

SAMPLE

LIVING CONSCIOUSLY *in*  
MIDLIFE *and* BEYOND

MIDLIFE



NEW LIFE

EILEEN CAROSCIO

SANDY DEMAREST

PAUL WARD

FOREWORD BY CHIP CONLEY

# PRAISE FOR *MIDLIFE, NEW LIFE*

“*Midlife, New Life* is a wise and inspiring guide to living consciously for the rest of your life. It shows you it’s possible to build a life that really does get better with age.”

—**Richard Leider**, international best-selling author of  
*The Power of Purpose*, *Repacking Your Bags*, and  
*Who Do You Want to Be When You Grow Old?*

“Forget ageist stereotypes about retirement. *Midlife, New Life* will help retirees find what they’re really looking for: purpose-driven lives full of health, vitality, supportive relationships and financial freedom.”

—**Ken Dychtwald**, PhD, author of *What Retirees Want:*  
*A Holistic View of Life’s Third Age* and  
*Radical Curiosity: My Life on the Age Wave*

“If you’re eager to embrace the change, challenges and glee of your next chapter, *Midlife, New Life* is a must-read. This guide smoothly glides you through the prosaic and practical and from money matters to mindful meditation to help you discover ways to reach for the stars and find dreams that will help you get there. You will be inspired to intentionally steer your path and find meaning in who you are, what you do, and in those whose lives you touch.”

—**Kerry Hannon**, workplace futurist, best-selling author of  
*In Control at 50+: How to Succeed in the New World of Work*,  
and senior columnist at *Yahoo Finance*

“The authors of *Midlife, New Life* are three remarkable life planning experts who, together, have brilliantly captured the essence of what it takes to live intentionally and consciously in the second half of life. The book not only prompts us to reflect on and reconsider our major life choices, which were often made decades earlier, it also provides a practical roadmap to help shape our futures using the comprehensive Conscious Living Wheel framework. *Midlife, New Life*, combined with the wisdom gleaned from an individual’s life experience, creates a powerful resource for those entering mid-life who wish to design a generative, resilient and purposeful future.”

—**Elizabeth Bussman Mahler**, EdD,  
teaching professor, Northeastern University

“This instructive, inspiring, and concisely comprehensive book offers the most salient advice on aging, drawn from the field’s wisest thought leaders, and a message: There are plenty of resources and paths for each of us who summon conscious and true self-regard to transform the diverse challenges of aging into fulfilling and wondrous possibilities.”

—**Bruce Frankel**, author of *What Should I Do With The Rest of My Life? True Stories of Finding Success, Passion and Meaning in the Second Half of Life*, and president of the Life Planning Network

“*Midlife, New Life* will help awaken your power of attention, so you can clarify purposeful intentions that you can then translate into intelligent actions. This is a practical playbook for living a more meaningful, happy, and fulfilling life.”

—**Michael J. Gelb**, author of *How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: 7 Steps to Genius Every Day* and *Brain Power: Improve Your Mind as You Age*

“A practical and valuable guide for everyone approaching midlife and beyond to navigate the challenges and opportunities that await us. Well researched and easy to read, this book belongs on everyone’s reading list. You’ll be in the know and well prepared for the road ahead. Highly recommended.”

—**Joyce Cohen**, career development/mid-life transition specialist,  
co-founder of My Future Purpose

“If you are looking for a resource that can help you envision, anticipate, and prepare for finding fulfillment in all the dimensions of your multifaceted life on your journey from midlife to elderhood, *Midlife, New Life* is such a book. It is filled with information and inspiration to guide you in making the choices to consciously and intentionally live in balance and wholeness as you navigate the challenging yet deeply fulfilling transitions of life’s second half.”

—**Ron Pevny**, director, Center for Conscious Eldering and author of  
*Conscious Living, Conscious Aging: Claiming the Gifts of Elderhood*

“The authors of *Midlife, New Life: Living Consciously in Midlife and Beyond* combine years of experience as researchers, coaches, mentors and advisors. In their book they creatively weave together their own experiences with stories from others, help us understand and use their Conscious Living Wheel, and challenge us to explore and create our own journey. Recognizing the uncertainties of life, they offer wise and practical guidance to help us recognize the potential in the years ahead. They encourage us to develop awareness and resilience as we create a conscious, intentional and fulfilling second half of life. This book will help you look forward to this next stage of life! I highly recommend you read it!”

—**Dorian Mintzer**, PhD, co-author of *The Couple’s Retirement Puzzle: 10 Must-Have Conversations for Creating an Amazing New Life Together*; and host of the monthly 4th Tuesday *Revolutionize your Retirement Interview with Expert’s Series to Help You Create a Fulfilling Second Half of Life*

*“Midlife, New Life* is one of the simplest and most profound statements to describe a stage of human growth and development that is no longer for a lucky few. Instead of midlife being a crisis, what if it were instead a “chrysalis” period of profound transformation. With our average lifespan expanding an extra 30 years in the past 100, the stage we identify as “midlife” has now been extended into decades of opportunity for conscious growth. I am delighted to recommend *Midlife, New Life: Living Consciously in Midlife and Beyond* as a resource for anyone from their 30s to their 80s to explore. Using the Conscious Living Wheel as a wider framework to examine our lives, this book will serve as both validation, consolation, and inspiration to deeply reinforce that the best years are yet to come.”

—**Kari Cardinale**, Senior Vice President,  
Modern Elder Academy (MEA)

“We all have hopes and dreams, but I remember a preacher saying: “One is either about to enter a storm, one is in the midst of a storm, or one has made it through the storm.” Preparation becomes essential to fulfill the journey because what lies ahead is pretty much uncharted waters. *Midlife, New Life* gathers the wisdom of experienced sailors to help prepare you to use the multidimensional pieces of the Conscious Living Wheel in order to successfully navigate the unique course into the second half of your New Life.”

—**Rev. Brian McCaffrey**, chair, Northeast Forum on Spirituality and Aging (NEFOSA) (retired); board member, Adult Lutherans Organized for Action (ALOA) (retired); board member, Sage-ing International (retired)

*“Midlife, New Life* emerges as a guiding light—a beacon of wisdom and inspiration for those standing at the crossroads of their journey through life. The authors have provided a user-friendly framework for navigating a challenging transition, resulting in a rewarding and fulfilling life.”

