The background features a stylized landscape with a bright yellow sun in a blue sky, rolling green mountains, and a dark green forest of evergreen trees. A winding grey road with a white dashed line runs from the bottom right towards the center. A yellow winged shoe is shown in flight on the left side.

# The Second Bounce: The Goodyears are still to come

By Robert Rowland Smith  
& Mark McCartney

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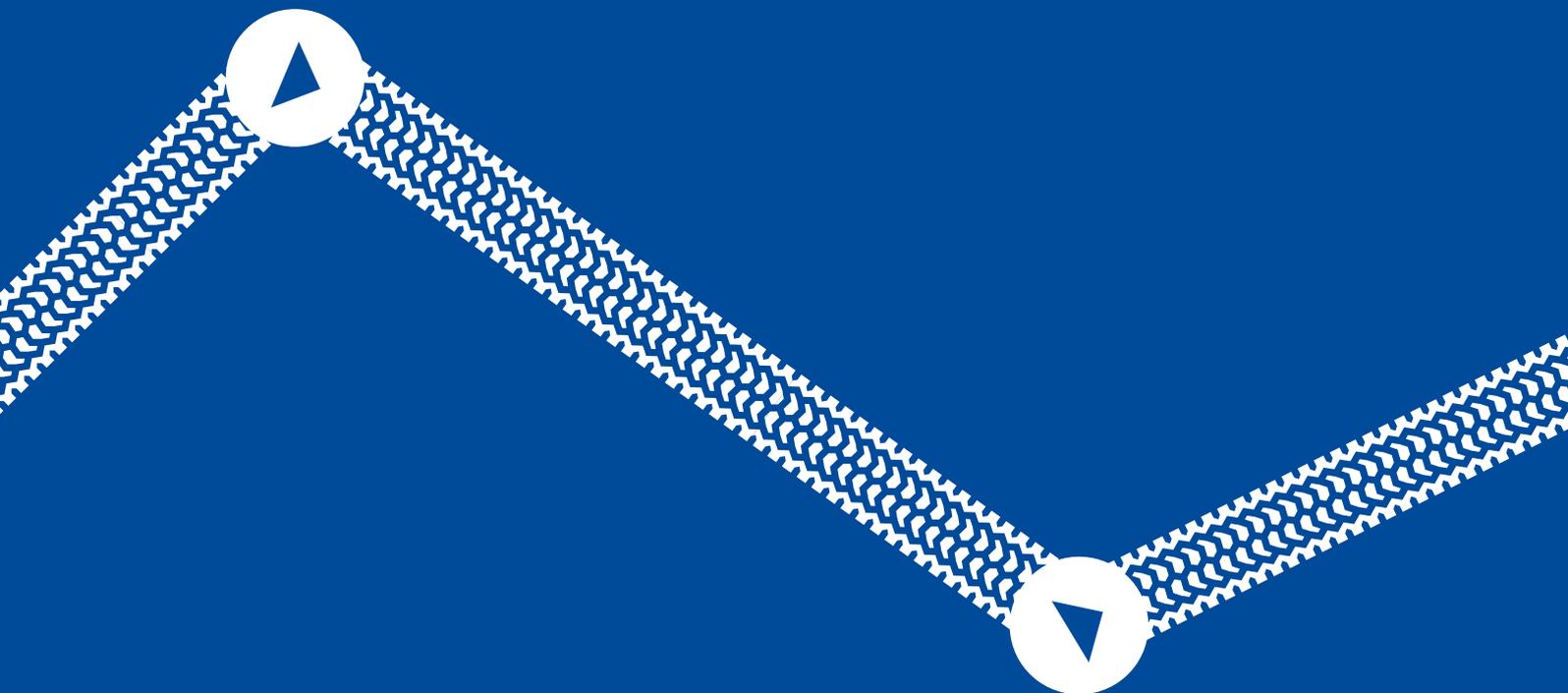
MADE TO FEEL GOOD.



# The Second Bounce

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In 2013, the Office for National Statistics published a report about demographic changes in the UK. It said that 'around one-third of babies born in 2013 are projected to live to 100'. Even for people who have been around longer than that, longevity is increasing.



