

The Second *Half* Playbook

Five moves for the man who wants to build
the second half on purpose.

You've built a good life. You're successful. You're showing up. But the real friendships have quietly faded. The adventures stopped. The hobbies got shelved. And nobody has a plan for the next chapter.

This isn't a crisis. It's a question: *What does a great second half actually look like — and how do you build it starting now?*

The answer is not more self-improvement. It is not therapy or a retreat or another book. It is simpler: good men, shared adventures, and honest conversations. Table & Trail is built on that formula. This playbook is five moves that put it into practice.

1 in 4

men can't name a single close
friend

1/2

as many close friendships as a
generation ago

74%

rely on their partner as their sole
emotional outlet

15%

have zero close friends — up from
3% in 1990

You are not the exception. You are the majority. And the majority of men in the second half are quietly running on something that used to work — and has stopped.

The next four pages are what the men who figured it out actually did.

01

Why This Is Harder Than It Should Be

The cultural script men inherited — and what it quietly cost them

Before the five moves, it helps to understand what you are working against.

Men in the second half inherited a cultural script: achieve more, need less, show nothing, keep it together. That script built careers, earned respect, and kept things running. It also quietly drained the friendships, the adventures, and the sense of aliveness that made the first half worth living.

Most men are not struggling because something broke. They are struggling because the script that worked in the first half stops working — and nobody gave them a new one. The result is a slow, quiet drift. Away from the men you used to know. Away from the things that used to feel like you. Away from any clear sense of what you are building toward.

You are not in crisis. You are just running a program that has passed its expiration date.

"The biggest risk factor for men in midlife is not money or career. It is isolation. And the men who do not address it do not just feel worse — they die sooner."

VIVEK MURTHY, U.S. SURGEON GENERAL

Here is what the research says

The Harvard Study of Adult Development followed 724 men for 80 years — the longest study of adult happiness ever conducted. The finding was simple: **the men with the closest relationships at 50 were the healthiest and happiest at 80.** Not the wealthiest. Not the most accomplished. The most connected.

Arthur Brooks calls it the shift that separates the men who thrive from the ones who don't — from chasing achievement to deepening relationships. Sebastian Junger puts it plainly: men evolved for the tribe, and modern life stripped every condition for tribe away. David Brooks calls it the second mountain — the one most men never climb because nobody told them it was there.

The research all points the same direction. The fix is not a breakthrough or a reinvention. It is simpler than that — and harder. It requires showing up, consistently, with other men who are willing to do the same.

Most men arrive at midlife with the same three things quietly missing: the adventures, the friendships, and the hobbies that used to make them feel like themselves.

The next three pages are five moves that change it.

02 The Five Moves

What the men who figured it out actually did

Every man who found his footing in the second half made some version of these five moves. Not all at once. Not perfectly. But they made them.

1

Show up for something — and let the friendship follow

In his early twenties, Mike moved to Chicago knowing nobody. He joined an outdoor adventure group. He did not go looking for friendship. He showed up for the activity — and the friendship found him. That is the model. It worked at 24. It works at 54. Stop waiting for connection to show up. Show up for the thing, and let the connection find you.

This is what The Trailhead is built for. Baseball games. Trail walks. Breakfasts. Show up and see what happens.

2

Do something hard — with other men

Challenge creates brotherhood faster than anything else. Not conversation, not sharing feelings — doing something that actually costs you something, with men beside you. It does not have to be extreme. It has to be real. A hike that requires effort. A commitment you keep. Something that makes you show up as more than the version of yourself that has everything under control.

Week 2 of The Turn — every man commits to one hard thing before Week 6. The group holds him to it.

3

Name the friendship problem — then solve it

Men stop making close friends after 40. Not because they stop wanting them — because life closes off the conditions that create them. Proximity, repeated contact, shared experience without an agenda. The friendship problem is not personal. It is structural. Once you name it, you can build the right conditions intentionally instead of waiting for them to appear.