—**David Shriner-Cahn**, founder, Smashing the Plateau

“This is a terrific book. The clue comes early in the table of contents, from the chapter headings, all expressed as active verbs such as ‘Exploring Purposefully,’ ‘Savoring the World,’ and, my favorite, ‘Bouncing Forward.’ The book has such a spring in its step. And it’s practical both from the insights of those who are living midlife consciously and from many, many consciousness-raising exercises and questions offered by the authors. This book doesn’t simply add meaningfully to the growing literature on aging well; it infuses it with great energy.”

—**Fred Mandell PhD**, founder of *Creating Futures That Work* and author with Kathleen Jordan of *Becoming a Life Change Artist*

“A deep dive into the ‘sprouts’ of conscious living! Regardless of where you might be, this book will guide you and reveal the potential for a fulfilling second half of your life. Its embrace of the full spectrum of your lived experiences and the revelation of the ‘soil, seeds and sunlight’ for your Part 2 potential is stunning and something for all of us to read and absorb.”

—**Mary Ann Esfandiari**, retired NASA senior executive and US Navy Commander and current researcher for Cornell Technical Services

“The authors have masterfully crafted the art of aging gracefully and well in their new book, *Midlife, New Life: Living Consciously in Midlife and Beyond*. Brilliantly conceived and crafted around the framework of the Conscious Living Wheel, this book offers wise and practical guidance for creating an abundant and fulfilling life for those in or beyond midlife or those embarking on their next life journey.”

—**Craig and Patricia Neal**, co-founders, Center for Purposeful Leadership

*“Midlife, New Life* is a comprehensive companion for creating your authentic life plan in midlife and beyond. It asks profound questions that elicit mindful responses toward new directions.”

—**Candy Spitz**, transition coach and founder of the  
Life Planning Network Chesapeake Chapter

“Fresh, creative, well-researched, and thought-provoking are all descriptions that hit me reading this book. The authors have been studiously thorough in the way the topics are covered to stimulate one’s imagination and engagement. The quality of thought and research that’s gone into this work has armed us all with the information and tools to enhance the quality of our later lives. I loved the questions and “Try this . . .” suggestions at the end of each chapter.”

—**Jim Currie**, reinventing retirement entrepreneur

*“Midlife, New Life* addresses transitions to what is next in life with clarity, consciousness, warmth, and well-expressed advice. Transitioning into your encore life is not as easy as it sounds, and there are particular challenges for specific demographics. Kudos to the authors for pointing out the challenges the LGBT community faces with housing, medical, and job discrimination. *Midlife, New Life* is an excellent resource for those even thinking about what is next in your life. Highly recommended.”

—**Larry Jacobson**, award-winning author, circumnavigator,  
motivational speaker, and thought leader in the field of retirement

“These three accomplished authors have written an excellent treatise on the delights and challenges of midlife and beyond. It is a heartfelt exploration into issues as diverse as finding your purpose and understanding your relationship to money. Among the three of them, they cover all the important angles.”

—**Sara Zeff Geber, PhD**, author,  
*Essential Retirement Planning for Solo Agers*

*“Midlife, New Life* is a comprehensive guide to optimize your next life chapter, suggesting a positive path for the journey through midlife and beyond. I resonate with key ideas of sharing your talents in making a difference in the world, and I especially enjoyed the personal touches, encouraging people who read it to make decisions by thinking purposefully. The reader has the opportunity to benefit from years of research and experience as Eileen, Sandy, and Paul use their own life knowledge plus stories from many interesting people to give the reader an experience similar to working with a life coach.”

—**Dorothy Keenan**, founder of *GrandInvolve*

“If you’re eager to build more purpose and meaning into your life, *Midlife, New Life* is an invaluable resource. An engaging read that is filled with insightful questions, tested advice, and inspirational stories, it will help guide you towards new possibilities for your next chapter.”

—**Nancy Collamer**, author of *Second Act Careers: 50+ Ways to Profit from Your Passions During Semi-Retirement*

*“Midlife, New Life* is an engaging, comprehensive and resource rich guide that invites the reader toward deep reflection and practical action planning for living a purposeful life. This will be my go-to recommended book for every client considering what’s next in midlife and beyond.”

—**Barbara Abramowitz**, psychotherapist and life coach

*“Midlife, New Life* is an inspirational book that we all need as we navigate the second half of life. The authors have taken careful thought, expertise, and stories to help us intentionally evaluate and discover what’s next with key areas in purpose, living well, working for fulfillment, and relationships. Happy to see a chapter dedicated to technology because of its ever-evolving significance and relevance to living, working, and aging well.”

—**Dawn Pratt**, founder of Techup for Women, managing partner at Global Training and Events Group, LLC



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# FOREWORD

I was delighted to hear from two of our alums (Eileen and Sandy) from the Modern Elder Academy (MEA), the world's first wisdom school for those in midlife and beyond. They have been on an exciting writing journey with their dear colleague Paul Ward, who inspired the idea of collaborating on a book to share their knowledge, experience, and wisdom on the challenges of navigating the midlife landscape.

Living consciously in midlife and beyond requires deep exploration of our inner thoughts and beliefs and our outer behaviors and practices. *Midlife, New Life* guides the reader with insights and inspiration for exploration and practical advice for taking action. The book is full of new concepts and ideas, insights from thought leaders and expert practitioners in the field, and thought-provoking questions and practical activities.

The authors are experts in the field of living consciously in the second half of life. Midlife and beyond represents a truly phenomenal opportunity and time of possibility for new growth and new life as their book title and cover image illustrate. *Midlife, New Life* aligns well with the MEA mantra to discover and grow whole.

Eileen Caroscio, Sandy Demarest, and Paul Ward provide a valuable approach to help you create a new vision for this new life chapter.

Their Conscious Living Wheel provides an excellent framework for consciously exploring the challenges we face in the second half of life. With purpose at the center, you can explore each of the ten outer elements of the wheel in sequence or in any order you choose. Whether your biggest challenges relate to health, money, or relationships, or you are seeking new ways to make a contribution, planning a new career, or wanting to develop your creativity or resilience, you'll find answers here. If you are looking for inspiration and a practical guide to embark on the second half of life, *Midlife, New Life* is the book for you.

The authors interviewed more than 50 people, who shared their experience and wisdom. They also include their own ideas as thought leaders in the field and supportive research findings to add to the depth of the book. Eileen, Sandy, and Paul are expert guides in the field of life transitions, offering coaching, facilitation, and training to a broad spectrum of clients.

