

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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This is a smart and beautifully written book, and it will electrify your life. Get this book!"

—Daniel G. Amen, MD, *New York Times* bestselling author of  
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ACTIVATING THE 10 HUMAN DRIVES  
THAT MAKE YOU FEEL ALIVE

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# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LIVING A FULLY CHARGED LIFE IN A CHAOTIC WORLD

“*The Charge* is an inspiring guide to the one thing we all want: more life in our lives. **Brendon Burchard** proves that we can harness our emotional drives to feel more alive, and that it’s our internal charge that helps us meet life’s challenges with joy and courage. I love this book.”

—Paulo Coelho, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Alchemist*

“Every once in a while you read a book that completely changes how you think about your life, igniting within you a new internal drive to be more, do more, and give more. This is that kind of book.”

—David Bach, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Automatic Millionaire* and *Start Late, Finish Rich*

“I look for authenticity and proof when I learn from someone, and I can share that Brendon Burchard is one of the most engaged, energetic, and enthusiastic people I’ve ever met. I’ve always wanted to know how he developed such a remarkably strong internal charge. This book reveals his secrets. **If you too want to perform at higher levels of joy, engagement, and productivity—buy this book.** It’s a must-read for any serious student of success and high performance.”

—Darren Hardy, publisher of *Success* magazine and *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Compound Effect*

“There hasn’t been a game-changing book on personal development in a long time. The wait is over. ***The Charge* confronts our very notions of what drives us as humans, and after reading this book you’ll find a new internal charge that’s stronger and more energized than you ever imagined possible.**”

—Jack Canfield, coauthor of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series and author of *The Success Principle*

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On a dark and steamy Caribbean night, Brendon Burchard stood bleeding atop the crumpled hood of his wrecked car. That night he learned about mortality, discovering that at the end of our lives we will all ask, “Did I live? Did I love? Did I *matter*?”

Since that fateful night, Brendon has lived a fully charged life, and he’s helped millions of people around the globe transform their lives and feel more alive, engaged, and fulfilled.

Brendon observes that the emotional energy of the world has flatlined, and he sets out to fix it. People are stressed, restless, and wanting more out of life. Despite the fact that most people have what they “need” to be happy, they rarely feel the levels of excitement, engagement, or satisfaction they deserve. So what’s the solution?

In *The Charge*, Brendon argues that the only way to measurably improve the quality of your life is to learn how to activate the very 10 drives that make you most human. These drives are your desires for more control, competence, congruence, caring, connection, change, challenge, creative expression, contribution, and consciousness. These drives shape everything you think, feel, and do in life, so understanding and mastering them is critical to your success and happiness. Strategically activating these drives on a consistent basis is the fastest path to living a fully charged life.

Harnessing our human drives is not easy; if it were, we wouldn’t see so much restlessness in the world. That’s why Brendon has devised what he calls the true “activators” of human experience—a series of *powerful yet simple actions* you can take to radically increase your levels of energy, engagement, and fulfillment in all areas of your life.

What Brendon uncovers in *The Charge* will surprise and challenge you. It turns out that most of the ways we seek to meet our human drives are actually counterproductive. We all want more control, for example, but seeking to have more certainty in our daily lives or to control other people will actually decrease our levels of control (and happiness). We have a deep desire for change, too, but we often fail to make the right kinds of change that would make us feel more alive and in command of our lives.

In *The Charge*, Brendon helps us overcome these mistakes and illuminates the path for strategically and intelligently activating our 10 human drives so that we can have the one thing we all want: more life in our lives!



**BRENDON BURCHARD** is the founder of High Performance Academy and author of the #1 New York Times and #1 USA Today bestselling book *The Millionaire Messenger*. He is also the author of *Life's Golden Ticket* and one of the top motivation and high performance trainers in the world. His famous training events and videos inspire millions of people to find their charge, share their voice, and make a greater difference.

