

Halftime

Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance



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■ The Big Idea

Bob Buford believes the second half of your life can be better than the first. Much better. But first, you need time to figure out what you want to do with the rest of your life. In *Halftime*, Bob focuses on this important time of transition – the time when, as he says, a person pauses to consider what will make their remaining years rich and meaningful.

To help people at midlife to embark on their “personal renaissance,” Buford lifts up the important questions we need to ask, such as: What am I really good at? What do I want to do? What is most important to me? What do I want to be remembered for? If my life were absolutely perfect, what would it look like?

Buford fills *Halftime* with a blend of personal insight, true-life examples, and hit-the-nail-on-the-head quotes from men who have successfully navigated the exhilarating and potentially dangerous shoals of midlife.

■ Why You Need This Book

This book provides the encouragement and insight to propel your life on a new course away from mere success to true significance – and the best years of your life.

Midlife. Halftime. It doesn't need to be a time of crisis; it can be a catalyst.

■ The First Half

LISTENING TO THE GENTLE WHISPER

In the first half of life, there is barely enough time to progress beyond second base, or even think about doing so. We are hunter-gatherers, doing our best to provide for our families, to advance to our children. In addition, for most men, and certainly a growing number of women, the first half finds us in our warrior mode. We need to prove ourselves and others that we can accomplish something big, and the best way to do that is to become increasingly focused and intense.

The second half, when the pressure lets up, seems to be more the time when most people round second base and begin to do something more than what they've done so far.

The first half of life has to do with getting and gaining, learning and earning. Most do this in the most ordinary ways. Some chase the prize in a more spectacular, aggressive fashion. Either way, few leave time in the first half for considering that there may be something beyond what they have to deal with in it.

The second half is more risky because it has to do with living beyond the immediate. It is about releasing the seed of creativity and energy that have been implanted within us, watering and cultivating it so that we may be abundantly fruitful. It involves investing our gifts in service to others – and receiving the personal joy that comes as a result of that spending. This is the kind of risk for which entrepreneurs earn excellent returns much of the time.

There is a risk in this decision: In tossing aside the security blanket that keeps you safe and warm in your cautiously controlled zone of comfort, you may have to set aside familiar markers and reference points. You may feel, at least at first that you are losing control of your life.

LOCATING THE MAINSPRING

Realize that not everyone can afford to devote only 20 percent of his time to his career. But don't allow the second half of your life to be characterized by decline, boredom, and increasing ineffectiveness.

Listen carefully to that still, small voice, and then do some honest soul-searching. What's in your box? Is it money? Career? Family? Freedom?

Remember, you can only have one thing in the box. Regardless of your position in life, once you have identified what's in your box, you will be able to see the cluster of activities that put into play your "one thing" and keep you growing.

But be careful. Growth is not always easy.

■ Halftime

TAKING STOCK

Halftime cannot be a noisy place.

The first half is noisy, busy, almost frenetic. It is not that you do not want to listen for that still, small voice. It's just that you never seem to have time to do it.

If you are hearing a voice speak softly to you, it is time to head for the locker room, catch your breath, and get ready for the second half – a better second half than the first.

Many times, a good second half depends on what is done during halftime. Here are some general concepts that can help you prepare to go back out into the field:

Make peace. Regret haunts you in ways that will sap your strength and inspiration to go on to better things. So, one of the first things you need to do in halftime is make peace with your first-half set of issues.

Take time. The biggest mistake most of us make in the first half is not taking enough time on the things that are really important, so when you enter your halftime you need to make sure you don't repeat that mistake.

Be deliberate. Set an agenda that will help you "walk" through the important issues.

Share the journey. If your marriage is truly a partnership, it would be wrong for you to impose a whole new lifestyle onto your spouse without consulting her.

Be honest. Your second-half self is your genuine self, so be honest enough to discover it.

Be patient. You can't do everything overnight. And a clear picture of what you should do with the rest of your life may not emerge anytime soon – or may not emerge at all, and if that is the case you must be ready.

FROM SUCCESS TO SIGNIFICANCE

One of the most common characteristics of a person who is nearing the end of the first half is that unquenchable desire to move from success to significance.

Not that success is all bad. Psychologist Donald Joy once observed that soon after a man turns forty, he is likely to tackle a huge undertaking – something that appears to be slightly out of his reach.

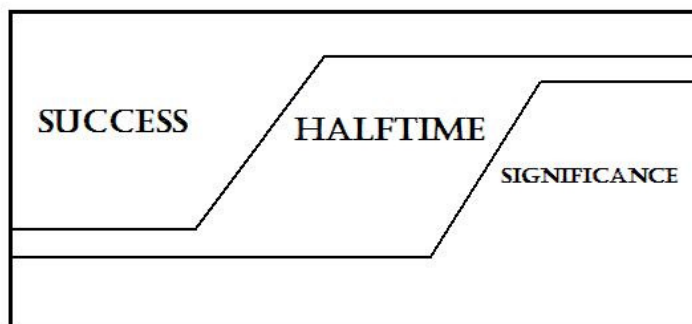
Some may consider this ambitious push to excel yet another attempt to be successful, but it's more than that. As we move closer to the halftime of our lives, we realize that we can only buy, sell, manage, and attain so much. We also begin to understand that we will only live so long. When all is said and done, our success will be pretty empty unless it has included a corresponding degree of significance.