It is with fondness for this exciting time in life—and for the writers—that I recommend reading *Midlife, New Life*. It will help you turn over some new leaves in your life—just like the book cover's image—and vibrantly grow and glow into this exciting new stage of life.

Chip Conley

Founder of the Modern Elder Academy

Author of seven books, including his most recent:

*Learning to Love Midlife:*

*12 Reasons Why Life Gets Better with Age* (2024)

# INTRODUCTION

A ship in port is safe, but that is not what ships are built for. Sail out to sea and do new things.

—GRACE MURRAY HOPPER

Journeying through the second half of our lives, we may find that uncertainty about the future keeps us from sailing toward new horizons or living the good life we imagined. Advancements in medicine, nutrition, and technology all mean we may live into our eighties or nineties or even beyond, and the question of *how to live well* seems more important than ever. What would it be like to keep reaching for those new horizons, confident you have made the best, most conscious choices possible, and to do things not because we have to, but because we *want* to?

Where do you find yourself on your journey through the second half of life? Are you living consciously? Are you safe in port or sailing out to sea? Are you riding out a storm and looking for calmer waters? More specifically, are you:

- Feeling unfulfilled and uncertain about the life ahead?
- Worrying about having enough money to live on?
- Disappointed you are not living the good life?
- Concerned about working after your full-time career comes to an end?
- Excited about opportunities to help others?
- Thinking about where in the world to live?
- Wanting to live a more creative life?
- Frightened about how your relationships might change?
- Scared about the future of technology?
- Anxious about the likely challenges ahead?

If you answered yes to some of these questions, read on.

We think of consciousness as moment-to-moment awareness. When we refer to *living consciously*—as we will throughout this book—we are referring to being awake and aware of what is going on in all aspects of our lives. Greater awareness of our own inner and outer worlds, the lives of others, and the world around us allows us to be more intentional about how we show up in the world, the decisions and the actions we take to realize our vision of the future, and the way we achieve our goals.

Wherever you are on your journey through life, we hope that this book will provide ideas, strategies, and examples of real-life experiences to reflect on so that you can consciously decide what resonates with you. Think of yourself as an artist or alchemist selecting the colors, the experiences, and the vision that will become your own customized version of your next life chapter.

This book is for you if you are considering a transition from a full-time career to whatever comes next, or if you are facing other choices or decisions that are causing you to reflect on the second half of life; or perhaps you have a colleague, friend, family member, or parent at

that point, and you're reading this book so you can advise and help that person; or maybe you are a life transitions coach, a career coach, or a retirement coach looking for additional inspiration or information.

What can you expect? Our hope is that by reading this book:

- You will discover new ways of living consciously, creatively, and resiliently.
- You will find new and refreshing ideas that will serve as a guide for planning activities you consider essential, helping you explore, plan, and act in alignment with your own purpose, values, strengths, and resources.
- You will learn wisdom from thought leaders in the field and those who have real-life experience of navigating through midlife and beyond.
- You will be inspired by the real-life stories and begin to shape your future with mindful awareness, purposeful intentions, and responsible actions.
- You will be inspired to lead and participate in conversations that matter, making a positive difference in your own life and in the lives of others.

## OUR OWN JOURNEYS TO LIVING CONSCIOUSLY

We, the authors of this book, each bring many years of experience as researchers, coaches, mentors, and advisors helping clients navigate career and lifestyle transitions. We have written this book to share insights and inspirations from our own knowledge and experience—along with stories from others navigating this terrain. In these pages you'll find a wealth of information from interviews conducted with prominent thought leaders such as Richard Leider, Dorian Mintzer,



Marc Miller, Fred Mandell, Bruce Frankel, Nancy Collamer, and Ron Pevny. Overall, we interviewed more than 50 people with expertise and experience with some of the challenges faced in the second half of life. We have included the names of our sources where permission was granted and have used pseudonyms where our sources requested anonymity. Together, we hope to provide new perspectives on how to live more consciously in midlife and beyond.

But first, a few words on our own journeys to living consciously.

### **EILEEN CAROSCIO**

When Eileen's father died suddenly when she was a teenager, she realized that life could change unexpectedly. This steered her into a fulfilling career as a registered nurse, helping people adjust to health-status changes and achieving next-level health goals. Her deep interest in supporting people's total well-being and their potential for moving forward beyond change and uncertainty expanded into helping individuals navigate the challenges and opportunities of the second half of life. As a leader in the midlife-and-beyond coaching field, she stresses the importance of putting a life vision and plan in place along with growing one's resiliency.

### **SANDY DEMAREST**

Sandy has spent her career helping people at all ages and stages move to new work roles, jobs, and careers. As her daughters left the nest, she went through her own midlife transition. She discovered her purpose of coaching those in midlife and beyond to reimagine what's next. She truly believes in living with intention and helping her clients discover their purpose, connect with values, and bring their dreams to center stage.

**PAUL WARD**

Paul's passion is around making the world a better place to live and work, helping people reach higher levels of consciousness, championing living and leading consciously, and enabling conversations that matter. Born in England, Paul's spirit of adventure has taken him around Europe and the Americas practicing his craft as designer, engineer, marketer, business leader, visioneer, facilitator, and coach. Farther afield, walking among the indigenous tribes and the animals of the Serengeti has provided deep appreciation of the need to find guides for adventures and spiritual journeys, and for personal and organizational transformations. Having gone through his own midlife transition, as a coach he helps people in the second half of life to manifest their dreams.

**HOW TO READ THIS BOOK:  
THE CONSCIOUS LIVING WHEEL**

Our Conscious Living Wheel provides a visual framework for the book and is our way of structuring the essential aspects of living consciously. Our life purpose is at the core, the heart center, from which all other aspects of the wheel radiate. In the first chapter, "Exploring Purposefully," we explain how you might discover your life purpose or calling and become aware of your core values, your identity, and the possible transitions and identity shifts you may experience in the second half of life. Our life purpose has a significant influence on all of the other aspects of the wheel. We have included a wealth of information about living consciously for each of these outer elements of the wheel.



In “Living Well” (chapter 2), we explore how to nurture our mind and body, enhance our mental and physical health, and create a personal health resource plan for living well in the second half of life.

“Appreciating Money” (chapter 3) includes ideas about how to be more conscious about our money: making it, saving it, managing it, spending it, and leaving it behind.

