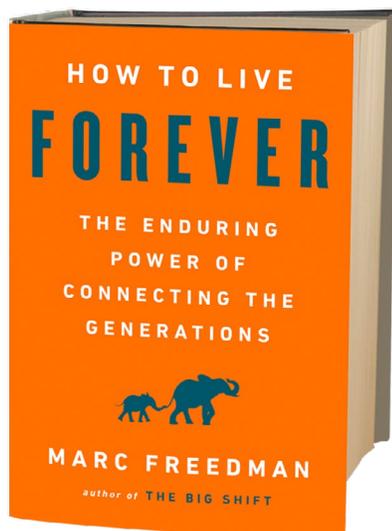


HOW TO LIVE FOREVER

DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY GUIDE



In writing *How to Live Forever*, Marc Freedman set out to answer three critical questions:

- With so many living so much longer, what do the increasing years beyond 50 mean?
- How can a society with more older people than younger ones thrive?
- How do we find happiness when we know life is long and time is short?

These are big questions that invite us to explore how we live our daily lives. You might want to talk about them with people at work, in your faith community, with your book group, with your service club, or around an intergenerational holiday table.

“The only resource big enough to help solve the problems facing the next generation is the older one.”

— Marc Freedman, *How to Live Forever*

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10 QUESTIONS

Here are 10 questions to help you launch your discussions. And, if you're inspired to turn talk into action, check out the suggested activities that follow.

- 1.** Marc begins and ends the book talking about the men and women, including his father, who have been mentors for him. Who are the people in your family, your neighborhood, your faith community, or your workplace who have been important guides for you?
- 2.** As you reflect on having a mentor — or being one — what are some of the challenges and rewards of these relationships?
- 3.** Marc describes the encore years as the perfect age, the “season when we know what matters and have the time and capacity — and the motivation — to do something significant with it.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Are there other life stages that you'd describe this way?
- 4.** Throughout the book, Marc discusses the importance of grandparents — including the importance of “fictive kin” like his neighbors Jake and Joyce, or Foster Grandparents like Aggie and Louise. Why do you think the bond between people in later life and younger children is often so powerful for both generations?
- 5.** The book explains the significant changes over the past century that have led to age segregation. How do our societal attitudes toward age contribute to age-segregation in neighborhoods, at work, at church, and in other facets of your life? Do you think of your own life as segregated by age?
- 6.** Marc encourages readers to “get proximate” — that is, to find places and spaces where all generations can interact easily and naturally. Where are the places in your life that provide the proximity for you to regularly interact across ages and generations?
- 7.** One theme Marc explores is finding “new ways to do old things” — including home-sharing across generations, artist-in-residence programs in senior-living communities, and virtual mentoring programs. Are there new ways to do old things that you'd like to try in your family, your workplace or your community?
- 8.** The book offers several excerpts from songs, poems or prayers that illustrate specific emotions about later life or mortality. If you were to choose a favorite song or poem to illustrate your own stage of life, what would it be?
- 9.** We often think of our wills as a way to leave things to others, but Marc writes that, “Love is truly the legacy we leave behind.” How are you preparing to leave love behind?
- 10.** After reading *How to Live Forever*, what's one new way you're inspired to leave the world better than you found it?

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5 ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a map of the places you spend your day or your week. Describe the people you encounter there — at the local coffee shop, in your workplace, at school, where you exercise, where you buy groceries, etc. How often and how intensively do you interact with people of different generations? Consider how you might build more and stronger connections with people who are in a different stage of life than you are.

2. The book mentions several instances of missed opportunities — for example, Marc’s mentor Emmy Werner passing away just before he reached back out to her after being out of touch, or Atul Gawande’s story about failing to ask a dying patient what mattered most to her. The last page of the epilogue features a prayer called “We Wait Too Long,” read at Marc’s father’s memorial service. Do these moments remind you of someone you’ve lost touch with or you’d like to thank? Consider picking up the phone, writing a letter or publishing a blog or Facebook post honoring that person.

3. Marc makes several references to David Brooks’s idea of “eulogy virtues.” Jot down a list of eulogy virtues you hope people will remember you for. Over the next week, consider how you express these values in your daily activities and commitments — whether in your family, neighborhood, volunteer commitments, work or faith community. What do you notice? Who might you want to share your list with? Does this activity inspire you to do anything differently, now or in the future?

4. Marc mentions several movies with intergenerational mentoring themes, including *Creed*, *Up*, *The Last Word*, and *Keep On, Keepin’ On*. Consider bringing people together to watch a great mentoring movie and talk about mentoring in real life. Get suggested movies, along with a guide for hosting a watch party, at generationtogeneration.org (generationtogeneration.org/movies-mentors/).

5. *How to Live Forever* includes many examples of ways people organized to help young people thrive — like Karen Dubinsky, founder of Pushy Moms, who organized other moms to help community college students apply for and attend four-year colleges. Is there a local need that could be met if a few experienced people stepped up to help — like summer hunger or backpacks for students who need them? Start a conversation with your friends about how you can help. Check out these [DIY \(Do-It-Yourself\) guides](http://generationtogeneration.org/diy-activities) (generationtogeneration.org/diy-activities) for inspiration.

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5 WAYS TO DO MORE

- 1.** Sign up for the [Encore.org](https://encore.org/subscribe-to-encore-org/) (encore.org/subscribe-to-encore-org/) newsletter to keep up with news about the encore movement.
- 2.** Join the [Gen2Gen](https://generationtogeneration.org/join) (generationtogeneration.org/join) campaign to learn more about opportunities to help kids thrive.
- 3.** Love the book's stories about people tackling a community issue together? Already involved in helping kids thrive? Take a look at the Generation to Generation [champion toolkit](https://generationtogeneration.org/champion-toolkit) (generationtogeneration.org/champion-toolkit) for ways you can mobilize others to stand up for and with kids.
- 4.** Consider mentoring a young person through a virtual or face-to-face relationship. Visit [Mentor.org](https://mentoring.org/get-involved/become-a-mentor) (mentoring.org/get-involved/become-a-mentor) or [Striveforcollege.org](https://striveforcollege.org) (striveforcollege.org), two Gen2Gen partners mentioned in the book. If you're over 55 years old, check out [national service programs](https://nationalservice.gov) (nationalservice.gov) like Foster Grandparents and RSVP in addition to AmeriCorps (for people of all ages!).
- 5.** Explore [Encore Fellowships](https://encore.org/fellowships) (encore.org/fellowships) — high-impact, paid assignments and career transition programs in cities across the country — at organizations serving children and youth.