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**“Never too old,  
too bad,  
never too late,  
never too sick,  
to start from  
scratch again.”**

**Bikram Choudhury**

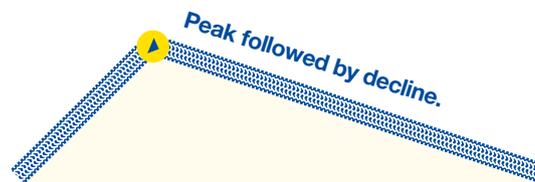
We have all heard about the consequences of this phenomenon sometimes known as ‘greying’, which affects many Western countries. Concerns about pensions, dementia, care costs, and productivity will all increase. But what often gets overlooked in such debates is the psychological aspect. What will it actually feel like to live that long? And, most importantly, how can we set ourselves up in midlife so that we make the most of our allotted time on earth?

Reframing the second half of life appears crucial. So far it has been conceived of as the worst half. But that might just be a prejudice. We may not have youth, but we do have experience. If we also manage our energy correctly, we can live much more fulfilled lives than we did in the first forty years.

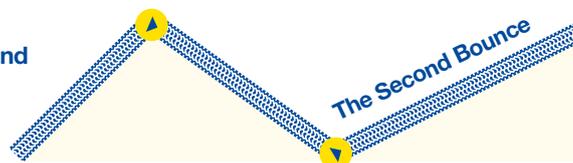
In order to do that, we have to prepare ourselves for what we call ‘the Second Bounce’. By ‘Second Bounce’ we mean that period, usually in our forties or fifties, when instead of falling foul of a midlife crisis, we reflect on where we have got to, regather our energy, and bounce back with renewed vitality for the second half.

‘Vitality’ is a key word. Like ‘vigour’ and ‘vim’ it’s one of a number of words that allude to the V shape of the Second Bounce. Whereas a midlife crisis takes the shape of a blip of false energy followed by a decline, the V of the Second Bounce refers to how we can come back with our vitality renewed.

**TYPICAL  
VIEW OF  
LIFE**



**THE V OF  
THE Second  
Bounce**



This is not just a fantasy, or a version of self-brainwashing. The evidence for the second half being just as productive as the first is growing. In neuroscience, for example, there is now research showing that the brain itself is not destined to simply deteriorate over time. In his groundbreaking work, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, Norman Doidge demonstrates how our grey matter is more like a muscle that can be trained than a machine that will inevitably degrade with use. The brain has a plasticity that allows it to be re-patterned and re-moulded. It can and wants to learn. The more it is used, and the more diverse the challenges it sets itself, the stronger it becomes. There are even brain-training techniques that have produced remarkable results.

Some people in their sixties have ‘trained’ their brains so that their optical nerve has been strengthened to the point at which they no longer needed to wear glasses.

There are also ways in which that demographic shift is actually a positive for the economy. In a recent article in *The Daily Telegraph*, Matthew Lynn makes the point that most start-up companies are begun by people in their forties. And since there are so many people in their forties now, we can expect a surge in the next few years. He writes that 2014 saw 581,000 new businesses registered with Companies House, compared with 526,000 in 2013 and 484,000 in 2012. This is the Second Bounce in all its economic reality.



# Attitudes toward the second half



## 1. Little agreement about when midlife starts

One-third (31 per cent) of respondents say middle age starts at 40. But nearly one-quarter (23 per cent) say 50 signifies the half-way point in life. And 16 per cent of those aged 50-55 still didn't class themselves as middle aged.

It seems then that there are widely differing views as to when the second half of life really starts. This is in contrast to other milestones in life attached to a specific age (18) and a specific ritual (marriage). This is why we believe a new ritual, The Changing Room, is required in order to start people thinking in new, positive ways about the second half of life. We talk about The Changing Room in the next section.

So rather than worry about whether or not one is or isn't at the half-way point of life (which of course we can't know anyway) we suggest it's better to consciously design a lifestyle that leads to a productive life long in to old age, especially as we don't know what advances science will make in our lifetimes that might provide a further fillip to our quality of life in older age.

It's worth pointing out that even thinking about 'midlife' is something of a modern luxury, however. In the past it either did not matter or was seen as a time of diminishing vitality. A slow, inexorable descent towards decrepitude was the shape of things, as in the first of our diagrams above. The French renaissance thinker, Michel De Montaigne, writing in the sixteenth-century, says in his essay 'On the length of life' that it is madness to expect anything from life beyond the age of 20!

To find out more, Goodyear Tyres commissioned some research to find out how UK adults between the ages of 35 and 55 currently view midlife. Can it be better than the first half? When does it actually start? And will it be different for this generation? These are just some of the questions we were interested in finding answers to.



We suggest it's better to consciously design a lifestyle that leads to a productive life long in to old age



41% of adults feel optimistic about this new life stage, with 67 per cent of these looking at it as an opportunity for fresh opportunities and experiences.