Insights in “Working for a Living” (chapter 4) and “Working for Fulfillment” (chapter 5) reflect how we are living and working longer and need to reimagine our working lives and the possibility of encore careers, entrepreneurial ventures, and volunteer activities.

In “Savoring the World” (chapter 6), we look at pausing to savor and appreciate the different elements of our beautiful world and making

conscious choices about where to live and where to visit in the second half of life.

In “Living Life Creatively” (chapter 7), we explore the value of consciously living life with imagination, curiosity, courage, and cheer as an attitude and a way of life, and how to develop our creative potential with mindsets and practices, processes and skills, and pathways and plans.

“Minding Relationships” (chapter 8) provides insights into some of the changing relationships in the second half of life, including our relationships with a spouse or life partner and with close and extended families, the loss of a close relationship, embracing new relationships, and the challenges of going solo in midlife and beyond.

In “Helping Humanity” (chapter 9), we look at environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and leadership in governments and business, and how we can each make a contribution to making the world a better place to live and work.

“Living with Technology” (chapter 10) represents major challenges as we age, and we explore how technology impacts how we live more consciously in each of the elements of the Conscious Living Wheel.

Resilience is needed to adapt and thrive when responding to challenges in the second half of life, and in “Bouncing Forward” (chapter 11), we suggest mindsets and practices to help build your resilience muscle to help you prepare for the path ahead and bounce forward into a more positive future.

As you read, always think about how the ideas expressed in this book apply to you as you journey toward living more consciously in midlife and beyond. You’ll find references and quotes from thought leaders and others we interviewed in preparation for writing this book, and questions to help you plan your own journey. Review the Conscious Living Practices at the end of each chapter, reflect on the questions, and try the activities that resonate with you.

Our Conscious Living approach embraces the three themes of noticing what is going on, setting intention, and acting responsibly, or more simply Attention, Intention, and Action (A-I-A).<sup>1</sup> *Attention* comes from awareness of ourselves, others, and the world around us and includes listening and learning with an open mind. *Intention* involves thinking about purpose, possibility, and priorities, leading to thoughtful choices and decisions. *Actions* are our behaviors reflecting our intention to act responsibly. We can all aspire to live more consciously and encourage others to live more consciously as well.

We have used the word “retirement” sparingly in this book. Although retirement has been traditionally a stage at the end of our working lives, people are increasingly reinventing themselves rather than retiring in any traditional sense of the term. Maintaining the philosophy of nonretirement pioneers such as Marika Stone and Howard Stone, we believe we are all “too young to retire,” at least from making valuable contributions to the world around us.<sup>2</sup> Our hope is that by reading this book you will be inspired to dream big, plan well, and take positive steps on your evolving journey in midlife and beyond.

## MIDLIFE, NEW LIFE

If you are in midlife and beyond, now may be the time for a new life. Living consciously in the second half of life enables us all to feel more vibrant and fulfilled—and doing so will change your life, if you let it. So let’s focus not only on dreaming about the future—let’s begin shaping that future. Remember, a vision without a plan will remain a dream, so it’s time for a new journey of discovery. Now is the time to determine your emerging identity, discover your life’s purpose, and to plan to live the rest of your life consciously and intentionally, making a difference for yourself and in the lives of those you care about.

Some of the transformations we have described can be challenging, and you may be reluctant to embark on some of the deep reflections needed to move forward. We invite you to read the book with an open mind and an open heart, fully prepared for these challenges. With the education, insights, and Conscious Living Practices we have provided, we hope you will be inspired to imagine a better life and go forward to live the life you imagined.





## CHAPTER 1

# EXPLORING PURPOSEFULLY

It doesn't matter what you do, what matters is why you do it.

—SIMON SINEK

**W**hen the caterpillar in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* asks Alice, “Who are you?” she replies, “I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least, I know who I was this morning, but I think I must have changed a few times since then.”<sup>1</sup> We live in a time of identity shifts, continually experiencing life transitions: from parent to friend, from business leader to community volunteer, from employee to entrepreneur, from caring for children to caring for parents. Knowing our core purpose during these identity shifts can help ground us during these transformative times—which is what we need for *exploring purposefully*. Exploring purposefully is the core, the heart center from which the other aspects of the Conscious Living Wheel radiate. We begin our Conscious Living journey by asking why: Why are we here?<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter we explore identity and purpose, thinking about



who we are, why we are here, and who we are becoming. We also look at our core values, identity shifts, and possible reinventions.

## MEANING, PURPOSE, AND CALLING

Consciously living life on purpose requires clarity around our purpose or calling, and what brings meaning to our lives. Although the words *meaning*, *purpose*, and *calling* are often used interchangeably, they are distinct. *Meaning* refers to a subjective feeling that our lives fit into a larger context and connotes personal significance about what is felt to be important and the experiencing of life as making sense. The words *purpose* and *calling* refer to a sense of direction in life, and enthusiasm regarding the future, addressing the question, “Why am I here?”

The meaning of our existence is not invented but rather detected. So says Viktor Frankl in his classic work *Man’s Search for Meaning*. He suggests three main avenues we can travel to arrive at a meaningful life: “The first is by creating a work or by doing a deed. The second is by experiencing something or encountering someone. In other words, meaning can be found not only in work but also in love. Most important, however, is the third avenue to meaning in life: even the helpless victim of a hopeless situation facing a fate he cannot change, may rise above himself, may grow beyond himself and by so doing, change himself. He may turn a personal tragedy into a triumph.”<sup>3</sup>

In his book *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life*, James Hollis describes our “profound, irresistible urge towards meaning, and our anguish at the loss of meaning.”<sup>4</sup> We may experience a feeling that has real significance, real meaning, both in the immediate situation and in the larger context of life in general. We can find meaning in our work, our writing, in our communities, and in our relationships.

Let’s take a moment of reflection.

Think back to a crisis moment in your life: maybe a diagnosis of a

life-threatening illness, or the loss of someone or something you cared deeply about. What was the first thing that came into your mind in that moment of crisis? You may well have asked yourself, *Why me? Why is this happening to me now?* And then you might have wondered, *What next? What am I going to do about this crisis?* We want to understand the meaning of the situation before we decide how to handle it. Now think of a moment of joy in your life: the birth of a child, a graduation, a promotion, or any feeling of accomplishment that comes to mind. What did you feel then? What was it that gave life meaning in that moment? Make a few notes about what comes into your mind as you consider these questions about moments of crisis and joy.

