

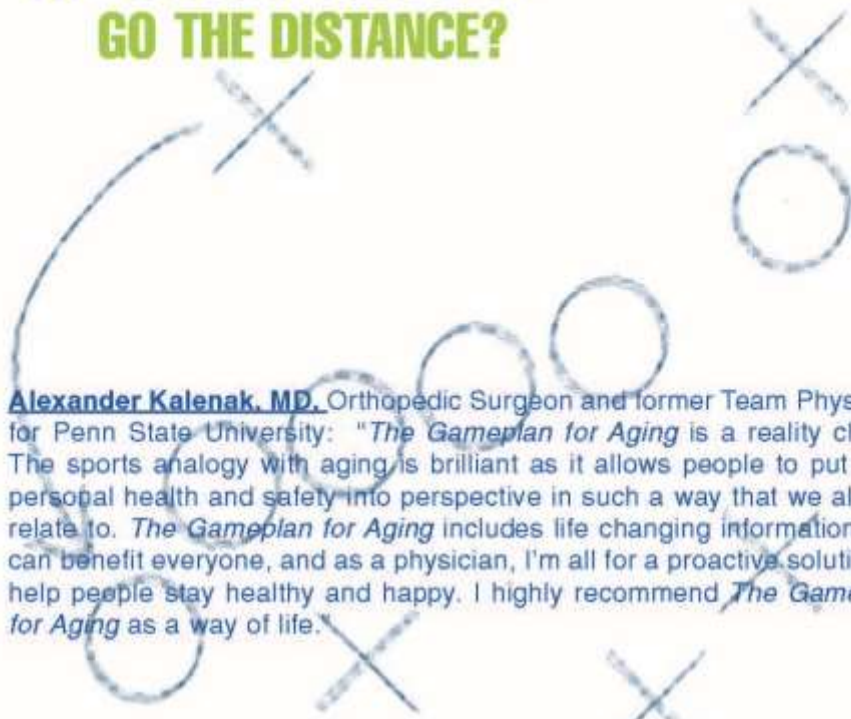
the
Gameplan
for **Aging**

Your Four Quarters of Life



by
Mark A. Everest

LIFE IS A JOURNEY.....
ARE YOU PREPARED TO
GO THE DISTANCE?



Alexander Kalenak, MD, Orthopedic Surgeon and former Team Physician for Penn State University: "*The Gameplan for Aging* is a reality check. The sports analogy with aging is brilliant as it allows people to put their personal health and safety into perspective in such a way that we all can relate to. *The Gameplan for Aging* includes life changing information that can benefit everyone, and as a physician, I'm all for a proactive solution to help people stay healthy and happy. I highly recommend *The Gameplan for Aging* as a way of life."

Diane Deacon, President, Creative Thinking Association of America and co-author of the books, *Think Out of the Box*, *Break out of the Box*, and *Raise the Bar*: "I've had the pleasure of participating in a number of Mark Everest's programs on *The Gameplan for Aging*. It had a major impact on my life! Mark's techniques are easy to apply in a busy day-to-day schedule. I use his techniques daily! This is truly an "Out of the Box" game plan to help you think, work, and live better! I *sincerely* recommend *The Gameplan for Aging*!"

Donald K. Hunt, President & CEO, SYSCO Food Services of Central PA, LLC.: " Looking in retrospect at the past year using the *Gameplan for Aging*, we feel it has had a profound impact on our company. The employees have embraced the concept of the 'Industrial Athlete' in their professional and personal lives. We have documented a reduction in injury frequency and have seen a boost in morale as a result. Pre-shift stretching, once laughable, is now a rote behavior. The energy level is amazing. I would endorse this program to anyone who is willing to commit to the betterment of the TEAM concept and wants to show their employees that they care!

**THE GAMEPLAN
FOR AGING,
YOUR FOUR QUARTERS
OF LIFE**

Mark A. Everest

With
Lori E. Everest

Contributing Editors & Lifestyle Factors Contribution
Susan Shapiro
Ronald Shapiro

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I dedicate this book to my best friend, Ed Lunney, who profoundly touched my mind, my heart, and my soul. During his long struggle with cancer he triumphed into spiritual health. As my teacher and mentor he was my inspiration for writing this book. I would like to thank my wife, Lori, for her ever-present belief in me. Words cannot truly express how much your support means to me. You are always there for me. I love you so much. And to our children, Marcus and Erica, thank you for loving me even though my travel schedule so often has kept me away from you. Whenever I think of the two of you I can't help but smile. To my parents, Dorothy and Rex, thank you for your love and commitment to me and to each other. You have provided me with a strong foundation and work ethic which I now use to expand my work with others. And a special thanks to Charles Tremendous Jones for inspiring me when I was but a young man, to follow my heart, find my niche, stay spiritual, work hard, and never give up.

