

**PART 1**

# **Confronting Midlife**



## CHAPTER 1

# The Midlife Wakeup Call

Adversity is the first path to truth.

—Lord George Noel Gordon Byron, Don Juan

Life begins at forty.

—Anonymous

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.

—Henry David Thoreau, Walden

## My Call

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The pang of midlife can strike when you least expect it, piercing you with a jolt of sadness, remorse, and yearning. For me it occurred quite unexpectedly on the last day of the entrepreneurship class that I was teaching at the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University, while the undergraduate students were presenting their business-plan projects.

As each of the fresh-faced students effortlessly downloaded their PowerPoint files from their Internet mailboxes for presentation on the built-in LCD projector, the blackboard, which had been the staple in my learning process, seemed pathetically awkward and ignored as it relinquished center stage to the retractable screen in this digital age of learning.

One of the business plans concerned an entertainment service that targeted “young” patrons, those between the ages of twenty and thirty-five, for trendy bars and restaurants in New Orleans. I was a decade beyond the target group. Although I struggled to pay attention to the fine points of their presentations, my mind strayed. I had always enjoyed teaching and had taught for years, mostly to adults who were older than myself. But returning to my alma mater to teach

undergraduates for the first time had a profound impact on me. Although there were many new buildings on campus, including the impressive new structure that now housed the business school, Tulane still had the same “feel” that I remembered from many years earlier.

I had graduated prior to cell phones, pagers, laptop computers, palm pilots, and even fax machines. The only computer I ever used was the centralized mainframe that ran the entire university and required typed cards to harness its processing power, then probably a fraction of a single laptop sitting in a student’s dormitory room today.

What had happened? Over two decades had dribbled away. It seemed only yesterday I was scuttling around Tulane’s treelined campus with my knapsack, slipping sheepishly into one of the wooden desks in the back of the traditional classroom, often after class had started, with my whole life and career ahead of me. Today, I was facing my own students, assuredly settled into comfortable swivel chairs in a tiered amphitheater that reminded me more of a corporate conference center than a college classroom. I often felt that my students were judging me as opposed to my grading them.

The presentations continued. One displayed the financial forecast for the business, which included a balance sheet. I thought about my own balance sheet. I had no spouse or serious romantic interest, my career was helplessly stalled, and my net worth had been decimated by the dot-com bust. I was once a young Tulane undergraduate, as cocky as many of the young men who sat in the back of the room and periodically made flip comments. But I was feeling anything but cocky lately . . . I felt downright helpless and miserable instead.

I finally realized that I wasn’t being fair to my students. They had prepared for today and I needed to reward them with my complete attention. With a great heave, I pushed my depressing thoughts to the side and focused on their presentations.

At the end of class, several students lingered to wish me well and, of course, furtively mention that they enjoyed my class. A few of their comments seemed sincere. A piece of their college transcript and a small part of their lives rested in my hands. Yet it seemed that they had all the power, with their young lives ahead of them.

After the last student left, I sat in one of the swivel chairs and reflected. I remembered myself as an idealistic young student, thinking that the sky was the limit and planning to set the whole world on fire. Instead, I feared that I had crashed and burned, my present life only charred remains of what could have been.

I had done both my undergraduate and graduate work at Tulane and after eight hectic years had collected three degrees, including the trendy M.B.A./J.D.. Along the way I passed the CPA exam to add some icing to my résumé. I thought I was set for life.

For a while, it appeared that I might be right. Upon graduation, I slid almost effortlessly into an old-line, prestigious corporate law firm in New Orleans and was paid a top salary. Then, I parlayed my three years at the law firm into an even higher paying job with a Fortune 500 company that had recently relocated from New York to New Orleans and was looking to beef up its corporate law department. I charged into my new position with boundless enthusiasm. Soon, I was firmly entrenched in the corporate fast track, jetting around the world closing creative and complex deals that dwarfed anything that my contemporaries were doing and that required every ounce of my education, intelligence, and stamina. I was barely thirty years old but had already caught the attention of senior management. One particular transaction had added tens of millions of dollars to the company's bottom line and I had received much of the credit. But I was too busy to notice that I was working too much, neglecting my personal life and squeezing relationships in around my hectic work schedule. The only thing I cared about was that my career was going *great*, or so I thought.

