THE BACKWARD TRUTH • STAGE III FREE GUIDE

The Second-Chapter Check-In

For empty nesters and couples nearing retirement

The kids are grown and careers are winding down. For the first time in decades, you may have real time together. **This chapter can be your best yet, if you design it on purpose.**

> Divorce after age fifty, sometimes called "gray divorce," has **doubled since 1990**. Many of these couples simply drifted apart once work and parenting no longer filled their days.
>
> *Source: Brown & Lin, National Center for Family & Marriage Research, Bowling Green State University*

Start with one brave question

Answer on your own first, then share gently.

Is there anything I've been waiting to say "until the kids were grown" or "until we retired"?

Talk it through

What parts of our marriage feel outdated now?

How much help (time and money) can we give family without hurting ourselves?

What are the "crown jewels" of our life we will protect no matter what?

What gets us out of bed in the morning, together?

THE BACKWARD TRUTH

Losing Your Shared Direction



Quick Check

Statement	Circle one
Our chores and roles feel fair now that our routines have changed.	0 1 2
We both know our real financial picture and our income plan.	0 1 2
We have set clear, loving limits with adult children and family.	0 1 2
We have friends and community outside our marriage.	0 1 2
We share at least one goal or project just for the two of us.	0 1 2

0 = not yet • 1 = somewhat • 2 = yes, and we live it

9–10: Strong and steady

You are enjoying the rewards of your hard work.

5–8: Some work to do

A few clear agreements will bring more peace.

0–4: Time for a reset

A wake-up call, not a verdict.

> **TUFF TRUTH**
>
> This stage isn't about winding down. It's about building the next chapter on purpose, so you never wake up as two strangers sharing a house.

In the Stage III workbook

- Your new daily rhythm plan
- The Lifestyle Design Game (a date night!)
- Family peace rules
- A 48-hour crisis plan
- Protecting savings and the survivor
- Finding shared purpose

This free guide is for education and reflection. It is not therapy, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you ever feel unsafe in your relationship, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. © 2026 Marcela C. Sherwin, Live TUFF, LLC. Free to share in full; not for resale.

Make the second chapter the best one.

Get The Backward Truth: Stage III, The Joyful Connection Years.

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