So many women have “I hate my body moments” that the concept appears not only in psychology articles, but marketing taglines as well. Even for the young, thin, and beautiful, there seems to be a struggle with body love.

Consider: How much of my idea about health and beauty is coming from the media and unrealistic images?

Partner: Do I surround myself with people who encourage a healthy lifestyle? Does my health care provider really listen to me? (p. 91)

Control: Do I actively resist the urge to compare myself and other women to unattainable standards? Can I find other ways to praise or compliment other women besides focusing on looks? (p. 96)

How do I feel about my body right now?

Do these feelings change daily? Do certain activities trigger those “I hate my body” moments?

What is my plan for a healthier tomorrow?

Are there lifestyle changes I need to discuss with my healthcare partner?

Are you still trying to “have it all” and have it all at the same time?

Whether it was channeling that old 1970’s commercial about bringing home the bacon (while looking sexy in a power suit) or dragging yourself out of bed to be a “super mom,” chances are you’ve had at least one have-it-all-do-it-all moment. Be kind to yourself and avoid doing it again.

At the end of *Ask and Achieve* I ask readers what they are willing to trade, give up, or postpone in order to have what they really want.

What are my TOP priorities?

Would you ask your best friend to do this? If not, then why are you placing such demands on yourself? (*Ask and Achieve*, p. 99)

Am I trying to do things I would never expect from others?

- Working with little or no sleep
- Sticking to a diet or changing a lifestyle habit with no support
- Maintaining a perfectly clean house *no matter what*
- Keeping everyone (boss, spouse, children, friends...) happy and anticipating their needs
- Always looking right (depending on the situation) – hot, sexy, motherly, fit, professional – and doing it with little/no effort
- Staying in a toxic relationship, friendship, or job

Business experts, educators, philosophers and psychologists all agree that asking questions is a powerful process. Asking open-ended and honest questions is the first step to readying your mind to find solutions. Ask and Achieve!

I am truly grateful for every social media follower, reader, and client. Feel free to contact me about this ebook, Ask and Achieve, or any of my articles you've read online.

Karen