## Feeling good about the future, it seems, can extend your life.

### 2. A positive attitude towards later life, particularly among men

41 per cent of adults feel optimistic about this new life stage, with 67 per cent of these looking at it as an opportunity for fresh opportunities and experiences. Men were more optimistic about middle age than women, with 29 per cent saying they were happy or feeling good about midlife, compared to just 21 per cent of women. And finally, 22 per cent of men said turning middle aged was an opportunity, compared to just 15 per cent of women.

There may be generational factors at play. We asked, 'Do we approach it (middle age) differently to previous generations?' According to our survey, 54 per cent think they are approaching middle life in a different way to generations before them. Nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) of these say they are approaching it more positively.

One reason why 35-55 year olds are approaching midlife differently could be that they are taking better care of themselves. Exercise came out top when we asked which hobbies respondents most wanted to begin in middle age.

But exercise on its own might not be enough. Feeling good is crucial. Commenting on research by The British Heart Foundation and University College London, The Daily Express reported on "the mental attitudes of 369 patients admitted to hospital with unstable angina and heart attacks and monitored their health for 46 months. They found the most pessimistic patients were twice as likely to die or need further surgery over the next four years compared with the most optimistic." Feeling good about the future, it seems, can extend your life.

### 3. Long live the midlife crisis

The notion of having a midlife crisis still exists, according to 43 per cent of our sample of UK adults. Perhaps surprisingly, 18 per cent of people aged 35 plus think they have experienced a midlife crisis. With work, family and financial pressures could it be that high stress is being confused with a midlife crisis?

There is a view among the majority of respondents (58 per cent) that they or someone they know have experienced a midlife crisis. There are regional differences, though: a third of adults living in London say they have experienced a midlife crisis, compared to just one in ten (12 per cent) in Scotland. Are Londoners less resilient, or are urban pressures causing inner turmoil?

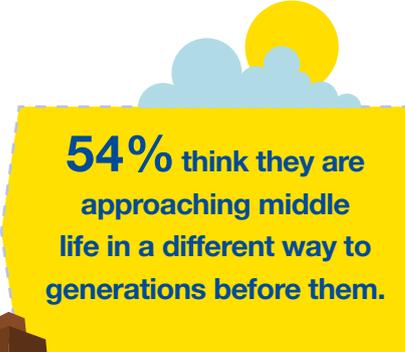


**Are Londoners less resilient, or are urban pressures causing inner turmoil?**

### 4. A time of change

When asked the question about attitudes going into midlife itself, a third of people (34 per cent) say they are looking at middle age as a time to reassess their life and make some changes. But this tends to be at the more personal level. Only one in ten (13 per cent) say they are using midlife as a time to rethink their career. In fact work ranks lowest of the things on people's minds. The top three are family, health and wellbeing, and relationships. It seems that as we get older we value the more human aspects of life over work.

Overall, the survey shows that despite low levels of agreement on when exactly midlife occurs, people recognise the phenomenon of the midlife crisis, and are aware of the potential for both positive and negative change in their life after that point. What we want to do in the next section is address how to look forward in a more systematic way by thinking of midlife as the time for a 'Second Bounce' from which life can continue to improve.