What does it mean to live a meaningful life? Some of the people we interviewed for this book talked about having a life of meaning and purpose. Here is what they said:

### What Feels Meaningful?

**Coming alive:** “I come so alive when I am writing something that’s meaningful to me, and making it really as good as it can possibly be. That’s what I call a signature gift. Something that really helps to define who I am.”

—Ron Pevny, founder of the Center for Conscious Eldering

**A life of service:** “All my life I’ve been living a meaningful life in service to others and I’ve been really lucky throughout my career in ministry and at the university to be well-loved by the people I served.”

—Steve Jacobs, university administrator

**Higher purpose:** “To be myself, to be kind and encouraging, and to learn from others; my higher purpose: to love, honor, and serve God in this world and the next.”

—Ann McKerrow, writer

**Making a difference:** “Being an active advocate for Alzheimer’s research and development” was a life purpose chosen after watching her mother’s slow decline and eventual death from Alzheimer’s disease.

—MaryAnn Esfandiari, retired NASA senior executive and Navy Commander

Ask yourself the question: What is meaningful in my life right now? Maybe it's the work you do as a teacher, for example, when you see students learning. Or maybe you volunteer in a local community group where you can see firsthand how the organization helps people in need. You might have a passion for helping younger people or supporting older people, assisting victims of domestic violence, or helping people through career or life transitions. These examples relate to some of the topics in this book. Having a life of meaning is about awareness and understanding of the past and the present, allowing us to grow and flourish in alignment with our values and guiding principles.

If the word *calling* resonates with you, we invite you to consider your life as a process of calls and responses. What has called you in the past, and what was your response to those calls? What is calling you forth now? In discerning whether these calls are true or not, Gregg Levoy offers a path between two essential questions: "What is right for me?" and "Where am I willing to be led?"<sup>5</sup> Ask yourself, what is calling me forth today?

Purpose and calling guide our future direction and where we are headed. Some believe we are born with a calling. Whether we believe we are born with a calling or more consciously discover or choose our purpose in life, our purpose is what we say it is. Our purpose—our *why*—can be our conscious guide for who we choose to be and how we choose to live our lives. Knowing why we are here, our purpose in life provides the foundation for all other elements of living consciously in midlife and beyond.

The words *mission* and *vision* are also often used interchangeably, but it is useful to maintain a distinction between these terms. If purpose refers to the difference one wants to make in the world, *mission* is the core strategy that must be undertaken to fulfill that purpose, and *vision* is a vivid, imaginative description of how the world will look once that purpose has been realized.

A major milestone in Paul's journey through life was an inventure in East Africa led by Richard Leider, where the adventure of a walking safari across the Serengeti was combined with an inner journey of discovery. Leider, a pioneer in the world of purpose, describes purpose as an expression of the deepest dimension within us—of our central core or essence, where we have a profound sense of who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. Purpose is what gives life meaning, our reason for being, our reason for getting up in the morning.<sup>6</sup>

Leider talks about Purpose with a big P and purpose with a little p: Purpose with a big P is about having a big cause or a calling, while purpose with a little p refers to the everyday, asking why you are here and how you can make a difference in somebody's life today. Purpose with a big P may be more aligned to "soul purpose," sometimes considered a deeper or more spiritual purpose connected to a cause where we can have a significant impact in the world, and purpose with a little p is more aligned to purpose we define. In other words, we have an opportunity to not only *have a purpose*, but also to *live purposefully*.

Larry Ackerman, a fellow traveler on Paul's inventure in Africa, offered eight essential questions for finding your purpose and place in the world. He believes that our identity is at the root of who we actually are. Although the way we express ourselves may change any number of times throughout our lives, who we are at our core does not change. Larry sees identity and purpose as one and the same but suggests a distinction: you cannot necessarily get to identity through purpose, but you can always get to purpose through identity. He offers eight identity mapping questions for finding our purpose and place in the world:<sup>7</sup>

1. Who am I?
2. What makes me special?
3. Is there a pattern in my life?
4. Where am I going?

5. What is my gift?
6. Who can I trust?
7. What is my message?
8. Will my life be rich?

We asked other people how they defined their purpose. Here are examples from the interviews:

### What Is My Life Purpose?

- “To unlock the power of purpose (big P purpose) and to make a positive difference in one person’s life every single day (little p purpose).” —**Richard Leider**, author of *The Power of Purpose*
- “To create, integrate, and make a difference.” —**Fred Mandell**, author, life transition expert
- “To advance and build up women in technology and to be a resource advocate for professional women.” —**Dawn Pratt**, founder of Tech Up for Women
- “To reach as many people in as many different cultures as possible through music.” —**Kathy Holly**, TV producer, vocalist/actress/musician
- “To make a practical difference to the lives of others.” —**Jim Currie**, reinventing retirement entrepreneur
- “To be the joyous midwife of peace, harmony, and unity.” —**Alain Gauthier**, international leadership consultant, coach, and educator
- “To create environments to help people uncover more of what they want to be to make a difference in their world.” —**Hilary Rowland**, executive coach, speaker, and facilitator
- “To build a community of those in their late-stage career to pivot to work with purpose.” —**Marc Miller**, author and founder of Career Pivot
- “Living an active, well-balanced life while contributing to community and giving back.” —**Kathy McEvoy**, retired executive, entrepreneur, lifelong volunteer

Our purpose is what we say it is—so if you haven’t done this already, it is now time to discover and write down your purpose. Can you do so in ten words or less? Read on to learn how to discover your purpose.

## DISCOVERING OUR PURPOSE

Dreaming may be a good place to start. Envision yourself living a life of purpose; journal about your dreams. And dream big! Reach for the stars. As the saying often attributed to C. S. Lewis goes, you are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream. Before writing a first draft of your purpose statement, sit quietly and contemplate the purpose questions shown in the box.

### Purpose Questions

- What do you really care about?
- What are you passionate about?
- What makes you cry?
- Why do you do what you do?
- What gets you up in the morning?
- What is the difference you want to make in this world?

Brief purpose statements of ten words or less are easier to remember than long, rambling sentences. The statements often begin with “to be” or “to do” something: “to make a practical difference,” for example, or “to build a community.” Or you can phrase your statement in alignment with the present moment, as in “*making* a difference,” “*building* a community,” and so on. However you choose to say it, your purpose statement may evolve over time.

