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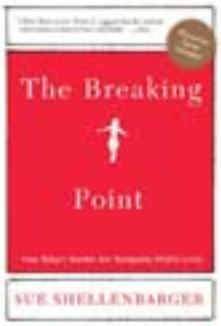

Discussion Questions for *The Breaking Point* by Sue Shellenbarger

1. Joseph Campbell said: "Midlife is when you reach the top of the ladder and find that it was against the wrong wall." Give examples of how this might pertain to your own life.

2. Female midlife crisis is not necessarily brought on by the fear of death (which is more common in men), but by major life transitions or events. Evidence suggests that women go through bigger upheavals than men but deal with midlife turbulence better, why?

3. Why is there more potential for crisis for women who are successful? Why do some women continue smoothly through middle life, and others experience complete upheavals?

4. How can the fear of losing your ability to attract men and to be thought of as attractive facilitate a crisis?

5. Compare the cultural effects of baby boom women's midlife crises to their predecessors in the 60s and 70s.

6. Discuss which one of the archetypes best fits your personality. (Adventurer, Lover, Leader, Artist, Gardener, Seeker.)

7. "Growth hurts," says a Cornell University researcher. Discuss ways to deal with the surprise of pain at such a mature stage of life.

8. Which mode of midlife crisis describes your experience and why: Sonic Boom, Moderate, Slow Burn, Flameout, Meltdown, Non-Starter.

9. How does making a choice for yourself make others in your life happier? How can you tell whether the risks involved in shaking up your life are worth the outcome? Is it necessary to take a leap of faith to push yourself through a midlife crisis?

10. Discuss ways in which the archetype of the Seeker can help women reconnect to themselves and to the things that have meaning in their lives.

11. One of the main lessons of midlife crisis is that you cannot be afraid to be alone, or alone with your thoughts. How can you rebuild a relationship with yourself? What are some of the things you can learn from midlife crisis?

12. How can women avoid the isolation that many feel at this stage of life? What are some of the ways in which women can share their stories and experiences to help themselves and others?