Then came the transfer.

As the 1980s ended and the 1990s began, the company, like the rest of corporate America, initiated a process that was delicately called "restructuring." For a while, the layoffs and transfers were restricted to fringe areas, but then veered towards the heart of the company. Although I considered myself one of the more productive lawyers, I was sent packing from the legal department at the corporate headquarters in New Orleans to go to an unfilled governmental relations position at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, primarily to

prevent any reduction in the staffing of the legal department. Although I should have been grateful for surviving a particularly onerous “restructuring,” I was not. As far as I was concerned, I had been unfairly plucked from my beloved and challenging arena of international deal making and exiled to a corporate outpost for a lobbying job for which I was overqualified, in a city in which I did not wish to live, and for a supervisor for whom I did not wish to work. I made other job inquiries but could not find as comfortable a place to land in a tight economy. I settled into my new job and did the best I could. The good news was that the interruption of my jet-setting pace and workaholism gave me the time to examine many issues in my life that had been sorely neglected and pursue other interests besides work. The layoffs continued at corporate headquarters, but I barely noticed them from my seemingly secure corporate outpost.

Then came the earthquake.

The company suddenly announced that, due to poor profits, it was shedding one-third of its workforce as well as most of its domestic assets, including those I had been hired to protect at the State Capitol. My complacency vanished as this new set of layoffs became as ominous as a swinging pendulum blade moving closer and closer to my formerly secure corporate outpost. I clung to the job I previously detested as if it were a life raft while I desperately searched for another position.

To my dismay, my experience, my accomplishments, and my education were generally ignored by corporate America. Much of my difficulty stemmed from the fact that other companies were also shedding employees at the time. The legal field in particular is notoriously difficult to laterally transfer within. The large law firms, for which I was best suited, tend to prefer fresh young minds that they can mold to their own liking. Such firms are only interested in adding experienced lawyers who bring along new business with them. I had not really practiced law for a number of years and had no clients of my own. But even though I was going against the grain, I came agonizingly close to several promising positions. One was with the branch office of a major law firm and the other as the head of a distinguished non-profit entity that served as a watchdog for state government.

In each case, I seemed assured of the position, only to have some last-minute complication botch the deal.

The branch office of the law firm was anxious to hire me and had in fact extended me an informal offer. But just as things were about to become formalized, a résumé showed up at the main office that the powers there felt was a better fit. The main office overruled the branch office and my offer vanished.

The nonprofit entity was even more of a heartbreak. Mine had started off as 1 of over 120 résumés submitted for the position of executive director of the high-profile entity, which advocated good government in Louisiana, a state that certainly experienced its share of bad government. The position was considered very prestigious, with its former executive director being tapped by a new governor as the commissioner of administration for the state of Louisiana, responsible for the entire operations of the state. I survived three cuts to eventually become one of five finalists. The position would have utilized my governmental relations experience and my business background as well as my legal expertise. I was excited by the challenge of taking this somewhat dormant but well-respected entity to new heights. I had prepared a lengthy position paper, and my interview with the search committee had gone extremely well. I had done my homework, and the committee members were outwardly impressed with my vision for the entity as well as my qualifications for the position. Although I was the youngest of the contenders, I had received word from insiders that my interview and résumé had made the best impression. The committee was scheduled to reconvene that day and would likely recommend me to the board.

However, that night, the retired, but still much respected, former chairman of the entity personally intervened on behalf of another finalist, who happened to be his protégé. Although some of the committee members purportedly had their doubts about the choice, the former chairman was apparently quite persuasive in calling in his chits. I found the promising job snatched from my hands at the last second. The protégé ended up lasting barely a year in the position.