Paul's purpose statement evolved from his experiences as a hot-air balloon pilot. On the website and business card for his hot-air ballooning rides operation was the tagline "taking you higher." During coaching conversations, he was able to discover and write down a life purpose statement based on a realization that his passion for ballooning was a manifestation of a much larger life purpose: "Taking people higher in spirit, in business, and in life." His writing and coaching related to living and leading consciously provides a sense of fulfillment aligned with that purpose.

Can you have more than one purpose statement? Of course! You might have a number of purpose statements, each focusing on a specific aspect of life—but having one overarching statement may provide greater clarity of purpose.

Simply putting our perceived purpose into words is not enough; we also need to align our actions to our purpose. By following our true purpose, we can turn our work life into our life's work, our vocation into our avocation, what we are paid to do into what we love to do. This can be more fulfilling than simply working for personal recognition or financial gain because it is done to make a difference in the world and for the people we serve. The power of purpose cannot be overstated. Purpose can drive everything we do, if we let it. Purpose can inspire us to leap out of bed every morning to take purpose-driven action.

## CORE VALUES

*Values* are commonly understood as the beliefs, ideals, or customs that give significance to the lives of individuals or members of a group and that are reflected in our behavior. Our core values reflect our beliefs, determine how we perceive the world around us, and serve as a guide to our decision-making. The words we use to describe our values reflect deeply held beliefs that change slowly if at all during our adult life.

For example, our core values might include honesty, loyalty, dependability, creativity, compassion, integrity, justice, positivity, service, courage, and gratitude. Our core values evolve from early stages of our lives, and each will mean something special to us. These values tend to be stable over our lifetime, although we may prioritize new values more consciously based on our experiences and new understanding of what specific words mean.

The terms *values* and *principles* are often used interchangeably, but distinctions between these two words may prove helpful. Values often reflect the beliefs of our cultural backgrounds and provide a complex map on which conscious and unconscious behaviors are based. Values may be considered as subjective and internal, whereas principles are external and objective. Principles (sometimes also referred to as *guiding principles*) may be thought of as codes of conduct that act as a compass to more consciously guide our choices and behaviors. The more our principles are in harmony with our values, the better the decisions we will make and the more inner peace we will have. With values and principles in alignment, our principles become the external manifestation of our internal values, and we're better able to make more conscious choices.

You can start articulating your own personal values by simply making a list of your values; if you'd like to deepen your exploration, refer to some of the tools and assessments in the Resources section at the back of this book.

## TRANSITIONS

We all experience many transitions in our work life, our home life, our financial situation, our relationships, and many other aspects of our complicated lives. Our identities are often where we first encounter the challenges inherent in a midlife transition.

After a longtime career, for example, we may be asked by someone



we meet for the first time, “So, what do you do?” We might begin our answer by saying, “I am a former teacher” or executive or engineer or whatever we have done for all those years. Being a former “something” represents the space between who we were and who we are yet to become. The challenge can be in letting go of old identities to make space for new opportunities that can inspire new directions.

The Transition Model, introduced by organizational consultant and author William Bridges, has three overlapping stages: endings, the neutral zone, and new beginnings.<sup>8</sup> To effectively move forward with new beginnings, we may have to consciously let go of the past. Loss of something or someone may be a feature of many transitions—both within and beyond our control—and may also represent a gift or opportunity for something new.

Mary Ann Esfandiari became co-chair of the Patient Family Advisory Council of the Memory and Alzheimer’s Treatment Center at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center after retiring from federal service in 2014 after 39 years with NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. Mary Ann shared her story of transition and purpose discovery.

Mary Ann had watched her mother suffer and eventually die from Alzheimer’s disease and her husband of 44 years get diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment, eventually leading to several strokes and death. Mary Ann retired from two very active careers at NASA and in the navy, and the death of her husband severely challenged her search for meaning and fulfillment in the second part of her life. During the interview, Mary Ann said, “It was difficult to transition from a very active working life to a retired life and then to a widowed life.” What had gotten her up in the morning had seemingly dissipated. She worked through some very difficult days and nights before finding the start of a path forward. Free time without meaning, purpose, and structure was incredibly challenging. Emerging from these challenges, Mary Ann

made steady progress toward the transition and was able to describe her life purpose: to be an active advocate for Alzheimer research.

These transitions may feel like crossing a river or a highway where the challenge of the crossing depends on the size of the river or the number of lanes on the highway. Or it may seem even larger, like crossing an ocean from one continent to another. Whatever the scale of the transition, we have to let go of what is known to get into the unknown territory of the neutral zone. This neutral zone represents a time for reflection, healing, and growth. It is a necessary interim stage that can help us steer away from endings before embracing the new beginnings of the future. It's important to note that although the metaphors suggest a linear process, the three phases are not always separate stages with clear boundaries; we may find ourselves stepping into new beginnings before completing the endings and neutral zone phases. Exploring purposefully can help us with knowing who we are and with navigating these life-changing transitions.

## IDENTITY

Our personal identity reflects who we truly are at our core. This reflects our inner perspective of who we think we are combined with the outer perspective of how others see us. Although the perception of our identity may change, knowing our identity can be helpful.

Our identity can be described by completing sentences beginning with "I am." For example, you might say, "I am a parent, brother, friend, writer, doctor, airline pilot, or business leader." These answers express more about what we do rather than who we are, however. Another way to complete the sentence is by describing how we feel: "I am happy, sad, hopeful, depressed, loving, excited." You might also express your values: "I am caring, conscious, curious, honest, vulnerable." We could

also identify ourselves by our name, age, ethnicity or nationality, social class, and many other categories.

Pause for a moment to reflect on these questions about your identity:

- Who are you?
- What is your identity?
- Who do you think you are?
- How do others see you?
- Who do you choose to be?
- What do you stand for?
- What new identity is emerging?

In many ways, our identity reflects our past and who we have become. At times we may lose parts of our identity that mean something significant to us. When we lose our job, maybe voluntarily through retirement or when being let go from a long-held position, our all-important work identity may be lost. This loss of identity can be devastating. Numerous movies with this theme have depicted someone who loses their job yet continues to pretend to go to work every day rather than admit that something significant has changed. It is common to struggle with feelings of uncertainty and apprehension following the loss of a job, which may result in a loss of self-worth or self-esteem. The grief of losing not only our identity as it relates to a job but also the day-to-day connections with work friends, customers, and other people related to our profession can result in an extended period of mourning.