Lastly, to all the people who have benefited from *The Gameplan for Aging*. You have taught me valuable lessons and have helped me to appreciate some of the greatest and simplest meanings of life. People have the ability to help each other, and in doing so, help themselves.

THE GAMEPLAN
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CHAPTER SEVEN

HALFTIME

DONNA'S STORY

In an athletic event, halftime is when the teams go back into the locker room to regroup. It's an interesting environment, especially if you're in the room with the team that's losing the game. I'm certain that many of you reading this book can relate to locker room talks. What does the coach say to the players if the team is losing at half time? Does he or she say, "Hey, team! You're looking sharp out there today! Let's keep up the good work. We can make a comeback if we just keep doing what we've been doing!" *Doubtful!* If the team is losing, the coach will try to re-motivate the players. He or she will take out the playbook and incorporate new strategies. The coach is trying to redirect the behavior of the players (behavior modification), because the team can't afford to make the same mistakes they made in the first half.

Aging is pretty much the same. If we don't feel as good as we can possibly feel, then we are losing momentum just like that sports team. Ask yourself a question and answer it honestly. How are, or were, the first two quarters of life? Keep in mind there are many factors that make up a good first half of life. Health is a very significant factor, but family, finances, and physical and emotional issues also play a huge role. If you've already passed that halftime mark, and are dissatisfied, ask yourself what you think could have been done to make things better? It's unfortunate that we can't turn

back the clock, for if we could.... I know that I, for one, would definitely have made some play changes along the way.

When I speak to high school or college students, and I talk about halftime in life, they say they'll make their personal play changes *at* halftime....whenever that time comes. Right now, they're just having too much fun! Forty years old is a million years away. Gosh, that's OLD! And, hey, I agree with the "fun" aspect! Remember one of the mission statements of the first quarter of life? For most, it's "Party Time"! Why not? However, if you think about an athletic game, how many coaches would say, "Hey, team, let's go out and lose the first two quarters of the game today! It's cool! Don't worry about it. We can make it up in the second half!" *That* would really make the game exciting for the fans, wouldn't it? I haven't met a coach yet who wants to be losing in the first two quarters of the game. Why? Momentum! Once you get it, you want to keep it; otherwise you have to work twice as hard to make up for slacking off in the first half. Aging is the same. Capture that momentum, and once you have it, you have to work at keeping it up! We progressively lose some momentum as we move from one quarter of life to the next, and if we simply let whatever happens happen, without trying to make things better for ourselves, without pushing to keep that momentum going, we will ultimately lose.

But what if our momentum is in full gear, going strong – and the unforeseen happens? What if, despite all our positive actions, something occurs to totally interrupt our lives; something so major that we can barely function, let alone push to keep our momentum going? Life altering events happen every day. We think they'll happen to somebody else, but inevitably these things do end up touching our lives. My sister-in-law, Donna, had such an experience. Nearing her forty-first birthday, she discovered a lump in her breast that was diagnosed malignant. I have been inspired by many people over the years, but Donna is the perfect example of the type of person I admire most. In fact, she has inspired so many of us, that I asked Donna to write her own story to add to the *Gameplan for Aging*.

DONNA'S STORY

“When I was asked to contribute my experience to *Gameplan*



Donna Reese, my sister-in-law, during chemotherapy treatments, August 2002

for Aging - Your Four Quarters of Life, I wondered what I could say that would motivate others. I went through a long and life threatening illness, but never felt that I was a particularly brave woman or that I could really be an inspiration to anyone. During my illness, I was very scared and sometimes discouraged. After reading Ed's story and knowing him personally, I knew that I was not the strong person that he was during his illness. I have always been a very patient and goal oriented person, though. I keep moving slowly and steadily towards my goals. Who knows - perhaps this is why I was chosen to endure an illness that persisted for a long period of time. I am the 'tortoise'; not the 'hare'. Persistence is my strength. And in the end, I persevered and crossed the finish line, just like the 'tortoise'.