Week 3 of The Turn — why men stop making friends after 40 and what it actually takes to build real ones.

4

Get your hobbies back

At some point, life got full and you put them down. The thing you used to do just because you loved it — fishing, woodworking, hiking, music, whatever it was. You told yourself you would get back to it. Getting your hobbies back is not a luxury. It is identity recovery. The things you do just because they make you feel like yourself are not optional in the second half. They are essential.

Week 4 of The Turn — the things you shelved when life got full. This week is permission to get them back.

5

Design the second half — do not just let it happen

The first half's direction was mostly given to you: succeed, provide, advance. The second half requires you to choose. The men who thrive are the ones who get specific — who can say, in plain language, what they are building and why. Not a career goal. A life direction. This does not happen alone. It happens in a room, with other men, with someone who knows how to hold the space.

Week 6 of The Turn — each man presents one page: what am I building? The group responds.

THE GUIDE

Mike Schneiderman — Founder, Table & Trail

Most men in the second half are not struggling because something went wrong. The friendships just got thin. The calendar filled up. One day you look up and realize the men you used to know are now once or twice a year — and nobody did anything wrong. Life just got full.

Mike has lived this. When his kids left for college, he realized his closest friendships had quietly become annual events. He remembered when they were not. In his twenties, he had moved to Chicago knowing nobody, joined an outdoor adventure group, and made some of the best friends of his life. One of those men stood at his wedding. The formula was simple: show up for something, and the friendship finds you.

He started a dinner group to test whether that formula still worked. It did. Table & Trail grew from that table.

His job is not to be the story. It is to help you find yours.

BACKGROUND

Certified Executive Coach

Emory University

25 Years

Organizational leadership and community building

RLT Training in Progress

Terry Real's Relational Life Institute · completing this year

03 The Trail

Where you enter and where it can take you

You do not have to start at the deepest end. Every man enters the trail wherever he is ready. The trail meets you there.

1 The Trailhead — Events

Baseball games, trail walks, breakfasts, happy hours. Free or low cost. No membership, no commitment. Show up and meet good men. Move 1 starts here.

2 The Open Table

A monthly hosted gathering open to any man. A real question, an honest conversation. No commitment required. Come once and see what is possible.

3 The Turn **\$499 founding rate**

Six consecutive weeks. Eight men. 90 minutes each session. A group text thread and one field assignment between every session.

Week 1: Who Are You Now? · Week 2: Doing Hard Things · Week 3: The Friendship Problem · Week 4: Reclaim Your Hobbies · Week 5: Build Your Brotherhood · Week 6: Your Second Half Blueprint

4 The Table **\$99/month founding rate**

The ongoing monthly home for men who have been through The Turn. A closed group — the same men, every month, for as long as it serves you. Not a program with an end date. This is the long game, where real brotherhood gets built over years, not weeks.

5 The Summit **\$100/session founding rate**

One-on-one sessions with Mike. For the man ready to do specific personal work — career, identity, marriage, the next chapter. Private. At your pace.

YOUR NEXT STEP

The trail starts here.

Move 5 says design the second half — do not let it happen to you. Here is where that starts:

Imagine your life a year from now. You have men who actually know you. You have something you look forward to every week. You know what the next chapter is for — and you are building it on purpose. That is not a fantasy. That is what happens when men stop waiting and start showing up.

The men who don't do anything about this don't end up fine. They end up alone.
The trail starts April 23.

Charlotte Knights Baseball — April 23

The first Table & Trail outing. The night the trail begins. No agenda, no pitch — just good men at a ballgame, seeing what this community can become. Come alone. Leave knowing someone.

April 23, 2026

Truist Field · Uptown Charlotte

tableandtrail.org

"The men who find community in the second half are the ones who did not wait for it to come to them."

They showed up somewhere — and stayed long enough for something real to develop."

Can't make April 23?

Get on the list for upcoming events and the next Open Table. tableandtrail.org/connect

Ready to talk about The Turn?

Reach Mike directly. mike@tableandtrail.org