

# WOMEN WHO SPARK AFTER 50

*Inspiration to Reinvent and Reignite Your Life for the Second Half*

**BOOK EXERCISES**

## **PART I:**

*Did Life Throw A Bucket of Water on Your Fire?*

## Chapter 1: Is There More to Life Than This?

Below is a list of things to get your creativity flowing. We'll come back to these three questions after you've inventoried the situations affecting your life in the list below.

- I'm dealing with a job loss or divorce.
- I don't want to get old.
- I'm a lifelong people pleaser.
- I'm scared I'll be lost when the kids leave home.
- My kids are gone, and I have no idea what to do with myself.
- I'm not sure what I'll do when my career is over.
- I'm tired of my career and want to do something else. I have no idea what.
- I'm envious of young people.
- I feel completely unprepared for retirement.
- I don't know how to be in this phase of my life.
- I'm tired of feeling guilty.
- I am unhappy with how I've gotten out of shape.
- I have a desire and restlessness to do more.
- I have a nagging feeling that something is missing.
- I feel like the women around me are doing better than I am.
- I have an overarching feeling of "It's too late."
- I feel trapped in my career.
- I'm lonely.
- I'm exhausted.

Add something not listed above: \_\_\_\_\_

Now, let's circle around and consider each of our reflection questions.

## **Chapter 1: Is There More to Life Than This?**

**Jot down your thoughts:**

1. What is unresolved in your life?
2. What needs your attention?
3. What do you need to do differently?

## Chapter 1: Is There More to Life Than This?

What would you do if you didn't feel guilty? Let's consider this carefully. Check the things below that you want to give yourself permission to do—guilt free:

### I give myself permission to:

- Sleep an extra hour a day.
- Go for regular walks.
- Start a hobby.
- Fit in time for my workouts.
- Go back to school.
- Watch a show I enjoy.
- Start a business.
- Write a book.
- Remodel my kitchen.
- Put in new carpeting.
- Install new windows.
- Ask for help.
- Tell someone no.
- Volunteer less.
- Go on a vacation by myself.
- Not make my kids' lunches.
- Not cook dinner every single night.
- Not do all of the laundry.
- Not clean my kids' rooms.
- Not call my mom every day.
- Not be the de facto babysitter for my grandchildren.
- Not mow the lawn.
- Not shovel the snow.
- Not do the grocery shopping.
- Not pay all of the bills.

## Chapter 2: Let's Get a Few Things Straight

### Your Belief System

Are you guilty of thinking any of the thoughts below? Check every box that applies to how you think about yourself so you can start working to overcome your biggest obstacles.

- I'm not good enough.
- Who do I think I am?
- I don't have enough time left.
- That ship has sailed.
- I could never do what she is doing.
- That dream is for someone else.
- It's ridiculous for me to even imagine I could \_\_\_\_\_.

## **PART II:**

*Clean Up the Mess*

## Chapter 3: The Sparks Have Dimmed

### Your Struggle Bucket

From the list that follows, I'd like you to put a checkmark by the things that have happened, or are happening, in your life that you continue to struggle with.

If you've experienced something on the list but you're not struggling with it today, leave it unchecked.

This checklist is also available as a download at [www.womenwhosparkbooks.com](http://www.womenwhosparkbooks.com) in case you'd like to work outside of the book.

- My life hasn't turned out the way I hoped it would.
- I don't think I'm enough.
- I have a difficult relationship with at least one of my children.
- I'm in a difficult financial situation in life.
- I'm a mom—and I feel guilty about something almost every day.
- I have a difficult co-parenting situation.
- I am afraid of what my future holds.
- I struggle with shame over past decisions.
- I am self-conscious about my appearance.
- I have a poor relationship with my mom.
- I have a poor relationship with my dad.
- I lost my mom or dad early.
- I've been passed over for promotions I thought I'd get.
- I suffer from anxiety.
- I suffer from depression.
- I don't have any friends.
- I am estranged from one of my siblings.
- I have an abusive spouse or significant other.
- Someone in my family struggles with an addiction.