At 40 years old, I felt like I was at the top of my game. My work as a nurse gave me great satisfaction. I had a wonderful family, two thriving teenage daughters and a loving husband. My days were very busy: work, church and organizational meetings, fitness workouts, visits with friends and relatives, and my daughters' sporting events. I had never been sick. In fact, my family doctor did not even know me.

When I discovered a lump on my breast, I was really not fazed. I *knew* that I was an unlikely candidate for breast cancer due to my healthy lifestyle and the fact that there was no history of the

disease in my family. However, since I had just turned forty years-old, I scheduled my first routine mammogram. This mammogram would change my life forever and turn my world upside down. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and, unfortunately, it had spread extensively through my lymph nodes. I was given a 50/50 chance of living another five years. **A 50/50 chance....!** Never before had I realized that many women actually died from breast cancer. Living another five years was not enough for me. I wanted fifty-five more years. I had to beat this thing and be completely cured. Those 50/50 odds actually empowered me and drove me to fight harder.



*Donna in remission, April 2004, with her family
L - R: husband Steve, daughter Lindsay, daughter Jessica and Donna*

I elected to have surgery to remove the cancer and then faced the fight of my life. I bravely (maybe naively) vowed to defeat this disease and told myself that no cancer was going to keep me down. *'I am woman. I am strong.'* *I can do this!* As soon as I had recovered from the surgery, I started to prepare physically for the toughest game in which I would ever play. I went back to my exercise routine with even greater determination. I even added swimming to my workout to stretch and rebuild my arm muscles which had become weak and stiff as a result of the surgery.

Feeling stronger, I was now ready to begin the chemotherapy part of my treatment. As a nurse, I was fully aware that toxic

chemicals would be pumped through my system, and this totally went against my principles to keep my body pure. I had always avoided taking even a Tylenol and, luckily, never needed much medication. I decided that I needed to get into a more optimistic healing frame of mind, so I began positive mental imagery and yoga. I read stories of survivors and began researching my disease and treatments extensively. I even imagined that the “chemo” were little Pac Men that would gobble up the bad cancerous cells as they encountered them.

The day of my first chemo, my daughters had their biggest softball game of the season. Since I felt guilty that I would miss the game, I made banners and posters to cheer the team on and filled a cooler full of drinks for the players. Watching my girls play their sports has always been my favorite pastime. Both girls always looked for my husband and me at their events and relaxed once they saw us. I felt awful that we would miss the game, but once I knew that my daughters were set for the day, I turned my thoughts toward what lay ahead.

My husband and I walked silently into the “chemo” clinic. I pretended to be brave, but was actually quite afraid of the unknown. Luckily, several members of my family arrived a few minutes later to help cheer me on. This definitely boosted my spirits, and in my “chemo bag”, I was armed with an arsenal of religious statues, rosaries and books to keep me inspired.

I got through my first session with only a headache and left for home. My husband put me to bed. I had a vague feeling of nausea, and I presumptuously quipped, ‘This isn’t so bad. I can handle it.’ But as I lay in bed, a vile sensation started to spread and grow in me. It filled my whole body. My head felt like it was about to explode, and soon I was wreathing in discomfort and bathed in sweat. Long waves of nausea overcame me, and I vomited. Wave after wave came, and my head was reeling. It was relentless. Nothing relieved it. It was by far the worst I have ever felt. In desperation, my family called my doctor who added another anti-nausea medication to my regimen. My discomfort continued, and they phoned my physician again, begging for help. Another combination of medications was prescribed, and I eventually drifted off into a drugged sleep...

The next eighteen months, I encountered one pitfall after

another and often felt as if I could hardly keep going. I read somewhere that God brings some of the most exquisite ‘flowers’ through the dirt and dark, and I wondered when I would see the ‘flowers’ again. Many ‘chemo’ experiences and four surgeries later, I realized something very important. I had very little control over my destiny. I had always been the caregiver, the one in control, and this was a very humbling experience for me. God taught me this lesson over and over again. Each time I would think that I was on top of things and getting my life together, he would give me another challenge.

I have been cancer-free for two years now and am feeling like a much improved version of my old self. Through strict diet and exercise, I am back in shape again, and I feel strong – ‘like a winner’. I don’t know what tomorrow will bring, but who does? I love and appreciate each and every day and no longer ‘sweat the small stuff’. My ‘flowers’ have finally bloomed at the finish line, and since I am the ‘tortoise’, I stop and smell them.”