**visit him and receive free training at [www.brendonburchard.com](http://www.brendonburchard.com).**

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# THE CHARGE

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THAT MAKE YOU FEEL ALIVE

BRENDON BURCHARD

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*Dedicated to my amazing, loving family,  
who always allowed me to chase and live the Charged Life:  
Mom, Helen, Bryan, David, and my wonderfully present,  
kind, energized, beautiful wife, Denise.  
And to Dad—we lost you too soon, Pops,  
but we carry your charge forever.*



## A Note to You, the Reader

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As a high-performance coach, speaker, and trainer, I have been blessed to work with truly remarkable people (and I include my audiences) from around the globe. Many of the stories in my book are snapshots or syntheses of my experiences and interactions with clients, audiences, and sometimes friends or family members. Some details are left out or changed because they're not relevant to my desired teaching point. And, in full disclosure, some of the stories have been dramatized. In all cases, I've done my best to convey the essential elements of my friends' and clients' stories and to share examples that will enable you to have your own transformations. I hope you enjoy them.

Also, please know that I am not a medical doctor, licensed psychologist, psychotherapist, psychiatrist, neuroscientist, financial or legal strategist, or anything else that ends with "ist." If anything, I am a student and a servant, and while I happily share what I've learned from these fields, none of the information I share with you is intended, nor should it be construed, to be professional medical, psychological, financial, or legal advice. If you need help in those areas, consult area-specific certified professionals. Neither I nor my publisher—especially, please, not my publisher—is responsible for anything that happens in your life, including anything bad or good that happens as a result of you doing what I advise in this book. Indeed, the whole premise of this book is that your life is what YOU make of it.

In writing this page, I share the first lesson of a Charged Life: we can have fun and engagement with anything we do—even dealing with lawyers.

Godspee  
*Brenda*



# Contents

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*Out There*

*Introduction*

1. Out of the Darkness

## **Section I: The Five Baseline Drives**

2. The Drive for CONTROL

3. The Drive for COMPETENCE

4. The Drive for CONGRUENCE

5. The Drive for CARING

6. The Drive for CONNECTION

## **Section II: The Five Forward Drives**

7. Introducing the Forward Drives

8. The Drive for CHANGE

9. The Drive for CHALLENGE

10. The Drive for CREATIVE EXPRESSION

11. The Drive for CONTRIBUTION

12. The Drive for CONSCIOUSNESS

*Conclusion*

*Acknowledgments*

*Index*

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*We are always getting ready to live,  
but never living.*

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON





# Out There

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The Charged Life, the truly *lived* life, is not a routine existence in some quaint, picturesque village of safety and certainty. No, the life worth living is *out there*, in the wooded wilds of the unknown, on the craggy battlefields that test our wits and wills in the daily fights with our own demons. It is found during the long onward slog through the storms and strife, when we hear only the whispers and taunts of foes and opponents stronger than we, on the ground where we are knocked sprawling and forced to face our own weaknesses, and on the mountaintops that we reach only because we pitted our every ounce of virtue, strength, character, and courage to keep climbing no matter the slings and arrows flung at our backs or the barriers thrown up before us. It is out there that we come face-to-face with the best of ourselves and with our destiny. It is out there, in a new world of uncertainty and adventure, that we push ourselves, better ourselves, realize ourselves. It is only in the herculean quest for something more that life fills us with wisdom and meaning, but only after we have paid with our sweat and, at times, our tears. It is in the marching on when we are tired and weak and fearful, and in the camaraderie of those fellow warriors we have striven with—our brothers and sisters and family and friends who cheered us on and toiled with us despite the messiness and apparent madness of it all. It is out there on the path less traveled, an uncharted path chosen by each of us alone, an often meandering, overgrown path that leads only to another unpaved road or open field of opportunity, where we must strike out once more with the same hope for victory and transcendence. It is out there when we have the guts to stand naked before the world as who we truly are, when we peer into the souls of those around us and finally see in them the image of the divine, that we plunge ourselves bravely and unconditionally into love that has no bottom or boundary. It is out there, outside the confines of our comforts and the pleasures of our accumulations, beyond our architecture of the routine, that we slip the bonds of our limiting beliefs, soar magnificently above our own shortcomings, and express our highest selves. It is out there, in a world rich with choice and challenge and fear and freedom, that your greatest gifts and adventures await you. Listen. It is out there that destiny calls. Be bold and ready yourself. It is time to charge once again.

