

Astrology and Mid Life

“Midway upon the journey of our life, I found myself within a forest dark, For the straightforward pathway had been lost. I cannot well repeat how there I entered, So full was I of slumber at the moment In which I had abandoned the true way.” Dante, Divine Comedy

As in Dante’s lines, your midlife may come on like a crisis, throwing you into situations or circumstances that take you to the brink of life as you know it. Astrology offers insight into these changing landscapes of life, via easily observed planetary cycles.

The use of set planetary cycles, such as the cycles used in the midlife transit phase (from the mid-30s to the early-40s), is an important theme of predictive astrology. Being age-based, they highlight the planetary archetype dominant at different points throughout midlife.

By exploring the mythology and qualities of each planetary archetype as they arise through midlife, you are better able to understand your changing needs as a new self starts to emerge. Each planetary archetype asks for a different kind of growth; understanding the archetype helps you manifest its potential in the most positive and conscious way possible. The planets whose ongoing movements (transits) combine to create the midlife period are Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, known collectively as generational or transpersonal planets. Being beyond the visibility range of the human eye, their use in astrology is relatively modern, with Uranus only discovered in 1781, Neptune in 1846 and Pluto in 1930. Due to their distance from the Sun, their cycles are substantially longer than those of other planets.

Uranus’s cycle of about 84 years means it spends about seven years moving through each zodiac sign. (Currently in early Aries.)

Neptune’s cycle of about 165 years means it spends about 14 years moving through each zodiac sign. (Currently moving from Aquarius into Pisces.)

Pluto’s cycle of about 248 years is elliptical, so its time in each zodiac sign varies from 12 to 25 years. (Currently in the early part of Capricorn.)

Compare this with the relatively short cycles of Jupiter (around 12 years, with about 12 months in each sign – currently in Taurus) and Saturn (roughly 29 years, with about 2.5 years in each sign – currently in Libra) and you can see how they came to be known as “generational planets”.

Spending such long periods in each sign means the essence of an outer planet’s sign placement creates themes for entire generations. (Their expression is personalised in your birth chart according to house placement, as this differs for everyone.)

The astrology of midlife

Astrologically, there are three distinct midlife transits. For current generations they occur very close together, from late 30s to early 40s. The Pluto square Pluto phase is a time of developing power. Situations in life highlight where you give away or misuse your power. The journey through this phase is

around re-establishing your sense of conscious power and regaining a sense of control in life. This journey takes you from disempowerment to empowerment, often via an intense confrontation with the underbelly, or dark side, of the human psyche, either your own or someone else's.

The Neptune square Neptune phase is a sensitive time when you are asked to soften into life. Spirituality and creativity are hallmarks of this period, as is the modern phenomenon of a sea change. Meaning and purpose become more important than success and achievement. Life choices ideally offer you the chance to escape or retreat from reality for a period of time. Energy levels can be low as your focus shifts inwards to discover what is meaningful for you at this stage of life. This is dreamtime, where long-term foundations or structures (relationships, careers) can be washed away to give you empty time and space to simply be.

The Uranus opposition represents the process of individuation. This chaotic and unpredictable period helps shake you free from limiting structures. Freedom is the essence of Uranus and following an authentic life path becomes a personal mission impossible to ignore. Others may consider your choices radical, as you give yourself permission to experiment with experiences you have long wanted to explore but never dared. Uranus is about rebellion and any area of life in which you have experienced restraint or limitation, or made conformist/conservative choices, will be the area(s) in which you break away unexpectedly.

How each of these midlife phases or planetary archetypes manifests is unique to each individual, based on the personal house placement of Uranus, Neptune and Pluto in your birth horoscope. Common themes exist within each generation via the sign energy. These are outlined below for the current generation experiencing the midlife phase.

What has midlife been like for you? Did you find Pluto's influence (around 37) or Uranus (41/42) or Neptune (42/43) more relevant?

What is the meaning of midlife?

- In challenging your current world view, it invites you to explore life and your own psyche anew.
- Accommodation is presenting yourself as different people ("personae") based on your situation.
- Separation involves removing the personae you wear in different situations & assessing who you are.
- Reintegration means feeling more certain of your true identity & adopting more appropriate personae.
- Individuation involves recognizing & integrating the conflicts that exist within & finding balance.