

An Excerpt From

Life Reimagined
Discovering Your New Life Possibilities

by Richard J. Leider & Alan M. Webber
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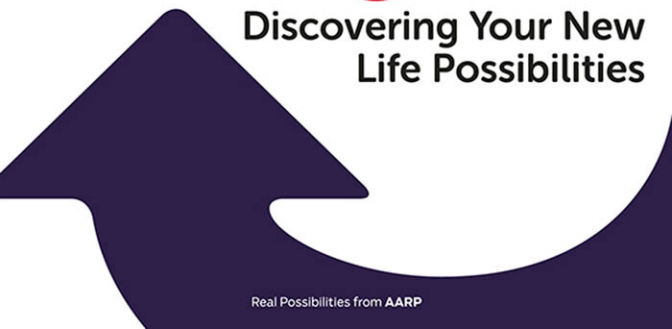
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Life

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Life Possibilities



Real Possibilities from AARP

Life

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Real Possibilities from **AARP**

Life Reimagined

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Foreword

The authors of this book have given us a great gift. It is a gift of self-reliance, a gift of confidence, a gift of hope.

First and foremost, this book is personal. This book is about you. It is not a lecture—it's a conversation. Through the power of storytelling, Richard Leider and Alan Webber take you on a personal journey of fear and aspiration, risk and security, meaning and purpose. Their words and insights are inspiring and energizing. Their tools and techniques are realistic and practical. Their genius is not to help you reinvent your life, but to help you adapt and thrive in a new life phase.

This book is a road map for the “new normal” of reimagination and new choices that confronts so many people today in midlife and beyond. And you will discover that its message applies to younger adults who find themselves navigating major life transitions in a time of rapid change. Whatever your own phase in life, the road map shows you how to find the inspiration and courage to reimagine your direction, reassess your gifts, and unlock your personal potential. It will help you find “what’s next” and discover your real possibilities as you move toward your best life regardless of age.

I am the Chief Brand Officer of AARP. I am also about to turn 50. I not only relate to the conversation in this book. I live it.

I am also first-generation American—a by-product of the Cuban revolution. By age 16, I was a caregiver to my father, who had cancer. I spent endless nights wondering how I was going to get through the experience and what the meaning of it all was. Shortly after his death, my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. My caregiving for her did not end until her death.

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By then, I was 28 years old. My parents never saw me graduate from college or get married; they never saw me become a U.S. Senate press secretary, CEO of a tech company, or senior partner of a global communications company. More important, they never met my son.

Through all those years, I lived a life of constant reimagination, and I instinctively went through all the steps you'll discover in this book. I formed my Sounding Board of friends and family to help me navigate, learn, grow, and achieve. In each transition I "repacked my bags" and started over—each time leaving something behind that was not useful for my next chapter. Learning to live in the present and taking one small step at a time was not a process in a book; it was my existence.

The life transitions kept coming. The economic collapse dealt me great financial stress at a time of profound personal challenge—a divorce, the death of my brother, and the role of single parenthood. I found myself a focus group of one, living and dealing with many of the same issues as the people I was hired to serve in my role as the chief steward of the AARP brand. The teacher became the student—and the student went to work.

Enter a Life Reimagined moment. One sleepless night, four years ago, I realized that my calling was to help millions of people navigate their personal "what's next" by developing smart solutions to life's challenges, a meaningful route to achievement, and the simplest way to understand the "new normal." And I had to do all of this while honoring the AARP promise of helping multiple generations live with dignity and purpose.

That's when I turned to Richard and Alan. They, along with others, went to work to activate a global network of thought leaders and to harvest the rich insights you will find in

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this book. I'm humbled by the commitment and intensity that Richard and Alan have brought to this enormous challenge. They have poured their lives' work into the pages that follow. As a result, we now have this modern road map and interactive guidance system for navigating a new life phase.

But as proud as I am of them, I'm even more moved by the commitment of A. Barry Rand, the CEO and "chief servant" of AARP. His leadership has prompted AARP to take an active role in this new conversation of "living versus aging" and to flex its mighty reach to bring the best thinkers, the latest resources, and the collective power of community to create the Life Reimagined platform. Our hope is that this platform will spark a movement that goes beyond a generation encountering aging to engage people of all ages in asking that fundamental set of questions, "What's next?" "What's next for *me*?" "*What's next for all of us?*"

So read this book as a gift to yourself. Play with the diagnostic tools. Chart your course toward your next possible life. Then pass it on to your spouse, your partner, your children, your friends—anyone you think will benefit from a new road map for the new normal. I wish I had had the insights in this book many years ago, when I was a 16-year-old caregiver trying to make sense of the chaos, the pain, or simply the aspiration of achieving my goals.