Sixty days later I was laid off from my company. The good news was that I had a relatively soft landing. I was given a

consulting contract with the company and ended up as “of counsel” with the law firm of a high-school classmate. The bad news was that I was forty and had to start all over again. I had no clients, had not practiced law for a number of years, and felt a bit out of place at the firm. My classmate and his partner, who were around my age, owned the firm, and the remaining associates were generally younger and more recent law graduates. My classmate was most gracious about the arrangement and often referred to me as the “smart kid” from the class. But if I was so “smart,” how did I end up back at the starting gate with lawyers over a decade younger than me?

My career at the firm hobbled along. New clients were not easy to come by and I felt that I was barely holding my own and even losing some ground. I watched many clients get rich while I struggled to collect my hourly fees. I was making a living and that was about it.

My personal life also had its up and downs. In the years after graduation, I found myself in and out of unhealthy relationships that were the easiest to juggle around my career. But just about the time of my transfer by the company, I met a nice woman who had been recently divorced and I entered into my first serious relationship. Although my body was transferred to Baton Rouge, my heart remained in Mandeville (a New Orleans suburb north of Lake Pontchartrain, where she lived) and I became well acquainted with the stretch of highway that divided the two.

Other good things had happened. I started writing again, something I had not done since my college days. My new position with the company afforded travel opportunities in which guests were allowed to tag along. We traveled extensively both on and off the corporate expense account and generally had a good life together, particularly in the years after the transfer but before the earthquake. For a while I was actually fairly happy.

However, something that I did not completely understand prevented me from making that final commitment to her. We had sessions with a relationship counselor and even attended some couples’ workshops. I prayed, meditated, and read everything I could on relationships. I even bought her an expensive engagement ring and checked into foreign



wedding destinations. I did everything but set a wedding date. And as the weeks turned to months and the months turned to years, the love began to seep slowly away. She eventually moved away to pursue her long-cherished dream of living by the beach, even though she had emotionally departed the relationship years earlier.

My finances had not fared much better. Like everyone else, I had become enamored with the stock-market boom of the late 1990s, in particular the technology stocks. As the market began its downturn, I kept listening to my broker, who assured me that this was a temporary correction and everything would be okay. We all know now that the market slide for many technology high flyers was anything but a temporary correction.

I was more angry at myself than at my broker. Even though I had an M.B.A., I had allowed my personal and retirement portfolios to become dramatically undiversified and had ignored the same advice about risk allocation that any of my students could have told me from their first-year finance course. In other words, don't put all of your eggs in one basket. My net worth had been nearly decimated.

Maybe that was why I was feeling broke, alone, and unsuccessful these days. During this time, I had also lost three close family members: my grandmother, at the end of a very long and fruitful life; my father, after a battle with lung cancer; and my nephew, so tragically at the beginning of his young life that I can't really discuss it but only pray for my sister and her family.

My awareness returned to the empty classroom. Possibly the thought of real tragedy had extracted me from my self-pity. I was definitely in the throes of some midlife crisis, but whining about it was not going to do me any good. I felt utterly defeated.

My self-esteem had ebbed so low that I felt dependent on the "kindness of strangers." This phrase comes from the classic play *Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams, which is set in the New Orleans French Quarter. The words are spoken in a very dramatic scene by the pathetic and forlorn Blanche Dubois, who has been finally pushed over the edge after being raped by her beastly brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski. In the movie version, Kowalski was played brilliantly

by Marlon Brando (who can forget “Stell-ahhh!”?). When Blanche is finally being carted away to the asylum, it initially appears that she will have to be physically subdued. Then, the kindly doctor speaks reassuringly to her and offers her his arm. With his support, she makes her way out, saying, “Whoever you are, I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.”