**54% think they are approaching middle life in a different way to generations before them.**



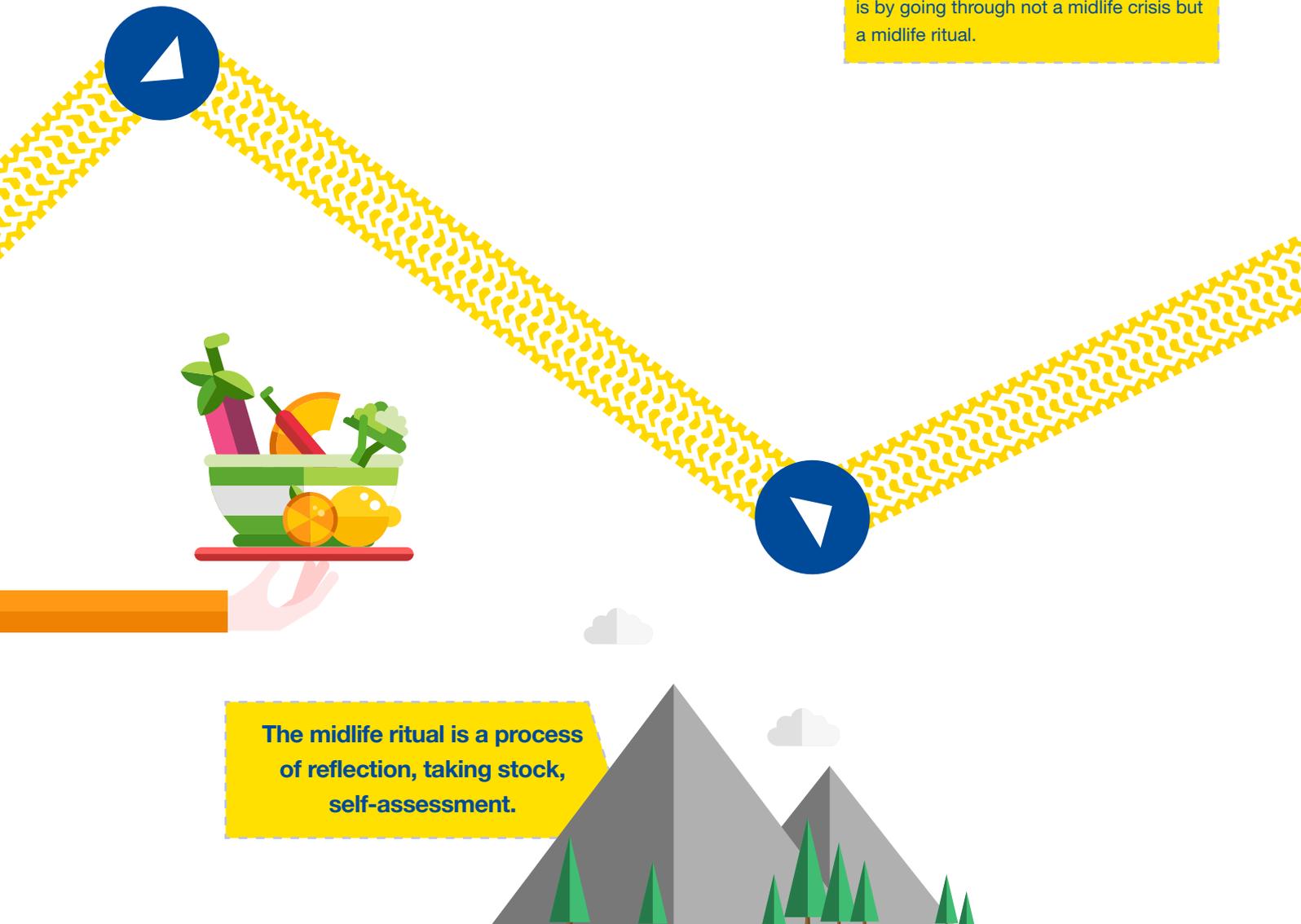


# The changing room

**So what exactly is involved in the Second Bounce? A Second Bounce is like a midlife crisis but without the crisis. What typically occurs in the crisis is that men and women realise with a shock that they are no longer as young as they were, and that a new generation has sprung up behind them, attracting all the attention.**

The feeling of being left behind is especially acute in the West where so much attention is paid in the media to beautiful young things in the fashion, film and music industries. In reaction to the more external changes, it is little surprise then that people often do things that are out of character as a way of denying or dealing with the physical and emotional aspects of ageing. Popular culture is littered with examples of the types of strange behavior associated with the conventional idea of a midlife crisis; ill-advised attempts by the middle-aged to emulate or recapture their youth with the acquisition of an electric guitar, sports car or new partner.

The Second Bounce, by contrast, is about embracing that age: seeing it as an asset rather than a liability. In a moment, we'll talk about how exactly to do that. But first it's worth saying that the Second Bounce does in fact have something to learn from the midlife crisis. Namely, that it is a rite of passage. We talk about 'going through' a midlife crisis precisely because it is a process. The Second Bounce involves going through a process too, but going through it deliberately, rather than being caught up in it helplessly or with a sense of panic at time slipping by. In other words, if you are going to bounce back, you have to gather some momentum first. And the best way of gathering momentum is by going through not a midlife crisis but a midlife ritual.



**The future can be a lot better than the past, even if the past was great.**

Not ritual as in candles and chanting, however. The midlife ritual is a process of reflection, taking stock, self-assessment. Without understanding where you have gone to, you can't properly make sense of where you want to get. The analogy might be with half time during a football match. If you're going to play a brilliant second half, you first need to know what the half time score is, where you went wrong in the first half, and also how you scored the goals you scored. We call this process 'The Changing Room'. The key questions to ask yourself during this precious period of time out are:

### 1. What is the score?

This is a process of looking back at the first half of your life. You ask yourself if you are ahead or behind in terms of the expectations you had, say, at the age of eighteen. You consider how you set goals, which might have been more externally-focused rather than internally-focused. Try to be honest.

