

Your Middle-Aged Dream May Seem Outrageous

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“The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim so high that we miss it, but in setting our aim so low that we reach it.” Michelangelo

Maybe you’ve had the dream all your life. You’ve spent your time, however, on other responsibilities. Commitments made your future potential something that you kept hidden in the back of your mind. Few people even know of your silent inspiration. Is now the time to go for it?

Or maybe you’ve been successful. You have lots of experience with pursuing dreams. All your life, you’ve met challenges and overcome them. People look up to you. Many individuals count on you for their livelihood. Ah, but the big one has become your consuming thought. Dare you pursue it now?

Perhaps you’ve faced what was demanded of you at each step of your adult life. No dream has ever consumed you. You’ve quietly admired wild adventurers. Your dream has been that someday, you’d have a tangible, specific dream of your own. You’ve even interviewed folks you’ve admired, seeking to learn how their imaginations evolved. Lately, however, a few potential initiatives have presented themselves. You wonder if you’ve been artificially holding yourself back. Are you a late-bloomer?

Many people enter their forties and fifties feeling trapped by their circumstances and past choices. Yet for the first time in history, increases in life span and the ability to make a living out of doing what you love may make it possible for you to pursue something a bit unusual. Ours is the first generation to enjoy the luxury of choosing what we do with the second half of life. Don’t ignore your inner voice.

You have more experience and perspective than when you were young. You have money. You have options. You won’t let the second half of your life be characterized by repetition, boredom, and decline.

Your maturity has provided awareness that for your life to have meaning, serving others is far more significant than gratifying your selfish desires. You learned long ago that focusing on selfish gain does not provide the lasting satisfaction the world had promised. You can only buy, sell, manage, and attain so much. You also realize that you will live only a limited number of additional years.

About twelve years ago, I had the privilege of pursuing my own creative alternative. I spent some of my time contemplating this phenomenon of mid-life dreams. Bob Buford’s book *Half Time* served as an excellent primer. Buford points out that the first half of our lives is typically focused on personal gain. Success is defined in terms of “What’s in it for me?” and “How can I make the most of this opportunity?”

Buford suggests that your second half should be about relinquishing power, inspiring and empowering others. With your experience and blessings, you have the privilege of actually creating capacity, releasing and expanding the potential of others.

What does your dream involve? Mission work? Philanthropic endeavors? Maybe you’d like to start another business. Perhaps you simply aspire to be a loving grandparent, serving as a stimulating mentor and role model to a future scientist, musician, or athlete.

Some may say that your dream is unrealistic, not worth the effort, or inappropriate for someone like you. You may hear, “Nobody’s ever done anything like that before!” You’ll find more naysayers than advocates offering their opinions, so prepare yourself to merely nod and smile.

Most of us don’t have a clue as to what our limits really are! For most of human history, “experts” have defined limits that have been unexpectedly broken by enterprising dreamers.

“What are you doing, Orville and Wilbur? You guys are just a couple of bicycle mechanics!”

“You’re a retired farmer’s wife, Grandma Moses. No one is interested in purchasing your paintings!”

“Mr. Gandhi, the British won’t tolerate that. They’ll institute martial law.”

It’s appropriate that you start the second half dream before your first half starts winding down. To free yourself, you may need to transition some responsibilities. Start now. Make lists. Determine who needs your preparatory guidance. Generate a transition plan, moving in the direction of your dreams.

Let folks call your dreams “outrageous!” Just nod, smile, and pursue your second half vision with vigor!