These days, I wasn’t feeling in much better shape than poor Blanche. I felt I was drifting through life with no rudder or purpose. I would wake up thinking about things that didn’t matter, talking to people who weren’t there, and hoping that life would spare me for yet another day. I only felt good when someone said something nice, and such words of assurance were becoming increasingly harder to come by. My constant grumbling had drained my friends of any empathy, actually leaving me dependent on the kindness of strangers. Any negative comment or unkind action could send me into a tailspin. Criticism continued to pile up. I was constantly making mistakes, missing deadlines, offering excuses, and spinning myself silly in an ominous whirlpool that was sucking me under.

I had recently bumped into an old friend, who informed me that he was raising children, making money, and having fun. I responded that I was doing *none* of the above. I felt an utter lack of enthusiasm for life. I was simply going through the motions, often running from life rather than embracing it. I was scrambling to avoid failure as opposed to confidently pursuing success.

There were tears in my eyes. I placed my head down on the classroom table and hoped that nobody would walk in. How had my life turned out so badly? I had played by the rules. I studied hard and worked hard and generally did what I was supposed to do. What was the problem? How was I possibly going to get out of this? I didn’t have a clue.

Then I remembered someone I had known a long time ago.

With his shaggy hair, blue jeans, and T-shirts, he wasn’t that much to look at. He was actually a bit brash for my taste. He talked openly of his bold plans to obtain several degrees from an expensive private university when neither he nor his parents had any money. This whole idea seemed quite ludicrous under the circumstances. But the strange thing

was that he succeeded. It wasn't easy and there were many setbacks along the way. But he persisted and somehow managed to complete his education. It had taken working three jobs at a time, student loans, and today's equivalent of \$250,000 in scholarship assistance. But the truth is that he succeeded because he never once doubted that he would.

So I thought . . . if I did it then, I can do it now.

I felt a surge of positive energy and hope, deeper than I had experienced in a long time. I *had* succeeded in the past. I had beaten tremendous odds to complete my education. All of my friends in college had come from very wealthy households. My best friend's father owned one of the largest electronics manufacturers in the world. His family owned homes in New York City, Hong Kong, and Fort Lauderdale. When we would go through the school registration line together, he would pull out a blank check from his dad to pay the thousands of dollars in tuition, boarding, and fees. Most of my expenses were covered by scholarships and work study and I would fish the necessary cash out of my pocket to pay my bill of only a few hundred dollars. I was waiting tables back then and was paid in cash. Yet despite our different backgrounds and bank accounts, I was his classmate and his peer. Suddenly it became quite obvious to me what had been the key to my success in school.

## **Act As If You Cannot Fail**

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I retrieved a legal pad from my briefcase and wrote down:  
*Act as if you cannot fail.*

These days, I was acting as if failure was just around the corner. I had succeeded at Tulane because failure was simply not an option. I had never once doubted that I would succeed. My parents had struggled to send me to an expensive and elite grammar and high school. Many of my friends were going to Tulane and so was I. There was simply no way that I wasn't. I was totally confident in my quest for college and it showed.

Of course, there were many setbacks along the way. I was a Truman Scholarship finalist for the state of Louisiana but lost out on the prestigious and lucrative award. Another potential scholarship slipped through my fingers. I sometimes felt like giving up, but there was a stronger force inside me

that refused to quit. I was quite relentless in my desire to finish school. When the front doors seemed closed, I tried the side doors. When the side doors were closed, I tried the back doors. I would've broken in if I would have had to. Eventually, I caught the breaks I needed. I found the scholarships and the jobs when I was low on funds. I took out student loans to cover other expenses. I was able to complete my undergraduate and graduate work on schedule, as I had planned years earlier. But the main reason I succeeded was because I acted as if I could not fail. Had I tried to scale that daunting educational summit any less confidently, I probably would have slipped down along the way.