It's time for new personal solutions and new personal tools. It's time to reimagine your life's possibilities. Enjoy the journey!

Emilio Pardo
Executive Vice President
and Chief Brand Officer, AARP

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Introduction

Your Life Reimagined Journey

Let's start this book at the end.

In the end it's up to you.

Will you choose to take your Life Reimagined journey?

Will you choose to add your story to the thousands—the millions—of stories of curious, courageous pioneers of Life Reimagined?

Of course, it's up to you—to each of us—to make this choice.

But here's what's at stake. Here's why we genuinely believe you should choose to join us in taking the Life Reimagined journey.

The fact is, we are all participants in one of the most significant social movements of our time.

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We are engaged in the creation of a new phase of life. We call it Life Reimagined.

This new life phase comes after middle age and before old age. Its impact—the idea of a Life Reimagined moment—can come at any age. This new phase of life renders obsolete the myths and conventional wisdom of the last 50 years, the old story that has defined the trajectory of our life course and constrained the choices available to us in the second half of life.

Life Reimagined says you can choose your own path at any step of your life journey. As we reimagine the way we live and age, we will reimagine every phase of life that comes before and after Life Reimagined. The consequences of each of us exercising choice in our lives will ripple across every generation and every phase of life. Very simply, we are living in a transformational time that is personal for each of us and universal for all of us.

What Is Life Reimagined?

Life Reimagined is three things.

First, it is a map and a guidance system to help people navigate a new phase of life.

Second, it is a growing community of people who, by the way they live their lives, demonstrate the power of possibilities in this new phase of life. They are Life Reimagined pioneers—they exemplify the map in action.

Third, it is an emerging social movement that cuts across all distinctions, including age. It is a movement that will change how we age—and in the process change how we live.

Why Life Reimagined?

Before you read any further, stop and look around you. Check the news. Listen—really listen—to what so many conversations today are all about. Pay attention to the underlying themes and emerging threads that define the times we live in.

If you pay close attention to the forces at work in the world today, you'll see why Life Reimagined makes sense—in fact, more than makes sense. Why it is necessary and inevitable, why it accurately and honestly captures the new reality of our lives.

First, we are living longer.

Since 1900, when life expectancy in the United States was 47 years, we've added more than three decades to the average life span. Those additional years change the whole trajectory of life—and what is possible for each of us to choose to do with those years.

Second, we are working longer and more productively.

Living longer means adding more income-producing years to our lives, whether by choice or by necessity. This new reality has far-reaching implications for generations to come. As you'll see, work and economics are a large component of Life Reimagined, though they are far from the whole story.

Third, we are living with meaning.

So much change in the world produces uncertainty—and uncertainty returns us to the fundamentals of what matters: our own purpose and our connections to others. Life Reimagined invites us to get in touch with the most authentic meanings in our lives—and to act on them to discover new possibilities and make new choices.

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What Does Life Reimagined Say?

At the heart of Life Reimagined is a manifesto that calls upon each of us to live our lives with choice, curiosity, and courage.

It says that each of us is an experiment of one. That there are no one-size-fits-all answers for this new phase of life. Each of us has the freedom to choose our own way, in our own way, throughout all the years of our life. No old rules, no outdated social norms, no boundaries of convention or constraints of expectation.

It says that, in a world of change, there are two constants: having your own purpose and being connected to others.

It says that Life Reimagined is a journey of inner and outer discovery. And that the ultimate discovery each of us can make is self-discovery.

It says that none of us should go it alone on the journey into this new phase of life. Isolation is fatal.

Finally, it says that as we learn to reimagine this new phase of life, we will end up reimagining every phase of life. Thinking differently about how we live the second half of life will inevitably change how we live the years in the first half. As we understand the choices that are open to us as we age, we'll see that those choices are there for us at any time.

Strengthened by these truths, equipped with a map of the new territory that lies ahead, supported by the stories of countless pioneers of Life Reimagined whose real-life examples show the way forward, Life Reimagined offers each of us the promise of a life of real possibilities.