### 2. What am I proud of?

It's important not just to list achievements like qualifications. Things you are proud of might be difficult periods that you came through, relationships that you formed, or the success of somebody that you helped.

### 3. What could I have done better?

This isn't an excuse to beat yourself up. It's a chance to admit to yourself where you made decisions that didn't serve you or other people very well, but only so that you think about what you would do differently now.

### 4. What is my ambition for the second half?

This is a key question because it helps to allay the temptation of nostalgia. The future can be a lot better than the past, even if the past was great. Even if you plan on retiring at some point in the next two decades, you can still set goals, whether these are professional or personal.

### 5. How am I going to make that happen?

The important thing about realising an ambition for the second half is breaking it down into simple steps that are manageable, rather than trying to 'eat the elephant' all in one bite. You can't run a marathon without putting one foot in front of the other lots of times!



## PEN PORTRAIT 1. SIR ALEX FERGUSON

**Whether you are a Manchester United fan or not, you cannot deny Fergie's success. During twenty six years as a manager, he won a staggering thirty-eight trophies, including thirteen Premier League and two Champions League titles.**

But what we sometimes forget about Sir Alex is that he was a player before he was a manager. Not a bad player, by any means. In the late 1960s he even commanded a then record signing fee of £65,000 when he joined Rangers. But he ended up playing for the junior team and his playing career never achieved great heights. So it was as a manager that he came into his own. He was appointed to Manchester United in 1986, when he was forty-five. In other words, he began his Second Bounce very much in midlife.

There's a great moral in this story about Sir Alex. Namely, that you can think of yourself in the first half of life as a player, but in the second half as a manager. Even if your first half wasn't so great, it doesn't mean you can't triumph in the second. Especially if you recognise that you can mobilise different skills. As a player, Fergie had energy and talent, but it took him only so far. After his Second Bounce, however, when he decided to focus on management and Manchester United, he was able to harvest the experience of

being a player but use it differently. He had the skills of building a vision for a club, and of motivating a team. These are two skills that are more appropriate to the second half, because it's more likely that when you reach midlife, you can be taken seriously in these roles.

So even if you were only a mediocre player in the first half, you can be a champion in the second. It involves shifting your energy onto the area where you can truly bounce back, and use your skills appropriately.





# The Second Bounce state of mind



**Having come out of the changing room, the key next step is a change of attitude. A simple distinction between two types can be very useful here.**

The Fixed Attitude depends on a belief that intelligence and talent are fixed forever. Or you believe that once you get to midlife you have peaked, and there is no higher to go. For example, you might ask yourself why bother learning to play the piano at age 45 because my music teacher told me 35 years ago that I had no musical talent? By adopting the Fixed Attitude you are giving in to the old adage that you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

On the other hand, the Growth Attitude is a belief that intelligence and talent are expandable throughout life. Visually, you can imagine birth as the narrowest point of a cone that expands outwards and forwards towards the end of life. Over time, you widen your capabilities all the way through to the end, rather than

conceiving midlife as a watershed. Of course, we will be physically challenged in later life, but it doesn't mean that we can't be fitter or healthier than we were in our teens.

If you are interested to discover which of the two you typically practise, you can try this. Pick something you have always wanted to do. It could be learning a language, starting your own business, moving abroad, or building a house. Now ask yourself how many steps you have taken towards realising it. If the answer is 'very few' or 'none', the chances are that you are more comfortable with the fantasy than the reality. And if it's more of a fantasy, there will be a part of you that believes it's not really possible at all. That is the Fixed Attitude, which often manifests itself as unfulfilled dreams.

One of the key limiters in the Fixed Attitude is the belief that 'there isn't enough time'. The reason we give for not starting that business or building that house is that we are just too busy. Life has a momentum, and we are caught up with meeting everyday demands. But what people who say 'there isn't enough time' are actually saying is 'I don't have the energy'. It is energy rather than time that is the key resource for the Second Bounce. Often we use fatigue as an alibi for not changing. We'd rather be in familiar territory and tired, than in new territory with energy, precisely because the new is unfamiliar.

