

# Long Before ‘Retirement,’ Plan The Next Chapter Of Your Life

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As Hollywood icon Bette Davis famously said, “Growing old ain’t for sissies!”

Sure, the more birthdays we have the more aches and pains we may experience. Our physical stamina may decrease.

But here’s the good news: the autumn of our lives can also bring new adventure, fresh opportunities, and the chance to do things we only dreamed about in earlier years.

Fred Rogers of Mr. Rogers fame said it well: “Often when you think you’re at the end of

something, you’re at the beginning of something else.”

That’s certainly the view of Leslie Braksick and Mark Linsz. They’re co-founders of [My Next Season](#), an organization that helps companies and individuals succeed with important career transitions. They provide insights and interesting case studies in their book [Revealing Your Next Season](#).

What seems to be the two or three most difficult challenges facing people as they retire from careers that consumed many years of their lives?

Braksick says the top three are loss of identity, loss of community, and loss of structure, purpose, and focus regarding how they spend their time.

“With all-consuming careers, our person and work identities often merge,” she says. “We become known by our job title or profession, affiliated with the company or organization we work for. When separation from that occurs, there’s an immediate void: *who am I now?*”

Of course, most people spend more time at work than they do at home, so the people they process life events with on a daily basis are at work. “They weather ups and downs together; share stories and debrief political, sports, other events, every single day,” Braksick says. “When that community goes

away, it's a jolt. *Will I remain friends with these people? How will I make new relationships? With whom will I share so much in common outside of the workplace?"*



Leslie Braksick

Braksick, who was for decades a business consultant, says that “even though the pace, intensity, and travel are things we are often excited to leave behind when we retire from our main careers, it requires effort to put structure to your day and decide where your sense of purpose comes from. *How will I spend my time? What do I care enough about to invest time/energy in? What are things I am excited to leave behind/not do in my next season?"*

How does retirement from a busy work life affect people's sense of personal identity?

“The loss of personal identity with retirement from a main career is very real,” says Linsz, who spent much of his business career in the banking industry. “We give up so much of ourselves in service to our role/employer when we are heads-down doing our jobs. The more senior the role, the more sacrifices are required to fulfill the expectations of the job. We give up hobbies and non-profit-organizational interests; we stress our family relationships by missing events and work performed in evenings, weekends, and vacations. The beast we feed is our work/job—and that job title becomes our identity. When that goes away without something to replace it, the void is significant and hard.”

At what point in their careers should people begin to strategize and plan for their post-career lives?

You almost can't start early enough, Braksick says. “We would do well to think about our plans for post-career the way we do our financial planning for that same period of life. *Start early.* Why? We make different decisions in our final decade when we are laying track for what's next. When you're in the heat of the battle with your current work and not thinking about your next season, you're likely to decline anything extra: a guest talk at your alma mater, attending an industry conference, presenting at a meeting, taking a customer to dinner. You're legitimately busy (and tired!), so it's easy to justify saying no to all these 'extras.' But these opportunities are often huge networking opportunities may materially help you secure your 'what's next.'”

With that said, she points out, it's never too late. “You may have missed the window to 'start early,' but to quote George Eliot: ‘It is never too late to be what you might have been.’”

How can a person's desire to “leave a legacy” bring focus to planning for post-career life?



Mark Linsz

“It’s humbling to realize we are each leaving a legacy based on our actions: our words, our behaviors, and our treatment of others,” Linsz says. “We all leave a legacy of who we are/were to people, whether we are proud of it or not. When people are intentional about the legacy they want to leave and the impact they want to make in their lifetimes, it often creates a focal point for their next season that channels energy and anchors what they decide to do, how they spend their time, and dollars, and the people with whom they interact most often.”

What do leaders miss most when they transition from the workplace? How can they best deal with that?

“There are many elements that leaders miss when they transition from their primary role/careers,” Braksick says. “But what tops the list is being impactful, relevant, and influential—as important decisions are made and actions of consequence are taken. Their wisdom is sought and heeded at work, and there’s an incredible affirmation that comes with that. I once had a CEO client who shared that his wife told him to leave his crown at the door when he walked into their home. The loss of being the magnet when everything around you is a nail—can be very real and difficult for executives, especially in the early days following the transition.

What role do personal friendships and social life play in a person’s successful transition to post-career life?

“I cannot stress enough how important friendships are to the transition into retirement.,” Linsz says. “And yet, the more demanding the job, the harder it is to cultivate and maintain friendships outside of work. When they exist, friendship and social networks make transitions much easier. It’s so helpful to have someone to go through it with, to speak honestly and vulnerably with, who cares and is present for you during what is often a fragile period.”

Linsz says one advantage of “starting early” with transition planning is the opportunity to be more intentional in cultivating and maintaining friendships and connections with groups of people with whom you share common interests.

What about people who may not have managed their physical health particularly well during their career years but want to do better in retirement?

“Health is the rate limiter to all the things we want to do and be in life,” Braksick says. “It’s the one thing we can’t delegate to someone else. There’s no better time than retirement to take (better) care of yourself. Start with ensuring you have a primary care physician you trust who will share accountability, ensuring you have your screenings, evaluations of any concerns you have, and a plan for your wellness and movement.”



How can marriage relationships be enhanced by people as they transform to their post-workplace lives?

“Career transitions are greatly helped by open, honest communications between couples—and present a wonderful occasion to discover where there are overlaps and where healthy independence will best serve the marriage,” Linsz says. “Know the things that you want to do together—and the things you are excited to do separately. Ask each other: what are your goals for your next season? Then consider how each of you can support the other in the achievement of those goals.”

Linsz tells about how one couple developed a system where they created a board using Post-it notes, organized by a timeline and different colors to reflect different types of activities. They reviewed the board once a month over glasses of wine. “They wanted to ensure they focused on things that were important to them as a couple and individually and supported each other in the achievement of those goals,” he says.

Braksick and Linsz list the top lessons they’ve observed in people who successfully transition from the workplace to their “next season.”

- They have a plan for their next season.
- Prioritize people/situations/organizations they wish to honor in their next season.
- Are self-aware/honest about what brings them joy, purpose, and pride—and don’t jump too quickly out of concerns of being relevant, etc.
- Widen their aperture of what is possible.
- Rebrand themselves with a résumé, bio, and LinkedIn to (better) tell their (new) story and showcase their new focus.
- They have a plan and are willing to modify it as they experience or learn more.
- Focus on their health, recognizing it’s the rate limiter for all they want to do.
- Spend time deepening friendships and growing their community.
- Honor and prioritize family, presence, and engagement with others they care about.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/rodgerdeanduncan/2025/04/03/long-before-retirement-plan-the-next-chapter-of-your-life/>