Mapping the Life Reimagined Territory

As pioneers of Life Reimagined, we are both exploring the territory and describing it as we go deeper into it. With each of our stories we add more detail and clarity to what lies ahead. Since everyone's life is an experiment of one, everyone's journey into the Life Reimagined territory will be unique.

That said, there is a map to make sense of this or any new phase of life. The map features six guideposts that can help you find your way on your individual journey. Don't think of these as steps to be taken in rigid, chronological order but as practices to guide your way:

Reflect: A call to pause before you start the journey and then at various steps along the way, understanding that change and choice occur from the inside out.

Connect: A step where you request feedback and counsel from trusted friends and guides, recognizing that isolation is fatal—no one should make this journey alone.

Explore: A beginning of the journey of discovery, a step of testing different possibilities, both inside and out, in the knowledge that curiosity and courage are essential to finding the way forward.

Choose: A narrowing of options in which you focus on your priorities and do both a deeper dive and a reality check, exploring a smaller number of choices to see which fit your emerging sense of what's right for you.

Repack: A step of deciding what's essential for the road ahead—what to let go of and what to keep, how to lighten

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your load, both tangible and intangible, for the new way that is opening up.

Act: A first step toward making the possibilities real in the recognition that taking action doesn't drain energy, it releases energy through the optimism that comes with choice, curiosity, and courage.

If you choose to follow this map wherever it leads you, you will be making the choice to become part of the community of Life Reimagined pioneers, whatever your age.

Here's the story of one person who made that choice.

A Game of Tag

Betty Smith hated her civil service job. A rail-thin woman into her twenties, after giving birth to her daughter she saw her weight balloon to more than 200 pounds. Her diet depended on junk food, and she had turned into a cigarette smoker.

This wasn't who she'd expected to be or how she'd expected to look in her thirties.

One day, Betty remembers, she found herself at the park with Tracy, her daughter, who wanted to play a game of tag.

"Mom," Tracy said, tagging her and running away, "you can't catch me!"

"The thing is," Betty says, "she was right. I was so out of shape and so out of breath. I decided I had to get off the path that I was on, or I wouldn't be around to see my daughter grow up."

That was a Life Reimagined moment for Betty.

It was a moment when she realized that she could make a

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choice that would fundamentally change her life. It started with a change in her mindset, a change that altered how she saw her life going forward. Because of that moment, Betty saw with startling clarity a new purpose for her life and a new set of practices to help her achieve her life purpose. This Life Reimagined moment changed how she saw herself and how she experienced the world.

She quit smoking.

“I’d been casually saying, ‘I shouldn’t smoke,’ as I was lighting up another one. But then I realized I needed to be there for my daughter,” she says. “That was the passion that I had.”

She worked out a meatless diet of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, seeds, and nuts. When she traveled, even to places like France with its noted cuisine, she stuck to her diet, carrying cans of chickpeas to make sure she got enough protein.

She made the decision to begin a regimen of walking, and the pounds started to melt away. Walking gave way to running—first two miles a day, then four, then a 10K race. She entered marathons all over the world, and then took on ultramarathons. From ultramarathons she stepped it up even more, entering twenty-four- and forty-eight-hour races.

“I’ve been running for forty-three years, basically nonstop,” Betty says, “and I’ve clocked well over 100,000 miles.” In all, Betty has run more than seventy marathons, competing on every continent and in locations as exotic as the ice of Antarctica and the pyramids of Egypt.

That game of tag in the park also led her to look at her work life. She went back to school to get an undergraduate degree—and then added on an MA and a PhD. She jettisoned her boring civil service job and embarked on a thirty-year career in early childhood education.

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“I’ve gotten to the point where I’ve been able to age agelessly,” Betty says. “And I believe that each person can make a decision to age agelessly.”

Now seventy-one, Betty says, “Everybody has got this inner strength inside. People don’t realize they’ve got this strength and they don’t pull on it. And the strength is just waiting there and it would love to be asked to be active.”

Betty Smith’s story is one story of Life Reimagined. It shows what is possible when you live with choice, curiosity, and courage. And it says that the opportunity for discovering new possibilities in life—possibilities that matter to us, on our own terms—is there at fifty, sixty, seventy—or thirty.

Who Is Life Reimagined For?

There are countless varieties of Life Reimagined stories. Some stories are about family and relationships, some about work and earning a living. Some are about achieving better health or mastering a new skill, some are about transcending tragedy or overcoming heartbreak. Some feature celebrities who have chosen how they will shape their lives, regardless of fame or fortune. Some tell the stories of ordinary people who choose to live by their own rules, seeking their own sense of fulfillment. The simple truth is, Life Reimagined touches all of us.

