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25  
QUESTIONS  
TO HELP  
YOU  
IDENTIFY  
YOUR  
IDEAL  
SECOND ACT

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A WORKBOOK AND  
IDEA GENERATOR

by Nancy Collamer

# Introduction

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Welcome!

Thank you for downloading this workbook and for joining the newsletter. I'm delighted that we've connected.

In this packet, you'll find 25 questions designed to help you think about what you really love to do, do well and find most meaningful. The insights you gain will help to guide your second-act decisions as move further along your second-act journey.

I hope you'll enjoy these questions and find them useful. And please remember to continue your exploration on [MyLifestyleCareer.com](http://MyLifestyleCareer.com) where you'll learn about a wide variety of second-act career options, resources, strategies and tools.

Now, let's get started!

With gratitude,

*Nancy*



## SUCCESS TIPS



1. **Be Selective.** Not every question will appeal to you equally. So start by answering the questions that resonate, and then, circle back to the others. In general, it's best to try and answer as many of the questions as you can - the more time you spend on this, the more insights you'll gain. But you don't need to answer *all* the questions for this exercise to be useful.
2. **Don't rush.** It's better to fully consider one question at a time, than to try and rush through the packet. Feel free to step away and take a break in order to refresh your thinking and gain new perspectives.
3. **Discuss with friends.** These questions can spark some *really* interesting dinner discussions. So invite a group of friends over, discuss a few questions and see where the conversation leads. This process is always much more enjoyable - and effective - when you share it with others.
4. **Write down your responses.** Finally, be sure to write your answers down. You can either print out this packet or fill it out directly on the computer. Writing your thoughts down will help organize your thinking (and it helps to have things in write for future reference as well).



One last tip... When considering the questions in this packet, remember to always ask **“Why?”** in addition to “What?” So instead of asking:

*Which of my jobs did I enjoy the most?*

change the question to:

*Which of my jobs did I enjoy most - **and why?***

*What were my greatest successes at work?*

change the question to:

*What were my greatest successes at work - **and why?***

*What type of people do I like working with?*

change the question to:

*What type of people do I like working with - **and why?***

By considering your “why” you’ll better understand the critical motivators that drive your decisions.

## SECTION ONE: VALUES

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**“WE MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT WE GET, BUT WE  
MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE GIVE.”**

**– WINSTON CHURCHILL**

Values are a critical factor in career choice at any age, but they become even more important as we age. For many people over age 50, the desire to do “work that matters” is often *the* dominant motivator. The questions in this first section will help you better understand your core values — the issues, causes and beliefs that steer your life choices.

# 1. What are the “big” issues or causes you find yourself consistently talking, reading, worrying or thinking about?



**To consider:** Whether it’s the environment, world hunger or human rights, you probably have a number of issues that you feel strongly about. Think about what makes you angry or motivates you to take action. Bear in mind that a “cause” does not have to be connected to a specific charity or organized movement. Your “cause” might be a more personal issue, such as the value of family dinners or sharing family history with your grandchildren. What are your motivating causes and issues?

## 2. Are you committed to a particular religious or spiritual belief system? If so, how does it guide your life?



**To consider:** Even if you're not committed to any one religious or spiritual practice, you likely have a guiding belief system. Make notes below about how your beliefs might inform your choices going forward.

# 3. Who inspires you?

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**To consider:** Name at least three people you admire: friends, relatives, acquaintances or someone famous. Why do you admire them? Is it their intelligence, resourcefulness, kindness, political involvement, design sense ... or what? Look for the commonalities that tie together your choices.



## 4. How do you define a well-lived life?



**To consider:** How would you like to be remembered? What do you want people to say about your contribution to family, community, profession and the world at large? If you are stumped by this question, think about what you'd like people to say about you at your funeral (or try writing your own obituary). As morbid as it sounds, by focusing on the legacy you wish to leave, you'll gain greater clarity about what really, truly, matters most in your life.

## 5. If you could make a documentary about any topic, what would you choose?

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**To consider:** Not into films? Feel free to replace “documentary” with other types of creative endeavors, such as books, plays, songs, paintings, etc.

## SECTION TWO: SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES


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**“PLEASURE IN THE JOB PUTS PERFECTION IN THE WORK.” – ARISTOTLE**

By the time you’re ready to retire, you’ve amassed a collection of notable skills, experiences and expertise. But even though you’re *able* to do many things, chances are you may not *want* to continue to do them *all* in your semi-retirement. The questions in this next section will help you begin to identify the skills that you’d like to carry forward into this next chapter, as well as the ones that you’d prefer to leave behind.