—Brendon Burchard



# Introduction

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This book is an unapologetic assault on boredom, distraction, mediocrity, withdrawal, and living “normal” life. It will directly call into question why you are allowing yourself to live at the energetic level where you currently reside, and it will aggressively challenge you to live a more vibrant, strategic, and engaged life.

In the pages ahead you will find a pragmatic, often counterintuitive guide that cuts through the clutter of bad advice, lays waste to nearly half a century of psychological misunderstanding, and paves a shimmering golden path to one, and only one, destination: a new life that makes you feel truly, fully, and magnificently *alive*.

Face it: the emotional energy of the world has flatlined. Over the past forty years, across almost every developed country in the world, the diagnosis of clinical depression has grown nearly tenfold. This is despite the fact that almost every factor we associate with well-being—plentiful food, money, education, safety, access to the arts and health care—is abundant in these societies. Increasingly, people are reporting feelings of restlessness, fatigue, stress, and a sort of unnamable malaise that leaves them too often feeling bored, unsure, or frustrated.

My guess is, you can relate. Like everyone else, you have everything they say you “need”—safety, shelter, sustenance—and yet there are too many days that you don’t feel as excited, productive, or fulfilled as you thought you would. At some level, you may sense that you are not fulfilling the promises you’ve made to yourself or expressing the potential that lives within you. You start each year fired up for the big race, only to finish at a slow trot. Your week is scheduled to the hilt, but deep down you can tell that the work keeping you busy isn’t your life’s work. You’ve got the smarts and the soul and the hunger and the will, but all too often you find yourself spinning on a less-than-merry-go-round of doubt and delay. You’re connected to everyone and everything online, but you don’t feel nearly as connected to the world or to others as you would like. You’re waiting for some kind of permission or right timing to live full out every single day. You feel a restless desire for something more.

Well, I’m here to tell you that you *deserve* something more. But there’s a catch: to get it, you’re going to have to demand more of yourself. Those words might discourage you or even stop you dead from reading on, I know. You’re already fighting hard to stay afloat and awake, hammered by a tough economy, unreasonable demands from every quarter, and not enough sleep. Probably the last thing you want to hear is that you’ve got to try harder, work smarter, or give more in life.

The problem is, you do. And whether it makes me popular or not, I’m going to challenge you in these pages—and I hope you let me and then rise to the challenge, because I think you know there actually is more for you out there. I think you’ve tasted plenty of magically happy, engaged, and satisfying moments in your life and are willing to do what it takes to enjoy more of them. You can remember times when you had more fun, when you were wild and carefree and felt more excited and hopeful than you’ve ever imagined possible. In short, you’ve already had a glimpse, a taste, of the Charged Life—a heightened existence that makes you feel energized, engaged, and enthusiastic about living.

If that’s true, then let me show you my cards: I don’t think the restlessness, boredom, anxiety, fear, or any other enduring negative emotion you may feel about yourself, others, or life in general has anything to do with the economy, the evermore chaotic world we live in, your childhood, bad luck, or any other easy excuse that the propagators of victimhood are handing out these days. No, any lack of charge in your life is only the result of a colossal failure in *strategy*. Only the failure to strategically control the contents of your consciousness keeps you from feeling the consistent internal charge of being fully alive.

engaged, connected, and fulfilled. The good news is, you now hold in your hands a very strategic book. ~~I'm convinced that you've felt a spark in life before, one that lit you up for days. But I don't want ju~~ to give you back an emotional charge you may have sensed once or twice before—that would be the sort of cheap trick you could expect from a carnival hypnotist. I want to show you an entirely new plane of possibility and emotional vibrancy that you never knew existed. A more vital, more colorful, more exciting, sexier reality can be yours.