As I sat in the campus classroom that night, I realized the ultimate irony of my success in completing my education. The confidence and perseverance behind my diplomas should have been the launching point for my career. Instead, they had been my high point. After graduation, I seemed to never approach obstacles and adversity nearly as resourcefully as I had during my student days. It was almost as if I had left much of my self-confidence behind at Tulane. Once I entered the workforce, fear and self-defeating behaviors crept into my life. Lately, I had allowed career difficulties and the ending of a long-term relationship to shatter my self-esteem and derail my life. I felt reduced to relying on chance and even the kindness of strangers to somehow put me back on track. Perhaps the skies would part and fortune would once again smile down upon me. I was looking for answers everywhere except where they were. I needed to look within.

Maybe I had left much of my self-confidence behind at Tulane. But I was now back to reclaim it. The steps I needed to take to steady my capsizing life began taking shape and started with the statement "Act as if you cannot fail."

Other ideas popped into my head.

## **Accept Full Responsibility for Your Actions**

That's right—full responsibility. In reviewing my life, I had received some good breaks and some bad, just like everyone else. Part of my current career dilemma stemmed from having to start all over in establishing a law practice. I thought about the day I announced I was leaving my law firm

to go work for a large company. A senior partner in the law firm urged me to reconsider leaving private practice. He counseled that clients were the foundation of a lawyer's career and allowed lawyers to control their own destiny. I had already shown early promise in business development, and by accepting a corporate position with one employer, I could be placing my entire career at its whim. It was the most profound and unfortunately the most prophetic career advice that I ever received. Marketing skills and the "ownership" of clients are much more critical to success than simply performing your job. Why do you think top salesmen are paid so well? Unfortunately, I didn't heed his advice at the time and placed my career in the hands of a large company, just as corporate America began turning on its employees.

### **Forget Regret or Life Is Yours to Miss**

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I remembered this line from the award-winning Broadway musical *Rent*. I had seen the phenomenal production several times, both on and off Broadway, and had practically memorized its soundtrack.

It was simply too late to look back now. I really can't say that I regretted working for the company. My stint there provided some valuable experience that I couldn't have otherwise obtained. Things often happen for a reason. You learn your lesson and then you need to move on.

It was definitely time for *me* to move on. But I wasn't sure what to do. Did I really need to start all over again? I couldn't exactly rewind my life to the beginning, even though this enticing but impossible notion plagued my thinking. Too often I had allowed past regret to ruin the present and cloud the future. If only I had done this or if only I had done that. Why did I invest in this stock? Why didn't I take that opportunity? If only . . . No! I needed to make a stand right here and right now and do the best I could with what I had. And even as hard as I could be on myself, I needed to realize and be grateful for my blessings, which included my health, education, and experience. I could either lament lost opportunities or reenergize and refocus my life along a path of rejuvenation and renewal. What I really needed at this midpoint of my life was a tune-up.

## Midlife Tune-Up

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I liked the automobile analogy. Over the years, I had come to realize the benefits of buying quality cars and driving them for a long time. My first new car right out of law school was an upscale sports car. It was more expensive than a “practical” car and most of my friends thought that I had splurged unnecessarily. But they were surprised when I kept driving the car year after year, and it looked just as good as the day I bought it. Many of them were already on their second or third cars by this time and had ended up spending just as much money, if not more, on their transportation needs. And I really enjoyed that car.

The automobile industry has undergone profound changes since the 1980s. Cars that used to peter out after 60,000 miles now run for hundreds of thousands of miles. My next automobile ran for over 200,000 miles and most people thought it was new. The car had 45,000 miles when I considered buying it and I was concerned about the mileage. I brought it to be examined by my trusty mechanic before finalizing any purchase. He pointed at two similar models in his shop at the time and rattled off their mileage, 180,000 miles and 240,000 miles. He assured me, “This car is just getting broken in.” He was right. And the automobile looked good and drove well because I kept it tuned up and in good repair.