Although we may experience identity crises and moments of sadness or sorrow over the loss of identity, many of us also have wonderful experiences that result in a positive change of identity. Along with moments of personal achievement, fulfillment, and joy, loss can be a launchpad for discovering initially unforeseen yet positive changes. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, 99-year-old war veteran Tom Moore began walking laps around his English garden to raise money

for the staff of the National Health Service. After reaching his initial goal of 100 laps, he kept on walking. Having captured the imagination of the nation, he went on to raise more than £30 million (\$25 million) and was knighted by the queen soon after his 100th birthday. Through his actions, Moore created a new identity—although at his core, his life of service remained unchanged.<sup>9</sup>

## IDENTITY SHIFTS

As we travel through the different stages of life, we experience identity shifts, sometimes consciously choosing our identity and at other times having an identity shift imposed upon us. Changes in our work, our relationships, our health, or where we live can all bring about significant identity shifts. As we consider a conscious identity shift, here are five steps to help us face these shifts more positively:

1. **Notice moments of impact.** Take time to reflect on moments of joy and moments of sorrow you have experienced in your life. Write down what was meaningful in each experience.
2. **Reflect on these moments of impact.** Find a quiet space for contemplation or meditation on the experiences of these moments of heightened awareness. Note the thoughts and feelings that arise as you consider these experiences.
3. **Describe your current identity.** Select specific aspects of your identity such as your values, your role, your stage in life, or any other category, and complete sentences beginning with “I am. . . .” Write as many statements as you can.
4. **Consciously choose your desired identity.** Look into the future and consider who you want to become, which existing identities you want to change, and which you want to keep. Write new “I am . . .” statements as if you have already realized a new identity.

5. **Begin forming the new aspects of your identity.** Take responsible action to begin your identity formation process. Select an identity statement or group of statements and decide what needs to change to embrace a positive identity shift.

Identity shifts in the second half of life, especially as they relate to work, may involve rebranding—something we'll explore more fully in chapter 5. For now, let's keep thinking about identity as it relates to purpose (and those purpose statements you've been thinking about here in this chapter).

Identity and purpose—the who we are and why we are here—are interconnected. We may sense a calling from a higher power or we may choose how we describe our life's purpose. We may have a changeless core, but we can choose many aspects of our identity. Maybe it is time for us to take a fresh look and make choices about who we want to be and what we stand for.

Many of us have aspirations for making a difference in the world. Sometimes our actions change our identity in the eyes of others, as in the example of Tom Moore, yet it was perhaps his changeless core, his inner identity that inspired his actions without any idea of the huge impact he was to have on the lives of so many. Maybe it is time to consciously wake up and consider who we are and who we want to become. Who do you choose to be?

## REINVENTION

Transitions in the second half of life provide wonderful opportunities for reinvention. We can consciously change our identity, create new visions of the future, and discover or reenergize our life purpose. It is never too late to change course and transform our lives.

A well-known story of transformation is that of John Newton, in

the late eighteenth century. As a young man he had a reputation for violent and angry behavior. He worked on slave ships and was himself a slave before eventually becoming a captain on his own slave ship, the *Duke of Argyle*, making trips from the islands off the west coast of Africa to America, where he sold the slaves. The beginnings of his identity shift—a spiritual conversion, if you like—resulted from his experiences of a storm off the coast of Ireland. He later renounced his role in the slave trade and became an abolitionist and an Anglican priest. He is now best remembered for composing, for a New Year’s Day sermon in 1773, the words to the hymn “Amazing Grace.” He spent many years campaigning for the abolition of slavery, and died in 1807, the year it was abolished by the British Parliament. His story affirms that we can consciously choose to turn around or redirect our lives and establish a new identity consistent with emerging values and guiding principles. We should never give up on ourselves, no matter where we have come from or what we have experienced. It is possible to choose our new identity and discover our new purpose.

There are many examples of personal transformations, both positive and negative. Stalwarts of society held in high regard can quickly fall from grace due to moments of poor judgment. Convicted felons, having served their time, can transform to live a life of service to others. In her recent book *Who Do We Choose to Be?* Margaret Wheatley asks, “Who do we choose to be for this time?”<sup>10</sup> Consciously exploring our purpose, choosing our identity, setting intentions, and taking responsible actions present a significant opportunity as we transition from adulthood into elderhood.



In this chapter we have explored purpose and meaning, core values and guiding principles, and identity shifts and life transitions—representing the center of our Conscious Living Wheel. Your purpose,

vision, mission, values, and identity can be encapsulated in a Personal Conscious Living Manifesto referenced in the Resources section at the end of this book. In the following chapters we'll visit each aspect of the wheel in turn: living well, appreciating money, working for a living and working for fulfillment, savoring the world, living life creatively, minding relationships, helping humanity, living with technology, and bouncing forward. Before moving on, we invite you to reflect on your identity and purpose with the questions here.

## CONSCIOUS LIVING PRACTICES

### Questions for Reflection

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- What is your life purpose? Why are you here? What gets you up in the morning?
- What is your vision of what the world will look like when you are truly fulfilling your purpose?
- What is your identity? Who do you think you are? How do others see you?
- Who do you choose to be? What new identity is emerging?
- What do you have to let go of to make space for your new identity?

### Try This

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- Describe your purpose in ten words or less.
- Develop a Conscious Living Manifesto referenced in the Resources section at the end of this book.



# ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Photograph by Rosefield Photography

## **EILEEN CAROSCIO, CSC, RN, MSN**

Eileen is a multicertified coach, consultant, and a registered nurse. She is passionate about helping individuals to achieve their goals and live their best life. Referred to as the “midlife muse,” she engages you beyond your titles, jobs, and formalities to get to the core of what will enrich your midlife, making it more meaningful and magical.

She is a thought leader in midlife management. She teaches adult education classes and provides coaching to clients of a prominent financial firm. She is the local life planning network (LPN) membership chair and has held past leadership positions at the national level. She is an advocate of positive aging and has co-led the ALPA program (Advocacy Leadership for Positive Aging).

Eileen has a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Catholic University and a master of science degree in nursing from Marymount University. She is a member of Sigma Theta Tau, the national nursing society, with over 35 years of experience in a wide span of nursing areas.

After 25 years as a registered nurse, Eileen augmented her career to include coaching. Eileen began coaching in 2005 and is a member of the International Coaching Federation (ICF). She established Passageways Coaching in 2007, offering coaching, consulting, classes, and workshops on midlife navigation, creativity, and resilience.