Life Reimagined is for people who may be pushed by pain or pulled by possibility.

It is for people who are driven by their fears or propelled by their aspirations. People who are ending a relationship, beginning a new one, or burnishing an existing one. People who are trying to make sense of their old way of life or seeking to

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explore a new one. People who are facing aging and retirement or looking to get started on their lives in uncertain economic times. People who are wrestling with money problems. Dealing with the demands of caregiving. Looking to establish a new identity that better reflects who they really are. People who are looking to find new meaning in a life grown dull.

In other words, it is for people who are in a Life Reimagined moment in their lives.

Living involves change. It's inevitable and desirable. To make good choices about change, we need guidance and direction, new life skills and new practices. Life Reimagined provides that guidance and those practices.

Here's the truth: the art of reimagining your life must be learned. The search for "what's next" in this new phase of life is driving one of the most powerful social movements of our time.

What's Next?

In the end the choice is yours.

In the end it's up to you.

Will you choose to take your Life Reimagined journey?

Will you choose to add your story to the thousands—the millions—of stories of curious, courageous pioneers of Life Reimagined?

Will you choose to join the Life Reimagined movement?

Things are about to get interesting.

Will you join us?

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Chapter 1

This Isn't What I Was Expecting!

"This isn't what I was expecting!"

You constantly hear that refrain as people describe their response to a set of experiences in a world that is rapidly changing, a world that doesn't match the way things used to be. At the start of any conversation about what it's like to move into this new phase of life, you'll hear a long and varied list of things that people didn't expect:

I didn't expect to be divorced at my age—or to be beginning a new relationship.

I didn't expect to be unemployed—or to have the opportunity to start my own business.

I didn't expect my grown-up son to come back and live with me—or for me to have to go and live with my grown-up son.

I didn't expect my 401k to be worthless—or to have enough money to take the trip I'd always dreamed of.

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What people seem to have expected is that by the time they'd reached this point in their lives, they'd have everything under control. That at a certain age, they'd have enough money, enough status, enough experience, enough stuff, that they'd have things the way they wanted them.

By now I thought I'd have this whole thing figured out.

What we didn't expect was that we'd have to keep figuring it out, no matter what our age.

Or that we'd have to deal with the kinds of unexpected challenges that, today, seem to be coming faster, more frequently, more turbulently, and less predictably.

In a world that's changing, it's time for all of us to change our assumptions, our expectations, and our mindsets of what's possible.

It's time for a new story to replace the old one.

The Old Story

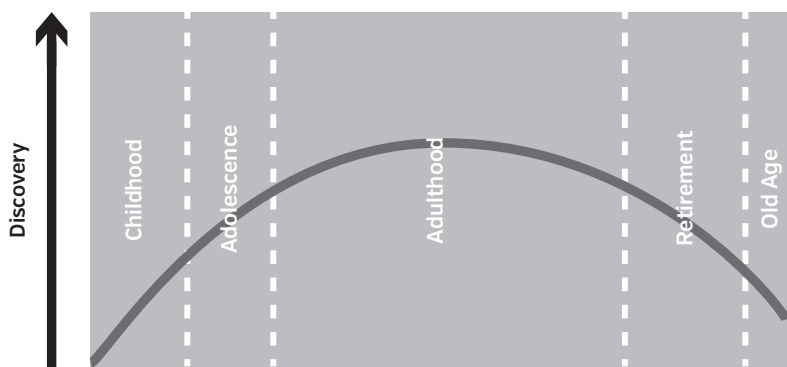
For the past fifty years at least, retirement has been the single destination of living. The old story was populated by such themes as "the golden years," "life of leisure," a life without the pressure of time clocks or the demands of work. Retirement was life's desired end point; leisure time was the definition of success, the reward that awaited you after you'd put in so many years of labor. Interestingly, it took roughly fifty years for a full-fledged retirement system to find its complete expression, described by its own language and supported by pensions, policies, Social Security, and retirement communities.

As a result of that fifty-year evolution, the way we think about the path of life has been dominated by an old and famil-

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iar story. It's an outdated mental image of the life cycle that we carry around in our heads, whether we know it or not. It looks like a simple parabola, an arch that starts at the bottom left of the chart, bends up and to the right until it reaches the top, and then gradually declines to the bottom right.