## PEN PORTRAIT 2. TENNYSON'S ULYSSES

**Alfred, Lord Tennyson was a leading Victorian poet. Among his most famous poems was 'Ulysses'. The story of Ulysses' later life tells a different story about how to ensure a Second Bounce.**



Ulysses' first half was marked by great events, which many of us won't experience. His journey back from Troy was beset by many trials and tribulations. Despite this, upon his return - let's call it his midlife moment - his expansive, growth mindset meant that he deliberately chose to seek out new experiences and challenges - and to the very end. His vim, vigour and vitality did not recede with age. In fact, quite the opposite, he hungered after more adventure. Think of these two lines:

**Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will**

**To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.**

The lines give us great hope that the second half can be even more productive and enriching as the first half. Ulysses made the deliberate decision to seek out more adventure, which indeed he did, for the rest of his life. The key point here is attitude. And of course greater vigilance is required in later life if one is to avoid the

narrowing of opportunities resulting from a more diminished view of what we think is possible.

The decision we make about how to live the second half comes down to these two lines from the poem:

**How dull it is to pause, to make an end, To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use**

# Mirror, Signal, Manoeuvre

**So what can you do to harness your energy, and make sure you give yourself to the important rather than simply the urgent tasks in life?**

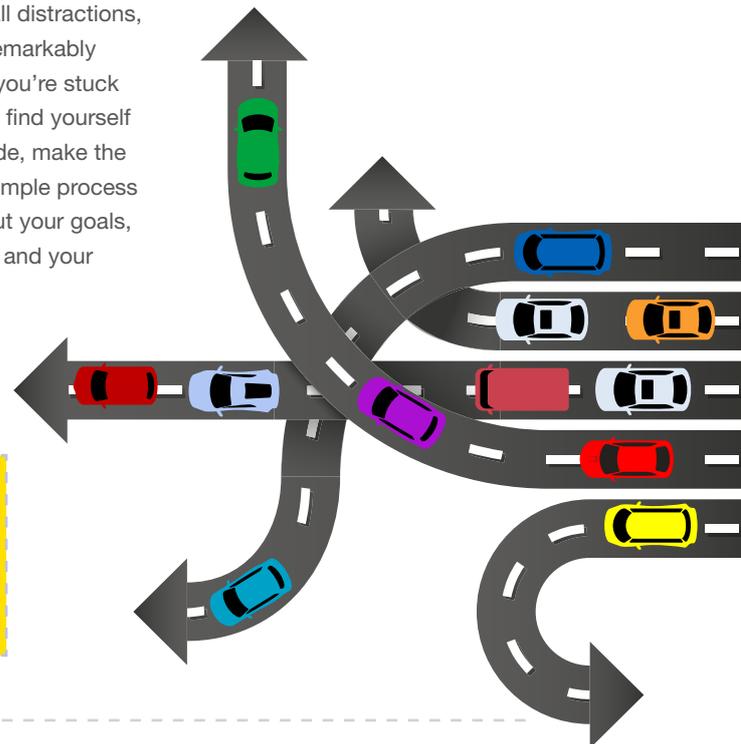
We recommend you spending more time in what we call the 'Alone Mode'. This involves making time for reflection in places where you won't be disturbed. Perhaps surprisingly, one of the best environments for the 'Alone Mode' is your car. Your car is one of the few places left in the modern world in which you can be alone to think, even if it's just sitting in it as you are waiting to pick up your kids.

As long as you switch off all distractions, you will find yourself in a remarkably calm environment, even if you're stuck in traffic. So, next time you find yourself in your car in an Alone Mode, make the most of it and follow this simple process to enable you to think about your goals, your untapped capabilities and your energy levels.

**We recommend you spending more time in what we call the 'Alone Mode'. This involves making time for reflection in places where you won't be disturbed.**



**Your car is one of the few places left in the modern world in which you can be alone to think.**



## Mirror

The mirror reflects your recent past. Ask yourself, what are the two or three things you have learnt recently? And how could these insights be useful? If it's helpful, you can think of your life as a project, and of recent events as milestones in that project that you are now reviewing in order to refine the next steps you are about to take.



## Signal

This is the chance for you to think about where you are going. What direction are you travelling in at the moment? Are you following your own course or one that has been set for you? Is it really you in the driving seat, or is somebody else making you go where you don't want to go? Ask yourself, what one or two actions might you need to take in order to change course if you need to. Maybe you find yourself on a detour, and if so, can you think of shortcuts to get yourself back on track?