To help people reach that kind of existence, I've spent fifteen years intricately studying everything I could get my hands on in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, human potential, and high performance. I've dedicated my life to the pursuit of helping others strategically, radically, and permanently increase their energy, their engagement, and their enthusiasm—*their internal charge*—in every area of life. I've helped executives reinvigorate not just themselves but their entire companies; couples reignite their love lives, athletes get their mojo back, artists reconnect with their higher genius, parents revivify their relationships with their children, and celebrities and politicians reenergize their followerships, all by helping them tap into a stronger internal charge—something they already had waiting within them. For this work, I've become one of the best-paid high-performance coaches and trainers in the world, and my world-renowned seminar, High Performance Academy, sets the standard in the personal growth and effectiveness business. But here's the thing: this isn't about me, and it never has been. I don't do this by chest pounding or by hyping you up with affirmations. I do this by building a strategic plan that allows you—no, that *challenges you*—to live your best life.

## Modern Motivations

It's time we all got more strategic and purposeful in how we live our lives.

Why is it that in our abundant world of choice and connectivity so many of us feel lacking and detached? With all the how-to information available at our fingertips, why are we so unsure of which levers to pull to dramatically improve our lives? How is it that we have so much—a roof over our heads, opportunity, safety, choices, access to the entire world—and yet don't feel sparked with energy *all the time* (or at least a lot more of the time)?

In days gone by, self-help gurus and armchair psychologists would respond to these questions by suggesting that we're all crazy, ungrateful, or oblivious of all the good things being heaped upon us. They would say we are driven by dark needs that don't allow us to bask in the sunlight, that we are too trapped in the past, that we expect too much, that we are unconscious of our real thoughts and patterns, or that we are not sending out enough powerful thoughts to attract the happiness in life that we deserve. These answers, of course, are inadequate. In fact, they have caused more harm than good.

So . . . back to the essential question: With so many of our basic human needs now being met, why don't we feel more electrified and satisfied with our lives?

The answer introduces a controversial argument: We feel unsatisfied because the entire baseline of our human motivations has *evolved*. What made us feel happy, energized, and fulfilled just fifty years ago no longer applies, because our brains, bodies, and society have changed so radically.

Such evolutionary language riles a lot of old-school biologists, who argue that the human brain and body could not have evolved fast enough in the past half-century to change our collective human motivations—that as a species, we've always been motivated by the same basic human needs. Even if that's true—and many have argued otherwise—what is clear is that in our abundant modern culture, the *way in which* we activate and feel satisfied by those needs has changed entirely.

Consider this. In the most recent eyeblink of our history, our human experience and our collective

culture have transformed in every imaginable way: in what we do (more creative and autonomous work now than task-driven, managed, repetitive work); how we get our food and what we eat (leading to an astonishing evolution in the size of our bodies worldwide); where we call home (the global migration into cities); how we interact (a recently interconnected planet working in offices and organizations rather than fields and factories); what we buy (more nonessential purchases based on aesthetic preference rather than on functionality or utility); how we spend our time (more at work and yet still more in front of the television and computer); how long we live (longer, but with more health problems than ever—many *because* we live longer); and how we structure our organizations and nations (more democracy and tolerance worldwide—a trend closely tracked since 1981). If you could hopscotch back through history to fifty or a hundred years ago, you would see how much *everything* has changed. And having changed our world so completely, it was inevitable that we humans ourselves should also change in order to survive and thrive. The ways we think, feel, and behave—our psychology—had to keep pace with our world. Thus, the way we express and meet our human drives has evolved.

As our society becomes more abundant, people are no longer driven by just what they *need*. Most of our basic human needs for food, shelter, safety, and belonging have been met and structured by an advancing society. Yet meeting those needs does not, by itself, make us happy. Far from it. Unfortunately, much of our basic understanding of pop psychology still comes from Abraham Maslow's famous "hierarchy of needs" developed in the 1940s. Maslow was brilliant, and much of his work was misinterpreted, but its lasting legacy is this: if we can meet our needs, we should be happy. So when we have our needs met and *don't* feel happy, we all feel that something is wrong with us.

The reality is that in an abundant culture we simply no longer have to focus as much on what we need, so we focus on what we *want*. We have more options and, thus, more freedom to choose what we want our lives to be about. Surrounded by a million choices, we are freed from the constraints of need and yet, at the same time, challenged to find our focus and meaning in life. But no one would suggest that we turn back the clock. It's a blessing to be able to search for what we want. It just so happens that what we want today is very, very different from what we wanted just a decade ago.