Eileen holds certifications as a Myers Briggs Type Indicator facilitator, a Success Unlimited Network coach, Life Change Artist coach, Visual Coach, Kaizen-Muse creativity coach, KMI Master Mind facilitator, Modern Day Muse Group facilitator, and 2 Young 2 Retire workshop facilitator. She is also an authorized facilitator for the “Now What? 90 Days to a New Life Direction” coaching program.

Eileen lives with her husband in the Maryland-DC-Virginia region and works remotely around the globe. Eileen has a fondness for foxes and can often be found with a camera capturing their antics and escapades. She loves to immerse herself in nature, kayaking along a lake or hiking a trail. Learn more about Eileen at [www.passagewayscoaching.net](http://www.passagewayscoaching.net).



### **SANDY DEMAREST**

Sandy is an executive career and a retirement lifestyle and leadership coach, trainer, and speaker who leverages her experience to help organizations and mid-late-stage workers transition to new chapters. She specializes in training and coaching programs focusing on Engage as You Age, From Fulltime Career to Fulltime Life, and Create Your Next Meaningful Chapter. Her greatest gifts and joy are helping individuals, couples, and small groups craft their next chapter to make the most of the years ahead. Sandy is the founder and owner of Demarest Directions, providing coaching, training, and retreats.

Sandy started her career in social work after earning a degree in social welfare and psychology from Ohio Wesleyan University and extensive coursework in social work from Fordham University. For the past 25 years, Sandy has worked in career development. She later transitioned to coaching with certifications as a Career Management Coach, Executive Leadership Coach, and Strengths-Based Coach from The Academies. She is also a Certified Retirement Options Coach.

After ten years working with leaders and professionals embarking on their next life and work challenges, the last five years have been a time of change and reassessment for Sandy. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, there has been another opportunity for personal self-reflection and reassessment. She appreciates now more than ever that life is short, and we often live our best lives in our later years. Sandy has a renewed sense of urgency to live each day with purpose, joy, and gratitude and to help others do the same by embracing the freedom to create their future.

Sandy believes life is filled with adventures and often seeks new opportunities to learn and grow. She recently became certified as a barre instructor, bringing her energy and love of health and fitness to others. Another new adventure for Sandy has been the creation of Rewire Retreats for women as they transition to new chapters.

Sandy gives back to her community in a variety of ways, including leading the business education committee at her local chamber and being active on the world service committee at her church.

Sandy lives in Amherst, New Hampshire, with her husband, Russ, and they both enjoy traveling and spending time with their three grown daughters and family. She can often be found on the coast of New Hampshire or Maine enjoying a long walk on the beach.

Find out more about Sandy at [www.demarestdirections.com](http://www.demarestdirections.com) and [www.linkedin.com/in/sandydemarest/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/sandydemarest/).



**PAUL WARD, PhD**

Paul is an international conscious leadership and conscious living coach, author of *The Inner Journey to Conscious Leadership*, and a host of conscious conversation circles. He is sometimes referred to as the consciousness whisperer. Paul is the principal owner of the coaching,

consulting, and training company 2Young2Retire, LLC, offering impactful life transitions coaching and facilitator certification training.

Born in England, his spirit of adventure has taken him around Europe and the Americas practicing his craft as designer, engineer, marketer, business leader, visioneer, facilitator, and coach. Farther afield, walking among the indigenous tribes and the animals of the Serengeti has provided deep appreciation of the need to find guides for adventures and spiritual journeys, and for personal and organizational transformations.

Paul has masters and doctoral degrees in organization and management and has spent more than 30 years consulting to large and small organizations in Europe and the Americas. He is a certified conscious business change agent and a certified professional co-active coach, credentialed by the International Coaching Federation.

Paul has served on not-for-profit boards in the fields of mental health and chemical dependency and as president of the board of trustees for his local church. He is a hot-air balloon pilot and operated a commercial balloon rides business in upstate New York.

Jim Dethmer, co-founder of The Conscious Leadership Group, says of Paul in the foreword to his book, “When it comes to Conscious Leadership, Paul Ward is an astronomer and a biologist—he looks through both a telescope and a microscope. His book gives the reader a big picture overview of the subject as well as practical, specific details on how to live and lead consciously.”

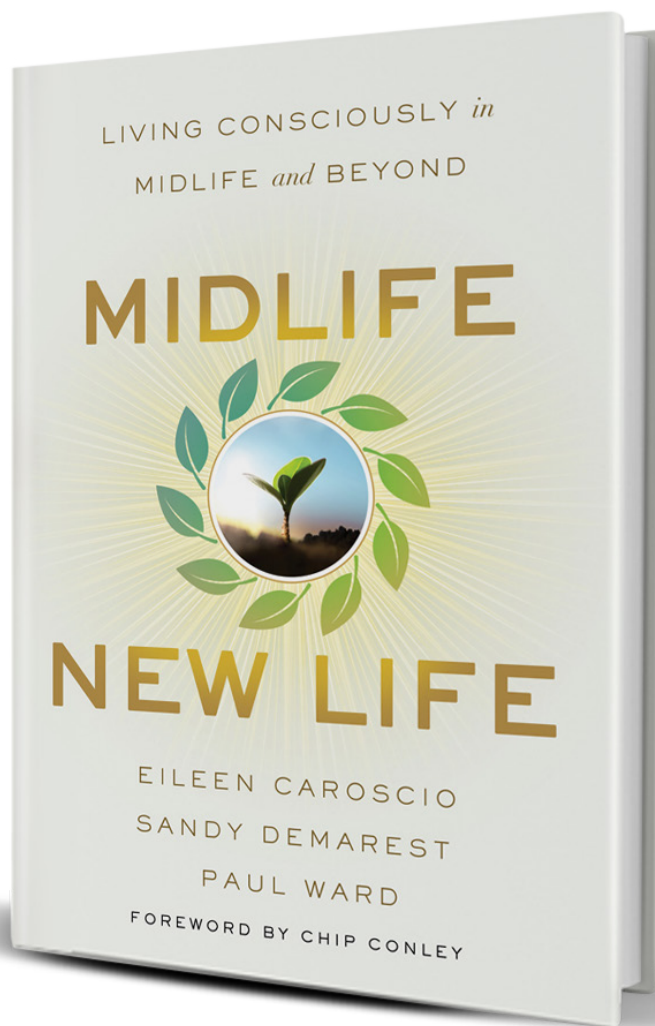
Paul divides his time between West Palm Beach, Florida, and Portsmouth, England.

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