The Old Story



That image depicts the story most of us assume captures the reality of aging.

What it says is this: each of us starts off fresh and new, ready to learn and grow and discover our individual potential. We arc upward as we go through our early years, and we continue to grow until about the time we hit middle age. At that point we've reached the apex of our lives, the top of the parabola. After that, as we pass middle age, we begin the process of decline that takes us into retirement, then old age, and eventually, death. We've reached the end of the chart, the bottom right-hand exit point.

There are two problems with this old story.

The first problem is that the story this image tells is a disheartening, disturbing, disempowering tale. It says that the

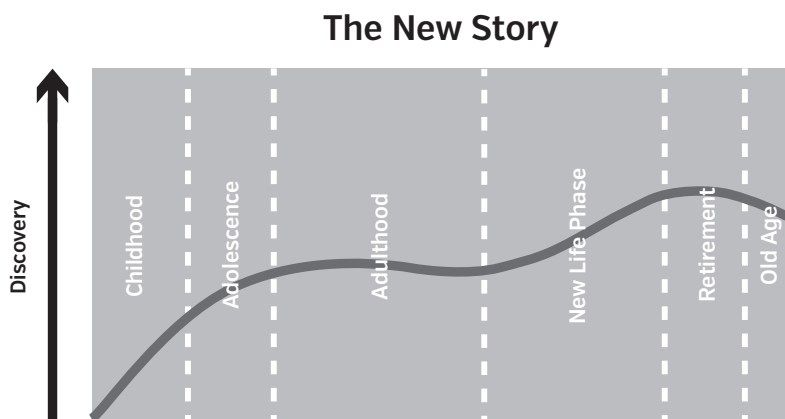
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two sides of the curve of life are the same except in reverse. On the way up, we're vital, engaged, alive to learning, self-expression, and growth; on the way down, we're closed off to all those possibilities. On the way down, we're simply on the way down. We're in decline and the only question is how soon the landing will come and how hard it will be.

The second problem is that this old story is flat-out wrong. It doesn't match how we live. It doesn't describe the new reality of our lives and the lives of generations going forward. We need a new story that corresponds to the new reality.

The New Story

Imagine a new image with a different curve.



This one also begins at the lower left-hand corner and arcs upward until it reaches a point at the top. But instead of falling back down along a symmetrical curve like the old image, this one dips a little and then goes back up! It continues to rise gently for an extended period, then levels off, and finally falls at the end.

Chapter 1: This Isn't What I Was Expecting!

What this second image depicts is the new story about Life Reimagined.

This new story is the real story.

And it is fast becoming the new normal. Just as planning for retirement shaped the old story—and touched all of life leading up to it—this new phase will change every other phase. It is a story for the ages—all the ages. The whole of society has a stake in this story—in the new choices it offers, the new possibilities it opens up.

Just as the old story gradually assembled a system to support it, this new story will also rearrange and re-create all the components of how we live our lives. As a result of Life Reimagined, we will find ourselves, at one end of the spectrum, engaged in deep and wide-reaching policy debates touching health care, Social Security, employment and unemployment, housing, technology, and more. And at the other end of the spectrum, we will discover and pioneer new offerings and entrepreneurial solutions that touch the lives of millions of individuals with tools and techniques that transform the choices available to each of us and the pathways open to us to explore. This new story shapes a new reality, for all generations to come.

It is reshaping the architecture of society and forming one of the most significant social movements of our time.

The Life Reimagined Spiral

The best way to understand the new story is to reimagine your life in the form of a spiral, a tornado-shaped figure that starts out at the bottom and winds its way upward through a series of expanding loops toward the top. Imagine this drawing as if

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it were a close-up of the journey of your life, a series of twists and turns, choices and challenges from birth to death.

When you're on a flatter part of the spiral, your life is on a plateau. At those moments, things seem like they're under control. You have good work, good health, enough money, a solid base at home, a network of friends and colleagues with whom to share your life. At times like these, you may actually feel like you do have this whole thing figured out! Or at least you're satisfied with the way things are.

But then, inevitably, a trigger knocks you off the plateau; you leave the flat area and take a turn into a new zone, limbo.

What Is a Trigger?

Another word for a trigger is a wake-up call—a conscious choice or an external event that disrupts the comfortable status quo of our lives. It's a moment when the game changes, and we have to adapt to the new game.