Think about how the tidal shift from needs to wants has washed ashore at work. Our modern workforce isn't driven by the mere security of a paycheck or the primitive motivation of the carrot-and-stick wielded by manipulative managements. Today's workers have a new and insatiable hunger for intrinsic motivations, especially the engagement and fulfillment that comes from projects involving creative control, social connectivity, design, story, and contributions that extend beyond the confines of the cubicle and the greater organization. We've become an on-the-go, "friended" workforce that places social interaction, aesthetic experience, innovation, and meaningful collaboration at the top of our priority list when evaluating jobs, causes, projects, and leaders. The old concepts of motivation at work based solely on compensation, a corner office, and long-term ladder-climbing ambitions, no longer apply (and haven't for a decade). We just aren't as fooled by all the usual trappings of success anymore because in an already abundant society, *what drives us* has changed. Our modern lives simply don't function based solely on the same considerations of security and sustenance anymore, nor do we see our path to self-actualization the same way we saw it even a generation ago. With all the choice we have, we'll skip traditional security and instead seek novel, challenging, connected, and creative experiences. This isn't just the ramblings of a self-confessed modern free agent. Neuroscience is proving that indeed when our brains are free from the basic animal needs of safety, what engages the most neural activity are those very things: *novelty, challenge, connection, and expression*. And many of the world's largest happiness surveys are finding the same at a global level—we want to feel engaged at work, and what makes us engaged are things like choice, contribution, and creative expression.

We have watched our professional and personal lives blend more and more, until the concept of work/life balance seems a nostalgic pipe dream from the 1950s. Today our home lives are more hectic, stressful, and unstable than they have ever been. People have trouble staying together or even getting along. Parents have a hard time understanding what drives their children's behavior, let alone their own. With the kids booked up doing after-school activities, and Mom and Dad at work all the time, what can families *really* hope to accomplish together? Putting a roof over your family's head, or food on the table isn't enough anymore, no matter how much you might wish it were. In a hyperconnected and abundant world, your family members are supremely aware of the choices they have. Every day they see better houses, parents, schools, and toys and gadgets on television and the Web. So they care little that they have what they need—that, for them, is a given. They care about having what they *want*.

How can we think more strategically about ourselves and what motivates us today when meeting our basic human needs simply isn't moving the happiness needle out of the blah zone? What's going to lead us to exciting, fulfilling lives amid the sea change going on in our workplaces and our personal lives? How do we get that spark back into our lives, so that what we do fills us with joy and satisfaction? What levers can we pull on this grand ride of life so that we reach our full potential and travel in style to our destiny?

In *The Charge*, I'll answer these questions by proposing a new framework for thinking about human motivation—one that moves us away from merely doing what we need to do to feel secure and comfortable and into the drives that make us feel truly *alive*. Along the way, we'll go deep inside your mind and understand the structure of your brain, and we're going to give you the mental levers that actually *change* that wiring. The mixed bag of emotions that you feel about your life and your work is going to be laid bare before you, and, perhaps for the first time in your conscious adult life, you're going to learn how to control, reassemble, and reconfigure it so that you can experience the Charged Life.

*A Charged Life is a consciously designed existence that feels evenly engaged, energized, and enthusiastic.* It's a life that is purposefully chosen and activated by leveraging the 10 drives that make us human, which are the subject of this book. The Charged Life is not a one-time feeling or a fleeting spark. It's an enduring flame in the soul that illuminates you throughout all your days no matter the darkness around you. Nor is it about wandering around with a fake perma-grin or feeling supercaffeinated and amped up by some syrupy cocktail of self-help affirmations. It is about elevated yet consistently even energy that is strategically planned for and sustainable, allowing you to be fully engaged in the moment and optimistic about the future. I'll further describe this life in the next chapter, but for now you should underline the operative phrase in its definition: *a consciously designed existence*.