Significance need not be a 180-degree course change. Instead, do some retrofitting so that you can apply your gifts in ways that allow you to spend more time on things related to what's in your box. And do it in such a way as to reclaim the thrill of that first deal.

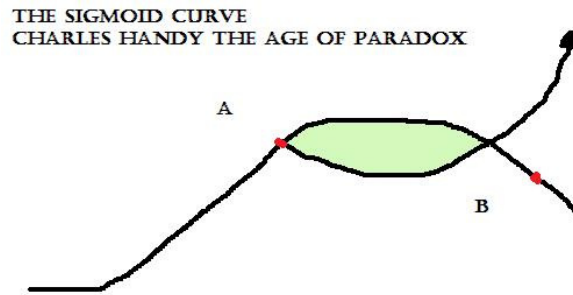
OVERLAPPING CURVES

Everything seems to conspire to keep us where we are. That is why so many people remain stuck in the first half or, at best, flounder in a perpetual halftime. Life seems more comfortable in known, familiar territory, even when we are fairly certain something better awaits us out there.

Many people don't make it through this zone, which is characterized by the pain of loss of former certainties and by confusion about what comes next. Graphically, it looks like this:



Seeing this time of uncertainty and sensing the pain, risk, and confusion involved in change, we have a tendency to cling to the known. The future seems to be somewhat fuzzy and vague, and doesn't compete well with the comfort and certainty of our present situation.



The normal pattern for most people is a single curve that rises as we approach middle age, and then sharply falls off toward retirement. What author and philosopher Charles Handy recommends is to start a new curve, preferably while the first one is still rising, but certainly before it begins to fall.

It is important to learn how to enjoy and benefit from the success you worked so hard to attain without becoming addicted to it, without going past the inflection point in the curve when it turns sour. Handy's Sigmoid curve shows us that everything, even the best things, go pathological beyond that inflection point.

And it is the realization that they could become stuck forever – “in a rut,” as some say – that helps motivate some people to escape the first half.

■ The Second Half

REGAINING CONTROL

It is one thing to talk about regaining control, and quite another to really do it. Old habits, even tempered with a brand-new outlook on life, die hard. Here are some things you can do to regain control over your own destiny:

1. *Delegate at work, play, and home.* You cannot do everything and shouldn't try. Work smarter, not harder.
2. *Do what you best; drop the rest.* Go with your strengths.
3. *Know when to say no.* Don't let others talk you into doing something you don't want to do or don't have time to do it; it will become a chore.
4. *Set limits.* Reallocate time to your mission, to your core issues.
5. *Protect your personal time by putting it on your calendar.* Leave time for absolute silence, for deliberately looking at your life to see that it is in balance.

6. Work with people you like. Work with people who can add energy to life, not with those who take energy away.

7. Set timetables. If you do not put your second-half dreams on a timetable, they will quickly become unfulfilled wishes.

8. Downsize. Get rid of the things that stand between you and regaining control of your life.

9. Play around a little. Play ought to be a big second-half activity, not so much in terms of time spent, but in importance.

10. Take the phone off the hook. Unless you're a brain surgeon on twenty-four hour call, it's not necessary to let people know where you are all the time.

Desire alone will not allow you to do something new in your second half; you must create the capacity to do it. If you are being controlled by too many time-and energy-consuming activities, you will continue to be frustrated by unfulfilled dreams and desires. Realize too, that you are in unfamiliar territory; and it may take some practice before you feel comfortable. Eventually, however, you will find a way to regain control of your own life.

LIFE MISSION

Developing a personal mission statement makes a lot of sense, especially for second-halfers. During the first half, you probably either did not have time to develop such a declaration of mission, or the mission statement you adopted really belonged to the company for which you worked. You did not own it, or at least not in the sense that is now possible in the second half.

You will not get very far in your second half without knowing your life mission. Stephen R. Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, suggests that in developing a personal mission statement, you should focus on what you wish to be and do, based on the values and principle that undergird all your beliefs and actions.

"Whatever is at the center of our life will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom, and power," writes Covey.

PLAYING FOR ALL YOU'RE WORTH

Here is a secret you may not want to hear: getting from the first half to the second is not easy. It may not happen in a week, a month, a year. And the lines between the halves are not always clear.

Please don't let that hinder you from playing the game hard. Some people can get the idea that all they have to do is follow a formula and things will turn out all right. Then, when their formulas don't work, they get discouraged and resign themselves to the downward slope of their one curve.

Remember, the second half is only part of the game. We all have to play the whole game.

Thomas Merton wrote that all you really need is in your life already. He called it the "hidden wholeness." What he meant was that you do not need to chase after things outside of you to find fulfillment. Even though that's what most of us do in the first half, we eventually learn that money, fame, material possessions, and experiences will never fill us. What we become in the second half has already been invested during the first; it is not going to come from out of the blue.

So moving from the first half to the second may not be easy, but if you want to do it, take heart in the fact that you already have all that you need to become fulfilled – you just need to "play it for all you're worth"!

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