## Manoeuvre

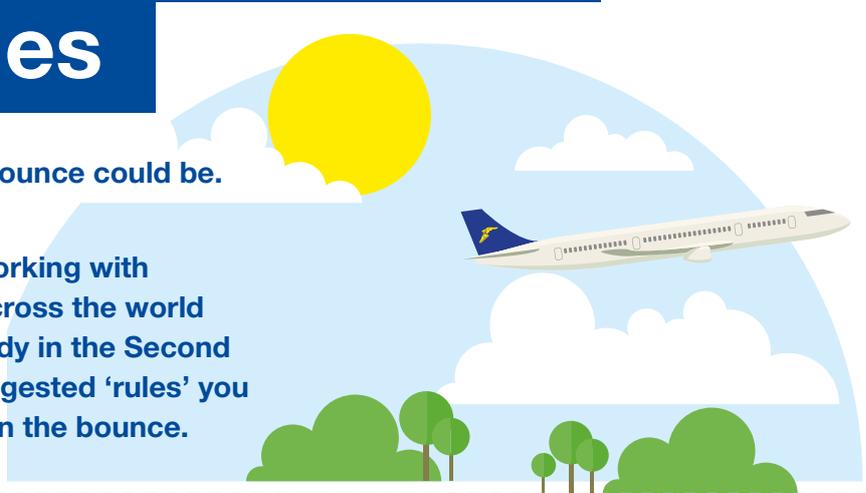
Whether it's at home or at work, there will be small, tactical moves you can make that help you along the road you want to take. It might be taking aside your boss and having a word about your career. It might be talking to your partner about clearing some space to be with each other. It might be sorting out a minor conflict that has flared up with a friend. In all cases, there are small adjustments we can make that serve to clear the path.



# Heightening the bounce: the new rules

There is no limit to how high the bounce could be.  
It's us who set limits.

So, based on our experience of working with hundreds of professionals from across the world who are about to or who are already in the Second Bounce phase, here are some suggested 'rules' you could consider in order to heighten the bounce.



## Don't ignore the 'stop' signs:

'busyness' infects many parts of modern life, leaving little or no space for 'otium' (see, Samuel L. Jackson). Reducing unproductive 'busyness' requires new skills e.g. short, regular periods of rest and recovery: daily, weekly, monthly, yearly. If you don't stop, 'busyness' will crowd out opportunities for renewal, meaning 'vigour', 'vim' and 'vitality (our 'V' words) will reduce at a time of life when you most need them.

## Marginal gains:

making dramatic, extreme changes often results in disappointment, but we can often make progress towards a big goal by making small inroads towards it. For example if we want to run a marathon, you first buy some running shoes, then walk for ten minutes a day, then reduce alcohol consumption, and so on. Lots of micro changes lead to very dramatic macro changes over time.

## Recruit some support:

take the approach of any professional sports person, musician or performer - recruit a coach or mentor who will challenge and stretch you.

## Restyle your lifestyle:

Dr Henry Lodge, coauthor of *Younger Next Year*, says that "...70% of American aging is not real aging. It's just decay. It's rot from the stuff that we do. All the lifestyle diseases ... the type 2 diabetes, the obesity, the heart disease, much of the Alzheimer's, lots of the cancers, and almost all of the osteoporosis, those are all decay." Focus on your health!

## Preempt later regrets:

the biggest regret based on Australian cancer nurse, Bronnie Ware's book *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying* was: I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me. The next one? I wish I hadn't worked so hard. Get some perspective!

## Create the Older Self Role Model.

One reason people lapse into midlife crisis is that they have no positive image of themselves to aspire to as they get older. Paint a picture of yourself in the future that is one that interests and inspires you. You've got plenty of time ahead: who do you want to become? How can you use your experience and skills to make yourself into the person you want to be?

### PEN PORTRAIT 3. SAMUEL L. JACKSON

**In the second half of life it is common to limit ourselves by accepting that we are unlikely to realise our ambition of, say, writing a best selling novel or running in the Olympics. Self-evidently some ambitions will be ruled out by temporal and physical realities.**



But perhaps more likely is that we give little or no time to developing those skills and capabilities which energise us as we try to cope with the blizzard of day-to-day challenges that we must face. Our career. Raising children. Or just keeping the show on the road.

Actor, Samuel L. Jackson's first big break, after many decades playing minor roles was in Pulp Fiction, when he was forty-six. In fact, the director, Quentin Tarantino, wrote the role specifically with Jackson in mind. Jackson aced the performance and moved back on to the Hollywood A List.