## 6. What are your favorite work-related projects or skills?



**To consider:** Make a list of all your favorite work-related projects, including volunteer, part-time and freelance jobs. Then, after reviewing your list, make notes about the specific skills (e.g., writing, organizing, mentoring) or projects (delivering a speech, creating budgets) that you found most rewarding and might like to build-upon in your next act.

## 7. What types of people do you most enjoy spending time with?

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**To consider:** The "who" of your work life -- clients, colleagues, boss or vendors -- are incredibly important. Boring jobs can become enjoyable when you work with people you like, and conversely, interesting jobs can be ruined by difficult co-workers. What types of people do you like most? *Young or old? Men or women? Intellectuals, creatives, risk-takers, comedians, sports lover, animal lovers or nurturers?* In the space below, make notes about the types of people, groups or personalities you enjoy most (or if you don't have a clear preference, make a note of that too!).

## 8. What do you know - or what have you achieved - that you could teach others?

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**To consider:** Whether you're an expert on how to lose 100 pounds, train for a marathon, or launch a best-selling novel, someone will probably be happy to pay for your expertise. Think about the skills, technologies, and expertise you'd most enjoy teaching others as part of your second act –and jot down your thoughts below.

## 9. Which of your education, credentials and life-skills training would you like to leverage in your next act?

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**To consider:** Even though you have an MBA, MD or other type of professional degree, doesn't mean you *have to* continue to use it. Now might be the time to use your less formal life-skills training to move in a new direction. For example, perhaps you'd like to build on what you learned as a college athlete to pivot into a part-time gig as a high school soccer coach. Or, you might want to get serious about turning your love of photography into a side-business. Note your choices below.

## SECTION THREE: STRENGTHS, GIFTS AND TALENTS

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**“YOUR TALENTS ARE A GIFT FROM GOD. HOW YOU  
USE THEM IS YOUR GIFT TO THE WORLD.”  
- LEO BUSCAGLIA**

All of us are born with innate talents, personal strengths and personality traits that should be considered when selecting our second-act paths. This next section will help you begin to identify your gifts and talents.



# 10. What do you do easily that others find difficult?



**To consider:** I especially like this question, because we tend to undervalue our “easiest” talents - the skills we use effortlessly and without much thought. Yet, those talents are often our greatest strengths and assets. So think about the compliments people give you such as, “You are always so rational” or “You always help others” and note how those gifts influence your next steps.

# 11. What types of situations are you the “go-to” person for?

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**To consider:** What types of problems do people consistently turn to you to solve? *Are you the friend who always gives parenting advice? Or the colleague who helps solve computer issues and manage problem employees?* Think about your “go-to” reputation and then write down your thoughts on how you might incorporate that into your next act.

# 12. What energizes you?

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**To consider:** When answering this question, you might find it useful to also consider several related questions: *Who* energizes you? (and who drains you); *Where* energizes you? (city or country, beach or mountains, a rustic cabin or modern skyscraper); *What* activities fuel your soul? (listening to music, reading a novel or engaging in vigorous debate). Remember, passion is often disguised as energy. By focusing on what energizes you, you'll discover helpful insights into your true passions.

# 13. What can't you stop yourself from doing?

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**To consider:** We all have those slightly quirky behaviors that help define who we are. For example, my colleague Linsey loves connecting people to useful resources and websites. Fortunately, this “connection compulsion” is a great trait for a career coach! My neighbor Jon is a perfectionist about woodworking, and not surprisingly, his wooden sculptures are of the highest quality. What is your “I can't stop myself” mojo and what - if anything - does it suggest about your next steps?

# 14. How do you *choose* to spend your weekends or free time?

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**To consider:** The way you *choose* to spend your free time provides clues into the way you might most enjoy using your time in your second act. For example: *Do you relish spending weekends with friends?* If so, perhaps you'd make an excellent recruiter. *Love reading?* Then, consider work as a freelance writer, copy editor or author. *Enjoy sharing career advice?* Perhaps you could go back to school and train as a career coach. Even if you ultimately decide to keep your hobbies and career separate, this is an important question to ponder.

# 15. What were your favorite childhood activities?



**To consider:** Think about your favorite childhood activities - reading, playing dolls, banging on a piano or spending time with your dog - and then think about which of those activities still appeal to you today. With a bit of creativity, you might be able to find a way to incorporate some of those activities into your next act, albeit in a more adult-like variation.

