



What is the lifelong potential of the human mind?

Might I have talents and brainpower that I'm unaware of?

Can I make money and a difference doing something I love?

Is there some science to this or just luck?

Millions of us in our 40's, 50's and 60's face career, financial and personal challenges beyond anything we anticipated—we're filled with fresh uncertainties.

We've seen careers derailed and investments devastated by economic chaos. Some of us have grown restless or burned out in our businesses or professions. Others have unexpectedly 'flunked retirement,' finding the so-called 'golden years' mind-numbingly boring.

However we've come to it, the challenge is the same: What Now?

Personally driven by this question, Peabody award-winning journalist and Fortune 100 leadership consultant Mark S. Walton set out on his most fascinating assignment yet. Crisscrossing America to meet with remarkably re-inventive people, and researching the latest breakthroughs in brain science, psychology, human performance, creativity and happiness, he made three life-altering discoveries:

- **State-of-the-art neuroscience has revealed that we are hard-wired for reinvention through the emergence of extraordinary new creative and intellectual powers in life's second half.**
- **A growing number of men and women are learning how to leverage this inborn potential. Rather than lowering their aspirations in midlife, they are raising the bar—*inventing* profitable new careers, businesses, and avenues for social impact that extend well into their 70's, 80's, even 90's.**
- **Longevity experts are increasingly convinced that doing work that 'pays it forward' to future generations pays us back in personal long-term health and happiness.**

What unrealized possibilities exist for each of us in midlife and beyond? How do we find and unlock our unique talents and capabilities? What kinds of people have accomplished this? What can we learn from their experiences? In ***Boundless Potential*** Walton shares his surprising and encouraging findings, weaving first-hand accounts, cutting edge research, and practical lessons into an actionable blueprint for redesigning our lives and work. Entertaining, informative, and empowering, this groundbreaking book delivers overwhelming evidence that we were never meant to downgrade our ambitions or goals, but to continually reinvent them.

Praise for *BOUNDLESS POTENTIAL* by Mark S. Walton

“A great book. The mix of history, psychology, neuroscience and profiles of successful re-inventers will hit home with intelligent men and women contemplating their next steps.”

—**Elizabeth Pope, *The New York Times***

“No greater challenge faces millions of us in our 40’s, 50’s and 60’s than how to create a successful and meaningful second half of life. In this path breaking and timely book, Mark Walton shows us how to reinvent our 'game' with a simple, powerful, practical framework, inspiring examples, and new insights from neuroscience. I recommend it highly!”

—**William Ury Ph.D., Harvard Law School, International Bestselling Coauthor, ‘Getting to Yes,’**

“A terrific book. *Boundless Potential* provides clear and practical advice on how to navigate the transition from work to good work; and if that isn't enough, Mark Walton is a master storyteller. The people you meet in this book will, I am sure, become your companions and inspiration along the way.”

—**Suzanne Braun Levine, Founding Editor, *Ms. Magazine***

“Brilliant, provocative and highly practical. Applying his award-winning journalistic skills to a topic of vital importance, Mark Walton has punctured the myths and stereotypes of life’s second half to reveal our true human potential: how we are hard wired, not for decline, but for continual reinvention, personal achievement and contribution to others.”

—**Michael Murphy, Chairman Emeritus, Esalen Institute, Best Selling Author, ‘Golf in the Kingdom.’**

“*Boundless Potential* is must reading. Mark Walton tackles one of the most important issues of our time with thoughtfulness, intelligence and careful analysis: how to harness the talents and energy of the largest generation in American history. For answers, he turns to some of our most important role models and brilliant thinkers on the interplay of age, creativity and experience.”

—**Mark Miller, Nationally Syndicated Columnist: Tribune Media, CBS Moneywatch, Reuters.com**

"Mark Walton writes like a private coach posing the important questions that we need to wrestle with in our 40s, 50s and 60s. He also provides scientific back up for the penetrating and intuitive wisdom in these pages. Although it is aimed especially at those of us in midlife and beyond, this book is essential reading for people peaking in their careers at any age."

—**Anisa Mehdi, Producer, ABC News Nightline, NPR's "All Things Considered."**

Excerpt:
The New Normal

Meeting on the Edge of Tomorrow

*Change is the law of life.
And those who look only to the past or
present are certain to miss the future.*
— John F. Kennedy

Nearly twenty-seven centuries ago, the Greeks invented the first reality show—sort of an “Olympic Idol” of the times.