So success can and often does come later in life: it's not limited to youth. But it might be better to adopt a more internal perspective by replacing 'success' with 'satisfaction'. What gives you satisfaction? What hobby or interest did you used to love? A return to a long-lost hobby or a discovery of a new pursuit that gives you energy can make all the difference in later life.

For instance, this isn't about being Oscar nominated rather it's about smaller, more personal ways to generate more satisfaction. This brings to mind a senior executive who loved to play cricket as a child in India. Then life took over.

Now, though, in his late 40s he has taken up the bat and ball again. It helps to feed all parts of his life, work and play. It is central to his wellbeing and his ability to perform at his best.

So maybe an ancient idea needs revisiting if we are to maintain our lustre in later life - more 'otium' (leisure time: studying, learning and culture) and a little less 'negotium' (which includes duties and employments). In a rapidly changing world when we continuously need to relearn time invested in learning and studying not only enhances our employability but also our 'enjoyability'.

## Conclusion

**One thing is for certain. We can't stop ourselves getting older. The question, therefore, is how we approach it. Entering midlife, whenever we think that actually is, provides us with an opportunity to take stock, and to gear up again. It doesn't have to take the form of a midlife crisis. It can instead take the V shape of the Second Bounce. Much of it is about the attitude you take.**

**Once you start imagining your second half as a period for new growth, rather than decline or fixity, you will start behaving accordingly, and new opportunities are likely to arise.**

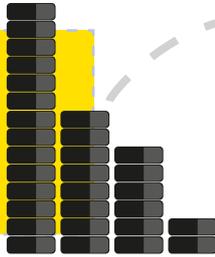




# About Us

Goodyear

As one of the world's largest tyre companies



we employ over **67,000** people



Our two Innovation Centers in Akron, Ohio and Colmar-Berg, Luxembourg strive to develop state-of-the-art products and services that set the technology and performance standard for the industry.

- At Goodyear, our focus is on:
- ✓ **making you feel good.**
  - ✓ **Giving you the opportunity to experience adventure, regardless of your age.**



For more information about us or our products, visit <http://www.goodyear.co.uk>. Alternatively, please get in touch via [www.facebook.com/goodyear.uk](https://www.facebook.com/goodyear.uk) [@goodyear\\_uk](https://twitter.com/goodyear_uk) or contact us directly via [goodyear@bottlepr.co.uk](mailto:goodyear@bottlepr.co.uk) or 01865 770381.

## Robert Rowland Smith

**Robert Rowland Smith is a Quondam Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He has lectured around the world on philosophy, psychoanalysis and literature. His six previous books include award-winning studies on Jacques Derrida and on modern poetry; a bestselling popular philosophy title, 'Breakfast with Socrates', which has been translated into twenty languages; and a business bestseller, 'The Reality Test', which reflects Robert's parallel career as an adviser to organisations on strategy, leadership and culture.**



Robert has contributed to BBC radio and TV, been a panellist at many public debates and festivals, and recorded podcasts for both Philosophy Bites and a series on innovation. He has taken small parts in two independent films, 'Do Not Read This' and 'Love in the Post'.

Robert is a qualified practitioner of Constellations, the technique for exposing hidden dynamics in group systems, and runs regular workshops on personal, creative and business issues.

He sits on the board of the Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology, and the editorial board of Angelaki, the journal he helped to found. He is a founding faculty member of both The London Graduate School and The School of Life.

## Mark McCartney

**Mark's professional background is PR and Marketing consultancy where he directed client accounts including Masterfoods, British Gas and France Telecom.**



He is also a specialist in workplace productivity. He writes and delivers keynotes on this topic for a range of organisations including the BBC and Talk Talk.

Now in his second half of life, with two small children he dedicates himself to helping clients find more sustainable ways to remain productive long into later life.

## The School of Life

**The School of Life is a new kind of cultural enterprise that is dedicated to exploring good ideas for everyday life. They are devoted to developing emotional intelligence through the help of culture.**

Based in Central London, with campuses around the world, they offer a variety of programmes and services concerned with how to live wisely and well. They address such questions as why work is often unfulfilling, why relationships can be so challenging, why it's ever harder to stay calm and what one could do to try to change the world for the better.

The School of Life creates a space to step back and think intelligently about these and other concerns. You will not be cornered by any dogma, but directed towards a variety of ideas - from philosophy to literature, psychology to the visual arts - that tickle, exercise and expand your mind.



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**Contact Us**

For further information on The Second Bounce,  
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**#secondbounce**