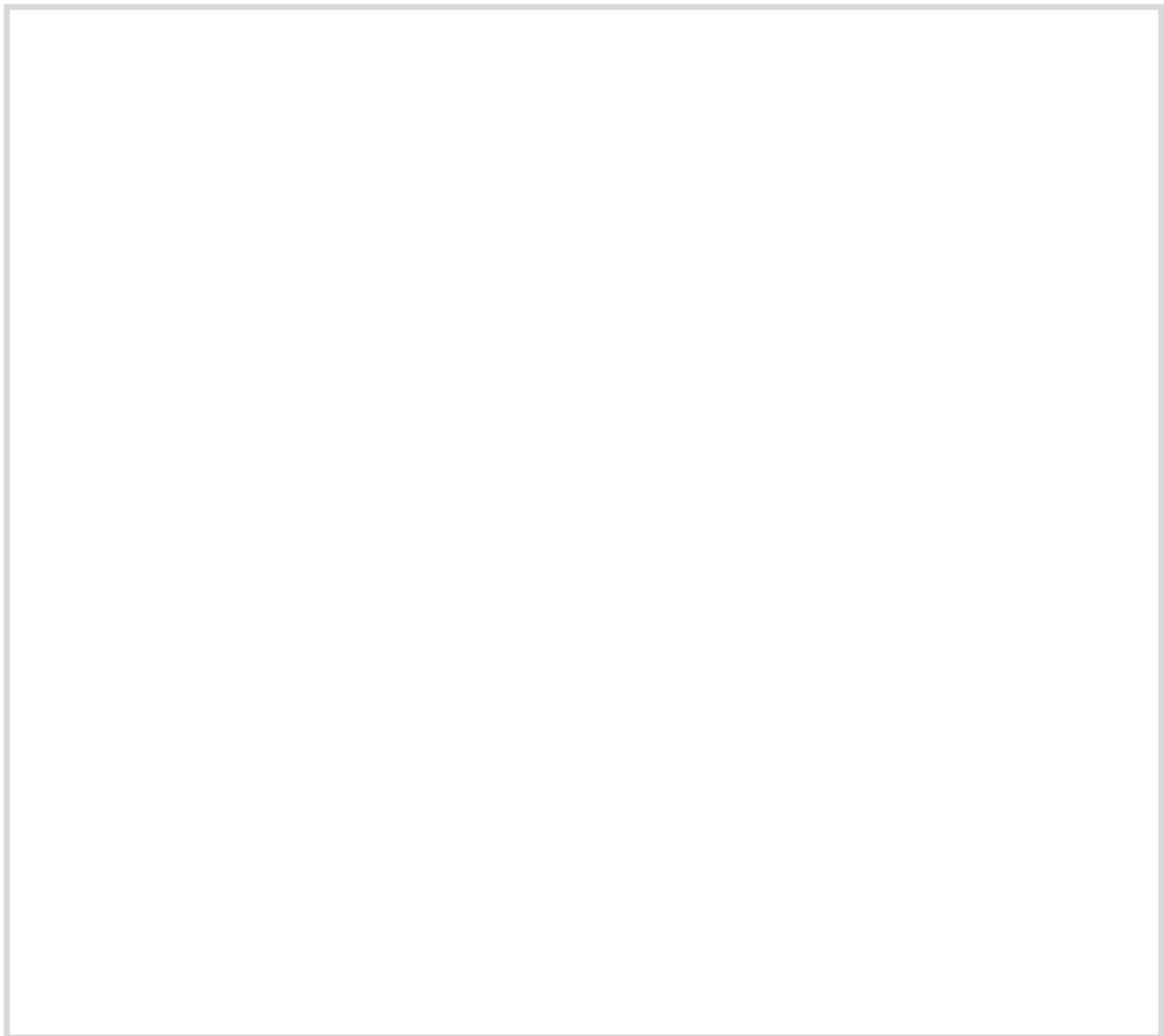
- My life hasn't turned out the way I hoped it would.
- I don't think I'm enough.
- I have a difficult relationship with at least one of my children.
- I'm in a difficult financial situation in life.
- I've been unhappily divorced.
- I've had a difficult break up.
- Mean words from others have destroyed my confidence.
- I don't have confidence.
- I am in an unhappy relationship.
- I have not forgiven myself for a years-ago abortion.
- I've attempted suicide.
- I feel hopeless.
- I suffer from panic attacks.
- I have an unhappy child that affects my own happiness.
- I am unfulfilled in my job.
- I regret not going to college.
- I struggle to feel happy.
- I constantly compare myself to others.
- My husband is having an affair.
- I'm having an affair.
- I'm an exhausted caretaker of others.
- I have a wayward child.
- I have an overwhelming amount of debt.
- I can barely pay my bills.
- I am afraid to speak up in meetings for fear I will say something stupid.
- I don't have any dreams for the future.
- I struggle with physical pain others can't see.
- I'm raising someone else's children.
- I have an adult child suffering from mental health issues.
- I've lost a child to suicide.
- What, me? I don't have any struggles. My life is so good.