Like automobiles, human life spans have been extended in both the quantity of years as well as the quality of life. Many of us are just hitting our stride or getting “broken in” at midlife. Our performance potential has now been extended by decades. Like quality cars, our bodies can also look good and drive well for a long time, provided that we focus on taking care of ourselves as opposed to being preoccupied by our odometers.

## The Midlife Tune-Up Process

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Once begun, a task is easy; half the work is done.

—Horace, *Epistles*

I reflected for some time on a process to tune up my own

life. Instead of changing sparks and plugs, it involved changing attitudes, outlook, and behavior. I had immersed myself in self-help literature for over twenty years and had attended many motivational seminars and retreats. I had also observed many happy and successful people. I eventually developed the six steps of the tune-up process, which all began with the letter *P*.

*Passion.* Passion is the seed of success and has been the basis of any significant achievement in my life. I had been very passionate about completing my education. Although my school days had been extremely hectic, they had also been good. During that challenging time, I was engaged in my quest, and my entire life sparked with vitality and energy. It was only later that my passion had waned. What things in your life are you truly passionate about? What gets you up in the morning? It is much easier and more enjoyable to pursue a path of passion.

*Purpose.* While I was a student, my purpose was crystal clear: getting through school. Once this goal was obtained, I often had trouble defining my next real purpose. Your purpose is what your life is directed towards. Once you find it, your life can explode into action. There is no better feeling than knowing in your heart that you are following your purpose and living the life you are meant to.

*Power.* Empowering yourself is one of the most important ideas in self-improvement. Power involves developing the unwavering confidence in yourself that you can in fact accomplish your purpose. I felt quite empowered in my quest to finish school, and that is why I did.

*Planning.* We perform at our best with clear, defined goals. With its institutional structure of assignments and semesters, school imposes its own planning scheme to organize your time around. But life does not always provide a syllabus, as well as graded and defined measures of progress. A critical discipline is to establish your own priorities and manage your own progress, instead of having it done for you. Remember to plan your work and then work your plan.

*Perspective.* Practically every self-help book I have ever read extols the virtues of having a proper perspective or a good attitude. Their constant refrain of the virtues of a positive attitude often reminds me of the hit tune that contemporary

radio stations feel obliged to run into the ground. However, there is a good reason for emphasizing a healthy and optimistic outlook, for it does dramatically affect your quality of life and your ability to deal with the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

*Perseverance.* The final tune-up step is perseverance. Nothing great was ever accomplished without overcoming tremendous obstacles and setbacks. Tragically, many people allow themselves to be deterred by various detours and bumps in the road, often when success is just around the corner. I once tried to inspire a friend who was experiencing similar hardships in completing his education. He wondered why I hadn't given up along the way. I replied that I had actually given up quite a few times. I just didn't quit.

## Balancing the Tune-Up

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All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

—Anonymous

Balance is a necessary ingredient of any self-improvement process. As you may have gathered from my story, I had been almost obsessively focused on my career at the expense of the other important areas of my life. I had driven myself to the point of exhaustion, passed on having a wife or family, and constantly denied myself life's simple pleasures. But I had little to show for all of my frenzied activity.

As I reflected on balance, I reviewed my notes from a spiritual retreat I had attended at the Manresa House of Retreats in Convent, Louisiana. My annual retreat at Manresa has become a significant part of my spiritual grounding. The facility has a national reputation and serves as the beautiful setting for three-day silent retreats, which allow participants time for rest and reflection. My most recent retreat master had been exceptional and had lectured on the benefits of leading a balanced life. He had illustrated his point with the cross of life:

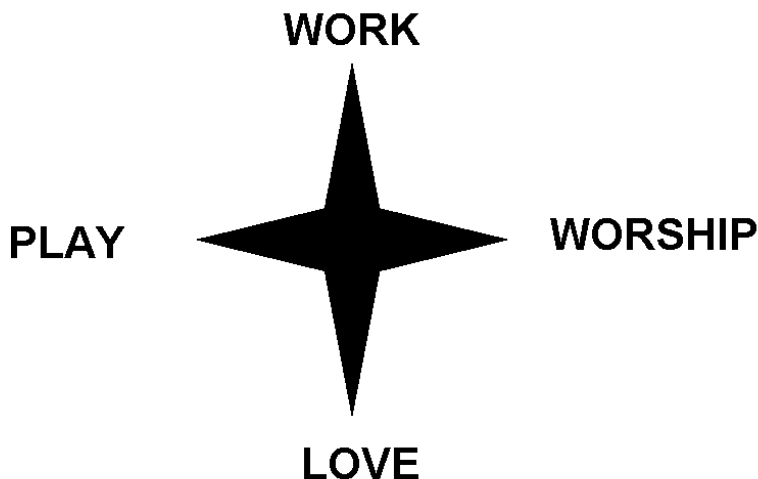
*Work:* Approach work with pride but don't be consumed by it.

*Play:* Set aside time for play, be refreshed, and enjoy why you are working.

*Worship:* Acknowledge someone greater than ourselves.

*Love:* Be willing to sacrifice to make someone else happy.





Although the reasons for keeping your life in balance are simple, the practice can be difficult. For example, if you spend all your time making money and neglect your family and the other areas of your life, you are not going to have much to live for. The flip side is that if you spend all your time with your family and don't work, you are not going to be able to provide for them. We all need to maintain balance in our lives to avoid eventually toppling over. The important areas of life include emotional, financial, career, relationships, physical, mental, and spiritual.

## **Tuning Up Your Own Life**

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Many receive advice, few profit by it.

—Publilius Syrus, *Moral Sayings*

The principles in this book worked for me and I am confident that they will work for you. I am not saying that I have all the answers to all the questions. Anyone who claims that is probably exaggerating. What I am offering you is solid advice based upon my life experience, research, and insight.

I mentioned earlier that I have been a devoted reader of self-improvement literature for over twenty years, as much out of desperation as inspiration. I have expended considerable effort to find the answers in my own life, including seminars, retreats, self-help groups, and prayers. I have spent time meditating on the beautiful red rocks of Sedona, Arizona

and even sat in a sweat box for five hours a day for two weeks trying to purify my mind and body. By the way, I enjoyed Sedona much more than the sweat box. I have sat on more than one counselor's couch and have solicited advice from many successful people.

Most of the success principles contained in this book are actually common sense. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out success. However, it does take a systematic approach to be able to convert this common sense into the insights and practices that can dramatically improve the quality of your life.

The great challenge in any self-improvement program is execution. If not implemented, such a program will fall by the wayside as easily as do many perennial New Year's resolutions. How many times have we been charged up by some motivational speaker or seminar only to quietly slip back into our own mediocre routine? Consequently, I have presented this book as a blueprint for improving your own life and organized it in a way that can be easily implemented as well as understood. I have included a Tune-Up Plan Guide in Appendix A and a suggested reading list in Appendix B to assist you with your own tune-up process.

I can honestly say that the tune-up process dramatically improved my own life. Within ninety days of applying the principles, my life started to turn around significantly. I took a chance, switched jobs, and attacked my career with a renewed focus and vigor. I started an exercise and diet program that helped me shed twenty-five pounds and feel better physically than I had in years. I began meditating each morning and felt a new calmness as I faced the day. I dusted myself off from my stock-market losses, changed financial advisers, and established my own plan for financial independence. I began addressing some emotional issues that had imprisoned me for many years. And I worked up the courage to ask someone out to whom I was really attracted. I became quickly smitten and for the first time embraced rather than ran from intimacy and began to make plans (albeit a little belatedly) to settle down and start a family. I felt happier and more alive than I'd felt in decades. I also began this book. I'd written several books, two of which had been published. But this was the first

time that I was genuinely writing from my soul, and the feeling was exhilarating.

So, happy reading, and I sincerely hope that this book helps you tune up your own life into a great one.