Triggers can be positive:

Are you in a new relationship? It's exciting, and the emotion is enough to knock you off your plateau!

Are you launching your new startup? The challenge is enough to fill you with energy—and also to keep you up at night with exciting questions and tough challenges!

Are you going back to school? Your calendar is now jam-packed, filled with classes to attend and homework to complete!

When you think about these positive triggers, they manifest the Life Reimagined mindset: you're exercising choice, demonstrating curiosity, and acting with courage.

Or triggers can be negative:

Do you know someone you care about who has just heard from a doctor with an uncertain medical diagnosis? You're suddenly frozen with fear, your emotional life clouded with concern.

Do you know people who have lost their jobs after decades of stability? They don't know which way to

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turn or where to start, and you share that anxiety with them, wanting to help but not knowing how.

Do you know someone who has been caught by surprise by an unexpected divorce? All of a sudden the stability of a long-term relationship has been replaced by the unfamiliar, unwelcome experience of learning how to live alone for the first time in a long time.

These are the moments when we feel like our lives are out of control. These are the moments when we say, or hear someone else say, “This isn’t what I was expecting.” At times like these we wonder, “What’s next?”—and the question feels like an unwelcome test, more a threat than a promise. Uncertainty and powerlessness dominate the situation. It feels like our lives are happening to us.

There are also triggers that are small and subtle, signals that add up to suggest that our lives are undergoing gradual, cumulative, and perhaps inevitable change. There are triggers that live in the gray areas of life. In some of these cases, we get to choose whether we want to accept living in the gray area or to respond to the discomfort of ambiguity and act decisively.

For example, there’s a whole category of people today who are “the working worried.” They’re not happy in their jobs, but they’re not prepared to quit. What worries them is that someone else will make the decision for them. They’re working—and they’re worried.

The same ambiguity applies to relationships. Not all relationships exist in the sharp dichotomy of good or bad, happy or unhappy. Many are simply in a rut. These relationship ruts aren’t so bad that a breakup is inevitable, but they’re not so

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good that they feel completely satisfying. Relationship ruts prompt the question, “Is good enough really as good as it gets?”

The truth is, we are changing all the time. Our values and priorities shift; we experience both bursts of confidence and spells of doubt; our relationships form, evolve, break apart, reform; our work both loses energy and takes on new vitality. All of this forms an ongoing, complex life spiral.

Life in Limbo

What happens is that triggers—positive or negative, subtle or unmistakable—kick our lives into limbo, a period of uncertainty, of wondering what comes next, and of anxiously anticipating how soon whatever does come next will actually arrive.

Being in limbo is all about learning to cope with the “in-between times.” As a result of a trigger, we’ve ended one period of stability or even one phase of life, and looking forward we don’t yet see another one beginning. We’re forced to live in the question “What’s next?” The door behind us has closed, and we haven’t seen the new doors that lie ahead. Or sometimes, although we see the new doors, we’re not yet ready to make the choice to open them.

Being in limbo can be scary in the way that uncertainty often is.

And it can be even more debilitating. Limbo can become a form of resignation, a kind of prison sentence to accept the way things are as the way things have to be.

Some people let themselves fall into the trap of living the old story as if it were the new reality. You hear them say, “What do you expect from someone my age?”—a passive acceptance of life in limbo.

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The truth is, when a number—your age—becomes your identity, you've given away your power to choose your future. The point isn't that sixty is the new forty. The point is that sixty is the new sixty, and there's a new way to be sixty.

Dying Without Knowing It

The worst-case scenario for those who succumb to limbo is “inner kill”—the condition of dying without knowing it. People with inner kill often feel that they either don't have enough or aren't good enough. They get stuck living in comparison with others or with some idealized, unattainable version of themselves.

You have inner kill when you've stopped growing, when you've given up on yourself, or when you find yourself always taking the easy, safe way.

Like most conditions, inner kill has a set of recognizable symptoms that let you diagnose it in yourself or someone you know: a tendency to avoid decisions; a tendency to daydream about early retirement; constant talk about intentions—without actually doing anything; not sleeping at night; sleepwalking during the day; having irritability as the emotional default setting; constantly repeating the same conversation topics week after week; making increasingly frequent visits to the liquor store, looking for a stronger alcohol prescription.

Ultimately, inner kill is the death of self-respect.