## ***Chapter 4: Clean Up the Things That Matter to You***

### **Things I Want to Clean Up**

Set a timer for 15 minutes and write down everything that comes to mind. Consider your surroundings, both inside and out. Consider your emotions, your thoughts, and the things nagging at you. Think, but don't overthink it. If it comes to mind, write it down.

If you're feeling stuck, you may want to walk around your house, room by room, to complete this exercise. Observations about your physical environment may trigger emotional thoughts.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin gray border, intended for the user to write down their thoughts and observations during the 15-minute exercise.

## Chapter 4: Clean Up the Things That Matter to You

What do you want to clean up? Jot down a few bullet points to describe what you'd like to do.

### 1. Clean Up Area #1:

a.

b.

### 2. Clean Up Area #2:

a.

b.

What feels more like a reinventing and reigniting focus to you? Jot down a few bullet points to explain your thoughts.

### 3. Reinvent and Reignite Area #1

a.

b.

### 4. Reinvent and Reignite Area #2:

a.

b.

## **PART III:**

*Rekindle Your Passion for Life*

## Chapter 6: It's Time to Reignite and Reinvent

### A Glance at Your Decades

Before we go further, I want you to consider what your past decades looked like. After all, they brought you to where you stand now. Most importantly, those past decades contributed to your current mindset.

As you read through these lists, think about your own experiences. Check the items on the list that come closest to representing each phase of your life.

This memory-refreshing exercise may provide insights into your current land, as well as your readiness to step on the bridge or head straight to the airport to hop a plane and hit the runway!

#### From 0 – 18 years (childhood):

- Did you grow up a fairly traditional dependent?
- Was there a strong sense of family culture and leadership from your parents?
- Did you receive structured learning in an educational system or at home with your parents?
- Do you look back on these years fondly?
- Were they difficult years?
- Did you rely almost entirely on your parents for financial support, at least until your teen years?
- Or did you support yourself in large part?
- Did your parents' encouragement foster a belief that you can go after your dreams? That you can do and be whatever you want?
- Or did your parents steer you toward their dreams for you?
- Did high school feel like the best years of your life?
- Or was high school a difficult experience for you? (One you're glad to have behind you!)

**Reflections:** What was great about these decades? What was a struggle? What was missing?

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**From 18 – 30 years (transition into adulthood):**

- Did you attend college or a technical school?
- Did you begin your working profession at some point during this decade?
- Did you, like many young adults, meet your “person”?
- Did you get married during this decade?
- Did you buy your first house?
- Did you give birth to or adopt children?
- Did you struggle with the inability to have children?
- Did you begin thinking about your goals for your life? If you’re a high achiever, did you even write them down?
- Did you feel excited?
- Did you feel like you had your whole life ahead of you?
- Did you have an idealistic view of a happy, joyful life ahead of you?
- Did you drift happily through this decade?
- Did your mess start early?