Today, we know it as the decathlon.

Ten separate events over two grueling days, in competitive running, jumping, hurdling, shot put, pole vault, and javelin—tests designed to rip apart the body, mind, and soul through inherently contradictory demands: the need to gain strength without losing speed, conserve energy while extending distance, boost performance here without deteriorating elsewhere.

At the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, Bruce Jenner, the American contender, showed the world how the decathlon could be won. He not only took home the gold medal, but with 8,617 combined points, he also set a new record in this ancient contest – an achievement that qualified him for the title “World’s Greatest Athlete.”

With global television audiences cheering him on, Bruce ran an impromptu victory lap around the field, gave his wife a congratulatory kiss, and, exiting the stadium, put down his vaulting poles for the last time.

“I always dreamed of winning the Games,” said the champion, who had prepared relentlessly for this moment.

Yet the reality was more like a nightmare. As champagne corks popped in his honor that evening, Bruce sat alone in his hotel suite overlooking the Olympic city—and cried.

“It’s like learning to play the piano. You sit in front of it for years, and you have a chance to play the most beautiful music in the world, and when it’s over, you put your hands in your pockets and you never play that music again.”

“I have no plans,” he told an interviewer. “What will I do tomorrow?”

I've never run, let alone won, a decathlon. But I'm not sure we need to in order to see ourselves in Bruce's story.

We complete our degrees. We set out to develop an expertise; build a career; raise a family; start a practice, business, or organization. Over the years, and despite the odds, sacrifices, complexities, and competition, we achieve our objectives.

We taste our personal "Olympic" dreams.

Then, at some point—often when we least expect it—an unwelcome, even harrowing new uncertainty appears.

What Will I Do Tomorrow

For some of us, the problem surfaces suddenly—the economy takes a hit; business conditions change; our jobs, homes, or investments are impacted; our future plans are disrupted or derailed.

"First it's shock, and then you get angry," said one pink-slipped 47-year-old executive, "and then you wonder, What am I going to do?"

For others, the doubts start bubbling up gradually. We find ourselves restless, dissatisfied and unchallenged at work. Or, having sampled the "retirement lifestyle," we feel trapped, disillusioned, and incomplete as we gaze at the road ahead.

What Now?

However the dilemma first arrives, it brings with it a set of concerns that grows disturbingly present and clear:

- Should I try to continue the kind of work I've done? Will I be able to? Is that what I really want anyway? Is it worth the effort to try?
- Maybe I should do something new. But what would it be? How hard would I have to work? How much money could I earn? Would I need to make an upfront investment? What if it doesn't pan out?
- Maybe I should just forget it. I'll kick back and relax. But what will I do with my time? How many years do I have ahead of me? How long will I be able to afford it?

With questions such as these in mind, I trust you will appreciate what drove me to visit Aspen, Colorado, in the summer before my 55th birthday.

Despite their beauty, it was not the rocky mountain trails or luminescent rivers. Nor was it the splendid festivals or intense political dialogues at the famed Aspen Institute that I'd heard about for so many years.

It was a seminar there—something I'd normally have avoided at all costs on a glorious mid-July week like this one. But surfing the Internet a few days earlier, I'd stumbled on an entry in the institute's catalog that wouldn't let go of my psyche:

“Professionals and businesspeople in midlife are increasingly asking themselves ‘What's Next?’ in their careers and personal lives. This seminar draws on the wisdom of the ages to help practical men and women plan for satisfying, useful, and meaningful second halves.”

At first, I was embarrassed to sign up, worried that I would feel out of place among younger people, tackling their early midlife crises.

I'd already been there and done that.

I started in radio news as a teenager. Straight out of college, I landed on the Washington, D.C., fast track, moving from press aide to the Secretary of the Navy, to CNN's chief White House correspondent by age 30, and soon after, to the position of network anchor and Senior Correspondent.

I became a familiar face in the corridors of power and in millions of homes. I traveled the United States and the globe many times over and covered the biggest stories of the times.

In my early forties, I left the news business and reinvented myself, founding an executive development firm that attracted, as clients, some of the nation's leading graduate business schools and organizations.

I authored a book on persuasive leadership that was named one of the top business books of the year.