On the other hand, for those who use limbo as a moment to embrace Life Reimagined, this in-between time can be an exciting opportunity. Limbo invites a deeper, game-changing conversation with your self. You may not embrace limbo—but

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you can accept it, work with it, get fully engaged with the challenge that limbo presents.

Limbo is an energy crisis: if you run from it or passively surrender to it, you'll find your energy sapped. When you decide that limbo is an opportunity for self-exploration, you discover new energy and new possibilities.

Trigger in the Park

The question isn't whether we'll be hit by triggers or get kicked into limbo. We will—all of us, at every phase of life, in all kinds of ways.

The question is how we'll react when triggers come and we find ourselves in limbo. Do we retreat? Or step into the uncertainty? Respond out of fear? Or move forward with courage?

Rich Luker's story is all about overcoming fear and stepping into a Life Reimagined moment with courage. His story shows how a positive trigger can lead to realizing a new, vital, but long-deferred dream.

As a boy growing up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Rich yearned to be able to play baseball. But he was no athlete. Small and unsure of himself, he heeded his father's expectations and stayed inside studying instead of going outside to play the game he loved.

"I was afraid on every level," Rich remembers. "I was afraid of getting hurt. I was afraid of making a fool of myself."

Still, something about baseball called to him, so much so that in college he found time to be a batboy for the University of Michigan baseball team.

"I had sports," he says, "but I didn't play. The baseball bug

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struck me early and stayed with me. But the thought of finding delight and playing the game never occurred to me.”

Rich grew up, moved to St. Petersburg, Florida, and made his living as a researcher and consultant.

And then one day, when he was in his fifties, he found himself talking on his mobile phone on a conference call, not in his office but outside as he walked by a park. A group of men his age and older were playing softball on a diamond. The game caught his eye.

A simple game of softball served as a life-changing trigger.

“I’m holding the phone, and I’m thinking, ‘What’s this?’” Rich recalls. “I don’t even remember saying, ‘I can’t talk now.’ I just hung up. I’m looking through the fence and I’m seeing something I can really love. I said, ‘I have to do this. I have to do this.’”

That was a Life Reimagined moment for Rich.

In that moment, he not only saw a way to do something he’d always wanted to do. He saw a way of being someone he’d always wanted to be, a way of living that he’d always wanted to experience. It changed more than the recreational side of his life; it touched every part of his life, inside and out.

In a life shaped by expectations, Rich had never expected to play softball. To be a softball player. “It was a life of watching and not doing,” Rich says. “There wasn’t even a realization. It’s just the most amazing thing.”

Today Rich still has his old job. And even after he felt that initial trigger at the park, he still had to try out for the league; he had to make a team and show he could play. But that trigger was about more than just softball. It was about exercising choice to overcome age-old expectations. It was about finding

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a new way to see life possibilities. And it was about shifting what mattered in life to match a new phase of life. Today, during the sixty-game softball season, Rich never schedules work between nine and eleven a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. That time is reserved for playing the game he has always loved with the new teammates he has found.

“How’s that for a priority?” he asks. “How’s that for pushing balance in life to say there are things more important than just work? It starts and ends with a decision to go after what you love.”

Life Is Hard

When it comes to expectations, Life Reimagined says that you can find new possibilities in this new phase of life—but only if you do the hard work of reimagining. Without doing the work, there’s no way forward: “If you can’t get out of it, get into it!” is the tough truth of a life well lived.

Life Reimagined doesn’t promise instant results or fairy-tale endings. Even the best story demands a reality check.

The problem is, some people allow their fears and disappointments, their negative past and preconceptions, to keep them from trying. They choose to live a self-fulfilling prophecy of self-doubt and disappointment.

It is true that this journey of Life Reimagined is hard. And there are no guarantees.

It’s also true that succumbing to self-doubt and negative thinking does have a guarantee.

The guarantee of failure.

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The Three Cs

Life Reimagined encourages and enables every individual to discover his or her real possibilities. It's a call to action, a rallying cry to do the hard work of reimagining your life.

Life Reimagined holds these three core precepts:

Choice is not a choice.

Choice is difficult. Choice is required. We are all challenged to choose, to reject victimhood, and to be choice makers. Life Reimagined is an everyday journey of making choices.

Curiosity is change.

Curiosity is the way to open up life. It allows you to see the world differently—and to see yourself differently. It kills inner kill and gives birth to real possibilities.

Courage is commitment.

Courage commits you to doing something. It requires courageous conversation and bold action, whether large or small.

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