In order to better design your life, you'll need to understand and activate 10 simple drives of human emotion and happiness. These are the psychological levers that you can use to reshape and reenergize your entire life. In [section I](#) of this book I'll teach you to understand and leverage what I call your five "baseline drives," which are the most automatic desires you have to develop control, competence, congruence, caring, and connections with others in your life. In [section II](#), I'll unveil the "forward drives," which will help you use change, challenge, creative expression, contribution, and consciousness to radically advance your life. Together, the baseline and forward drives add up to the 10 human drives that will help you ignite your new and fully Charged Life.

All this "change your life" stuff might sound grossly exaggerated and out of reach, if not for some recent advances in the fields of neuroscience, positive psychology, and high performance. We've learned more about how our brains function in the past three years than in the previous three thousand. We've broken psychology's century-old focus on neurosis and what's wrong with us and reframed our study of what's *right* with us. We've cracked the code on what it takes for you to perform at higher levels of joy

engagement, and productivity.

~~Now is the time to bring our new understanding of human experience to the forefront of how we structure and strategize our lives. The timing couldn't be better. You see the disenchantment, lack of direction, and soul-searching of your family members, friends, neighbors, and office mates. Everybody is looking for something, but he or she isn't sure what it is or where to look for it. The answers, as usual, are already within us. We simply have to understand ourselves better and activate the parts of us that make our lives rich, colorful, connected, and meaningful.~~

I won't pretend the journey to knowing oneself is an easy one. In consciously deciding to take the reins of your life and ride off in a new direction, you're going to find yourself (at first, anyway) on a bumpy, uncomfortable road. But that's okay—it's the only road worth taking. Life change is hard. Believe me, I know. It's taken car accidents and career changes and chaos and epic internal struggles to get me here, living my best life. But along the way I've learned to direct my human drives better, and because of that I live a life of joy, vibrancy, and fulfillment that I could never have imagined. So have my clients. I want the same for you, and to help you get there, I'm willing to rattle your cage and drive you from the land of comfort (which is also the land of mediocrity). I hope you'll play along, because the alternative—staying on the same path, hoping for something better while refusing to act boldly—beneath you. Our times are calling for you to master your mind and contribute more magic and positive energy to the world. We all need *you* fully engaged again and sharing with us the fully expressed extraordinary you. We need you to choose a different kind of life and to charge up for the challenges that lie ahead for all humankind.

## **When Willpower Trumps Brainpower**

No matter your position, circumstances, or opportunities in life, you always have the freedom of mind to choose how you experience, interpret, and, ultimately, shape your world. If you can believe this, then you can strategically choose and create a Charged Life. I believe this now more than ever, and not just at a philosophical level but at a very practical and physical level as well.

Despite being known worldwide as the high-performance guy, I recently lost the charge in life for a period of several months. I had to get incredibly conscious and focused in order to stoke my internal flame and reignite my life. I had to fight, *every single day*, to activate the 10 human drives that are the guts of this book. In the process, I learned that our minds are more powerful than most of us imagine—stronger even than our brains, but we'll get to that.

To be honest, I've lost and reclaimed the charge in my life three times. The first was when I fell into depression after a terrible breakup with my high school sweetheart in college. I was in a horrible space, suicidal, for an entire year, and it took a car accident to shake me out of it. (I wrote of that accident in my earlier books *The Millionaire Messenger* and *Life's Golden Ticket*.) In brief, after being in a car that flipped over a curve at eighty-five miles an hour, I learned that when we crash onto death's doorstep we're all forced to ask three questions: *Did I live? Did I love? Did I matter?* It was a soul-shaking experience, to say the least, and it made me question everything in my life. I had never really lived before, and the accident made me get serious about doing so. It was Virgil's quote that summed up my feelings: "Death twitches my ear. 'Live,' he says, 'I am coming.'" I decided to use my ticket to a second chance to consciously create a better life, so that when I round my final corner, I'll be happy with the answers at the end.

My ticket turned out to be good for fifteen remarkable years of vibrancy, connection, and meaning. In that span of time, I discovered and mastered the 10 human drives you will learn in this book. I built



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