**Reflections:** What was great about these decades? What was a struggle? What was missing?

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**From 30 – 50 years (early stage):**

(These years mark what I like to refer to as the “messy middle” of life. The messy middle starts out manageable, most commonly marked by a sense of a lot going on.)

- Did you earn an advanced degree or a different degree?
- Did you begin settling into a new marriage?
- Did you give birth to or adopt children?
- Did you begin juggling your work with the kids and taking care of your home?
- Did you spend a few years sorting through some of the challenges of marriage that you didn’t anticipate? (This could have ranged from minor annoyances to more egregious problems.)

- Did you focus on achieving the goals you identified in your 20s? (At least the ones that still remained on your list.)
- Did you experience financial pressures as life became more multi-faceted, with more things vying for your dollars? (This might have included daycare, kids' clothes, supplies and activities, saving for college for multiple kids, saving for retirement, paying the mortgage, facing the challenges of becoming a one-income family, paying an endless number of bills each month, and falling in the trap of credit card debt accumulation.)
- Did you trade in your young-adult car for a family mini-van?
- Did your schedule fill up with meal planning, shopping, cooking, carpools, volunteering at school, fitting in workouts, making sure your parents have what they need, laundry, cleaning, planning playdates and birthday parties, finding date nights, and keeping a social calendar active?
- Did your time with friends become a distant memory?
- Did you start struggling to fit in workouts?
- Did you begin feeling overwhelmed and exhausted?
- Did you still believe you could have it all? You wanted it, after all, so why wouldn't it happen?

**Reflections:** What was great about these decades? What was a struggle? What was missing?

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**From 30 - 50 years (late stage):**

(You're not seeing double. This is the same age range as above. A lot happens during these messy middle years, so I'm breaking it down by early and late stages. As these years go by, you may find things becoming more difficult than you intended.)

- Things have remained harried, hurried, and messy.
- You spent so many years taking care of the needs of others that your needs got left behind.
- Somewhere along the way, you lost your own voice.
- Many days it feels like your family doesn't appreciate what you do for them.
- Professionally, your career didn't progress the way you thought it would.
- You lost your passion for your career.
- You lost your confidence over the years

- You deal with regrets for the things you did or the things you didn't do.
- Your dreams are unfulfilled.
- You often feel lonely, even though you're surrounded by people.
- You vacillate between feeling happy and feeling sad.
- You're disappointed with a number of things in your life.
- You feel self-conscious because of your weight and find yourself declining invitations because of it.
- You're feeling stuck in a difficult marriage or relationship.
- You're feeling restless.

**Reflections:** What was great about these decades? What was a struggle? What was missing?

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**What are your insights from this activity?**

What did you learn by reflecting on your experiences throughout the decades?

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What surprised you?

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In what ways have your experiences affected your current state of mind or your current level of readiness to step onto the bridge?

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- *What do her relationships look like?*
- *What are people saying about her?*
- *What legacy is she leaving behind?*

## Your Vision of You

It's time to create the vision for your future.

### Your 80-Year-Old Self.

- *Who is she?*
- *What is she doing?*
- *What does she look like?*
- *Who is she helping?*
- *What is she enjoying?*
- *What makes her laugh?*

- *What do her relationships look like?*
- *What are people saying about her?*
- *What legacy is she leaving behind?*

## **PART IV:**

### *Fan the Flames*

## Chapter 10: Transform Yourself for Action

### Summary Checklist for Chapter 10: Transform Yourself for Action

This checklist is a summary of all of the things you've considered throughout Chapter 10. Here it is in one tidy place.