# 16. What are the little things in life that bring you “jolts of joy”?

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**To consider:** The little things in life - like working in a beautiful sunny room, savoring a juicy peach from your garden or enjoying a hike with your dog - are the small moments that enrich our lives. With luck, you might be able to weave some of those “little joys” into your next act. For example, if you love spending time shopping for fresh food, perhaps you’d enjoy selling your homemade jam at a farmers market. Or, if you appreciate great art, you might want to work part-time at a museum. Note your “jolts-of-joy” triggers below.


# 17. What subjects do you naturally and consistently gravitate towards?

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**To consider:** When you walk into a bookstore, which section of the store do you naturally gravitate towards: arts, cooking, business, history or personal improvement? If you read the Sunday newspaper, which sections do you read first: *Styles?* *News?* *Week in Review?* *Business?* Think about what your preferences reveal about the subjects you consistently find most compelling, meaningful and engaging.



# 18. What are some of the best things you've ever done, and what do they suggest about what you might do next?



**To consider:** Think about your best moments, both in your personal and professional life. They don't have to be "big" moments, but they should be personally meaningful and significant. Reflect on what those moments and accomplishments suggest about what you might want to do next.

# 19. What types of problems do you like to work on and solve?



**To consider:** Every business, both for-profit and nonprofit, is built to solve problems and satisfy needs in the marketplace. So think about the types of problems you enjoy solving (e.g., tackling technical challenges, solving relationship issues, inventing a new tool, creating budgets, fixing mechanical problems, etc.) and how those skills might serve you going forward.

## 20. If you were to go back to school now, what subject(s) would you study?

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**To consider:** Even if you don't plan to go back to school, it can prove interesting to browse through college catalogs (or the online equivalent) to see which subjects and fields of study spark your interest. Be sure to also take a look at continuing education programs and community college listings - you might be surprised by the career options you'll discover.

## 21. When do you most feel like you're "in the zone" or "in your element"?

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**To consider:** Have you ever been so absorbed in your work (or non-work activities) that you completely lost track of time? What were you doing the last time that happened? Think about the specifics that were in play that caused you to lose all track of time (e.g. types of people, interactions, environments, activities, etc.) Is there some way to replicate those elements moving forward?

## SECTION FOUR: HOPES, DREAMS AND (IM)POSSIBILITIES

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**“YOU CAN GET WHAT YOU WANT OR YOU CAN JUST  
GET OLD.” – BILLY JOEL**

The questions in this last section will get you thinking about those “someday” goals and dreams that you’ve kept on the back burner while you’ve been working full-time. Perhaps now will prove the perfect time to finally explore some of those long-forgotten childhood goals.

## 22. As a child, what did you you want to be when you grew up?



**To consider:** Our childhood dreams often get lost to the practical realities of adulthood. What were your dreams? *Did you fantasize about being an actress?* Perhaps now you could pursue doing voiceover work. *Dream of becoming a vet?* Maybe now is the time to get involved with a nonprofit that trains therapy dogs. Jot down your childhood dreams below and make special note of the dreams that still resonate today.

## 23. What would you do if you won the lottery and no longer needed to work?

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**To consider:** Pretend that it is two years after you won (so the thrill of the initial spending and travel spree is over). How would you choose to spend your time? *Would you start a foundation? Write a book? Travel six months out of the year?* Think about what this suggests about your values, lifestyle drivers and the way you'd spend your time if money was no object.

## 24. What is something you've always wanted to do, but put off (until now)?

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**To consider:** Once you are freed up from the demands of a full-time job, it's time to think about those goals and "bucket list" items you've kept on the back burner. Make a list of your "someday" dreams below. With luck and creativity, you just might be able to incorporate some of those bucket list items into your second-act plans.




## 25. What would you do if you knew you could not fail?

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**To consider:** I love this question, originally attributed to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, because it challenges us to acknowledge the fears that prevent us from living our best life. So let me ask you, “What would your second act look like if you were guaranteed success?” You might be surprised by the exciting possibilities that surface once the fear of failure is removed from the equation.

## And one bonus question...

What is *one* thing you can do today to move yourself forward?



**To consider:** Passion doesn't exist in a vacuum - it builds from action.

Fortunately, there is always something you can do to create positive momentum. For example, if you are thinking about shifting into a new field, you can sign-up for a class or schedule an informational interview. So think about it. What is one thing you can do *today* to move yourself forward?

# FINAL THOUGHTS



Thanks again for downloading this guide. If you've found it useful, I hope you'll encourage your friends to sign up for our newsletter and download their own copy of this guide at [MyLifestyleCareer.com](http://MyLifestyleCareer.com).

To continue planning your second act, be sure to check out the articles on our blog, our online course and Nancy's retirement coaching options.