Now in my mid-fifties, I was living, with my wife of three decades, in the town of our dreams on the coast of California. Our daughter was in graduate school on a fellowship that would lead to an excellent career. I could arrange my schedule to allow plenty of free time for running, hiking, travel, and friends.

I had health, liberty, good fortune, and a bit of fame—the gold medal of American life.

And I was increasingly unhappy: bored and irritable during the daytime, confused and conflicted as I lay awake at night.

What Should I Do With the Rest of My Life?

On arriving in Aspen, my biggest discovery was that, in this quandary, I was far from alone.

While some of my fellow seminarians were early forty-somethings, many were in their fifties and older: a highly respected investment banker, the CEO of a global workforce management firm, the former admissions director of a top private college, a superstar cancer surgeon, two accomplished entrepreneurs, and a managing partner of one of the world's premier consulting companies, to name a few.

Without exception, they were ambitious, intelligent, and accomplished people. They had loving relationships with spouses, children, and, in some cases, grandchildren. They were in no way regretful, disappointed, or malcontent about decisions they had made along the way.

Yet what drew them into a windowless meeting room on those picture perfect Aspen days were the same kinds of doubts and concerns that brought me:

After a career of 20, 30, or 40 years, am I a done deal?

Is it true that success is necessarily a younger person's game?

What will make me happiest now?

Have I had a positive impact on the world?

Where do I go from here?

In the group was a nationally known district attorney, thrown out of office in a brutal reelection campaign:

I worked hard since before I was a teenager. I was always go, go, go. I gave 32 years of my life to the law, to the district attorney's office, and to the criminal justice system. I'm absolutely convinced that I will live in good mental and physical health for another 30 years. Now I really want to do something else. But what should it be?

And from the former chief executive who, during his years in Washington, D.C., had built the most powerful advocacy force in American politics, there was this:

They had the retirement party, and one of the speakers was Newt Gingrich who said: “Well, you’re 63. Now the game begins.” And I thought to myself: You know, for most people the common mindset is, you stop working and you play golf, or go fishing, and then you die. Not me. The question I have is: Where are the things that I can have the biggest impact on, that will be the most meaningful? By God, people say, at 66 or 67, there’s not much you can do. But for me, that’s just plain crazy!

For four solid days, and as many wine-filled evenings, we exchanged experiences, hopes, philosophies, and dreams:

**Is it possible to make money and a difference
into our sixties, seventies, and beyond?**

**Might there be more potential within each of us
than we’ve been led to believe?**

**Could living a long life have a greater purpose
than most people think?**

“To raise new questions marks real advance,” wrote Albert Einstein.

And it was obvious, during our time and conversations together, that new ground had been broken, new perspectives gained.

But also unmistakably apparent—in more cases than not—was that many of our inquiries remained unsettled, our answers elusive or incomplete.

And as we said our goodbyes in Aspen, I decided on a personal course of action: I would not return to life as usual. Instead, I would make it my objective to research whatever, travel wherever, and find whoever could help me resolve these issues once and for all. I took on this project as though my future depended on it, which in fact I believe it does.

This book is the result.

If you have read this far, may I assume that you have arrived at a place in your own life where these matters are of importance to you, as well?

Or perhaps to someone you care about?

People You Will Meet in This Book

This book's pages contain the real-life experiences and pragmatic wisdom of uncommon men and women—people who have led the second half of their lives in an extraordinary way.

Each made a conscious choice to raise the bar, rather than lower his or her expectations. They decided to keep “going for the gold” in their way of living—to design and play a different game.

In midlife and beyond, they set out to reinvent their earlier success by creating a new kind of work they could truly love. And in doing so, they built a rich livelihood and legacy based on their full lifetime potential, not just the choices and necessities of earlier years.

As I encountered such people in the process of my research, I came to describe them as reinventive, and, by extension, to label the nature of their pursuits reinventive work.

“Why live on just one cylinder,” one reinventive woman asked me, “never experiencing the joy and power of the rest?”

Meeting such individuals and, in particular, conducting the in-depth personal interviews that are an integral part of this book, has been a profoundly awakening experience for me, as I intend that reading the pages ahead will be for you.

Included are several people I initially encountered during my time in Aspen, but most are men and women I've come to know since.

Be assured, this is no volume of theory or chicken soup for growing older.

It is a practical inquiry into the challenges of today and tomorrow, an intelligent person's guide to a fundamentally new—a twenty-first-century—redefinition of the word success.

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