#### Preliminary steps for action:

- Yes! I acknowledge that I have a lot of years ahead of me.
- Yes, I'm doing the work. I'll create a vision board for what my future is going to look like.
- A Spark Box? Absolutely! I'm on it. I'll start shopping right now.
- Yes, I love it! I'm going to start looking for a mentor.
- Yes, I'm ready to listen! The women around me, even strangers, have potential to inspire me. I'll be more proactive in my conversations.
- I'm ready to work on the Brand of Me

#### My overall view of life:

Situations:

- I tend to be optimistic.
- I tend to be pessimistic

Other people:

- I'm gracious and know people mean well.
- I'm more critical and don't always trust that people have positive intentions.

My own life:

- I have faith that I can do whatever I want.
- I don't have faith in myself.

#### The role learning plays in my life:

- I'm in. I'll keep learning as I continue my life journey.

#### My confidence and sense of self-worth:

- "I want to be confident."
- "I want to feel a sense of self-worth."
- "I'm willing to do the work."

**My connection to fear and perfectionism:**

- Okay. This is another thing for me to take a look at. I'll explore moving away from fear and perfectionism. (Spoiler alert: you don't have to know how you're going to do it, only that you want to do it.)

**My wardrobe, hair and make-up:**

- Hmm, I'm intrigued. I'll add hair, make-up and wardrobe to my list.

**My teeth:**

- As a matter of fact, my teeth do need some attention.

**My weight:**

- Yesssss. I need it on my list.

**My health and fitness:**

- I'm in! I need to step up and do the work to regain my health and fitness.

**My interpersonal communication style:**

- Ah jeez, I could lighten up about my opinions.

**My role as a mom and grandma:**

What kind of mom and grandma do I want to be?

- A needy mom whose happiness is tied to time with my adult children.
- A mom who finds happiness in her own life and whose time with adult children is a bonus.
- A mom who places guilt on my adult children when they don't spend enough time with me.
- A mom who understands my adult children have several priorities in life to juggle.
- A kind, gracious grandma who will be available in the way my kids would like me to be.
- A needy grandma who will pout if my kids and grandkids don't make me enough of a priority

- A supportive grandma who will follow the wishes of the parents.
- A grandma who will sneak my grandchildren sugar against the request of their parents.
- A grandma who will honor the wishes of my children in their role as parents.
- A busy grandma who will do the best she can to be available for her grandchildren.
- A babysitting grandma who wants to be the childcare solution for my grandchildren.
- An opinionated grandma who will coach the parents on how to raise their children.
- What else is on your mind about the kind of grandma you're going to be?
- Write it down here: \_\_\_\_\_

This is too important a season to leave it to chance.

- Yes. I'll give thought in advance to how I'll be showing up as a mom and grandma

**Make some advance decisions about technology:**

- Yes! I'm on it. Technology will not leave me behind.

**What else?**

What else do you need to do to set yourself up for action?



## Chapter 12: Women Who Are Doing It

### Reflection Questions

*What ideas did the stories in this chapter spark for you?*

*What is something you would do if you could?*

*What childhood dream(s) have you abandoned?*

*What is still holding you back from your past that you need to overcome?*

## **Where do you go from here?**

*Reading this book is a starting point. As you move forward, I would love to remain part of your support team.*

*Please visit my website at [aletanorris.com](http://aletanorris.com) to find out how to stay in touch.*

- You can join my Women Who Spark Tribe Facebook Community at [www.facebook.com/groups/womenwhospark](http://www.facebook.com/groups/womenwhospark)*
- Sign up for my Women Who Spark Midlife Makeover at [www.aletanorris.com/midlifemakeover](http://www.aletanorris.com/midlifemakeover)*
- Join my Membership community, Accountability and Friendship for Success, at [www.aletanorris.com/AFSMembership](http://www.aletanorris.com/AFSMembership)*
- Drop me a line at [aleta@aletanorris.com](mailto:aleta@aletanorris.com).*

*Please let me know how I can help you, my friend.*

*Aleta xo*