

A Better Story's Answer to

**CAREER**

**FORECLOSURE**

CANNEXUS18

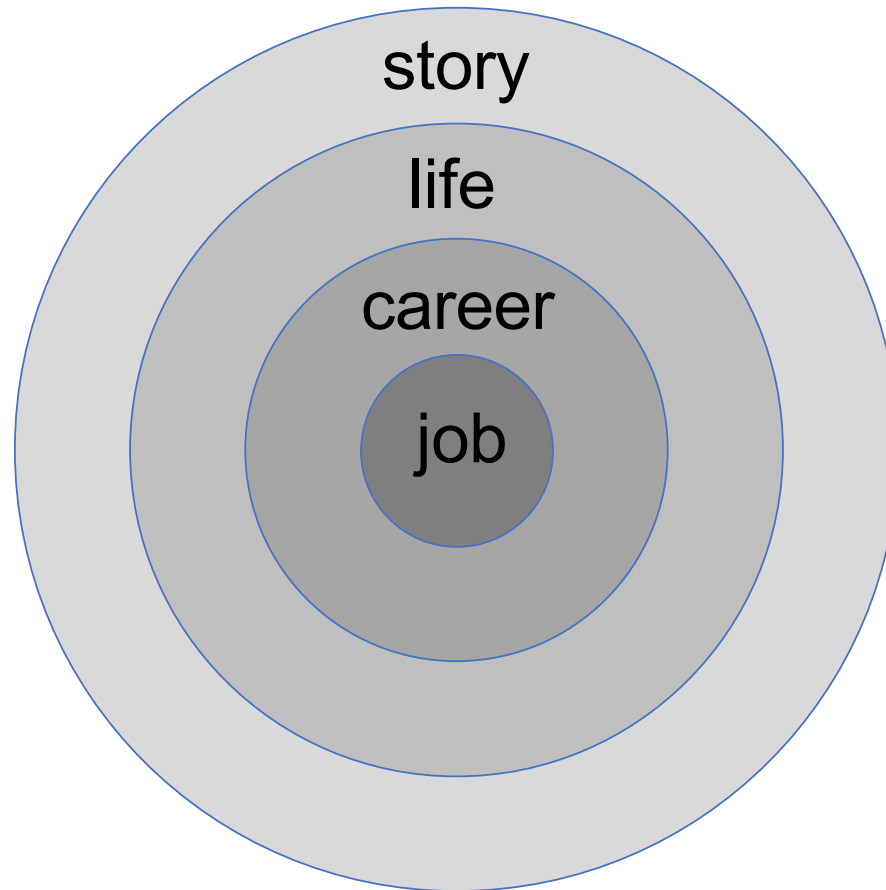
Ottawa, January 23, 2018

Gray Poehnell

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[www.ergoncommunications.com](http://www.ergoncommunications.com)

# An Expanding Focus of Hope



# A BETTER STORY

more than  
a better life

a better **experience** of life

# A BETTER STORY

encompasses a tale of two stories

INNER  
STORY

perceptions  
inner responses  
assigning meaning

OUTER  
STORY

events  
circumstances

Illiterate "Loser" ... Mathematician ... Greek Teacher ... Career Consultant

Trainer

Author

PROFESSIONAL

PERSONAL



Illiterate "Loser" ... Mathematician ... Greek Teacher ... Career Consultant

Trainer

Author



**PROFESSIONAL**

**PERSONAL**

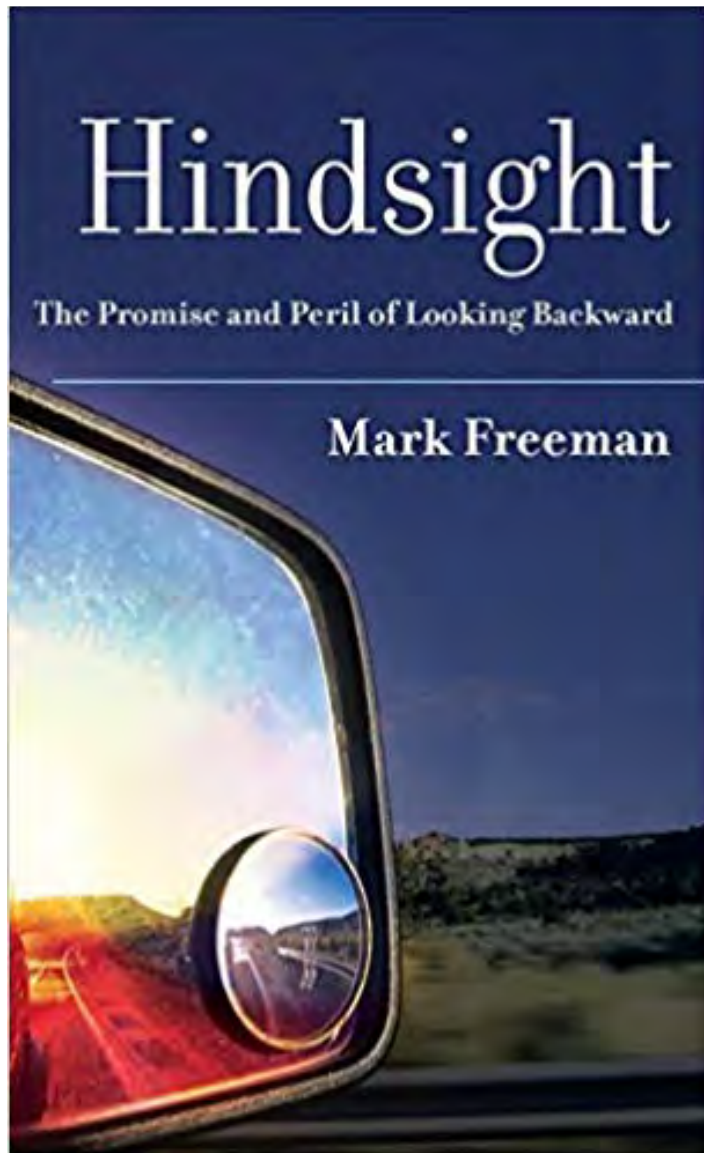


**A BETTER  
STORY**

Knowledge doesn't excuse me  
from experience  
but it can inform  
how I respond to it

Profound need  
for hope and for empathy  
for others and for myself  
as I seek to help people  
with their stories.





**narrative**

**FORECLOSURE**

“the premature conviction  
that one’s life story  
has effectively ended”

- Mark Freeman, *Hindsight*

# **CAREER**

# **FORECLOSURE**

- occurs when people believe that their career journey is over.
- can affect people at any age, especially in later life.
- often leads to crippling hopelessness, depression, or anxiety.

# **CAREER**

# **FORECLOSURE**

**What does it look like?**

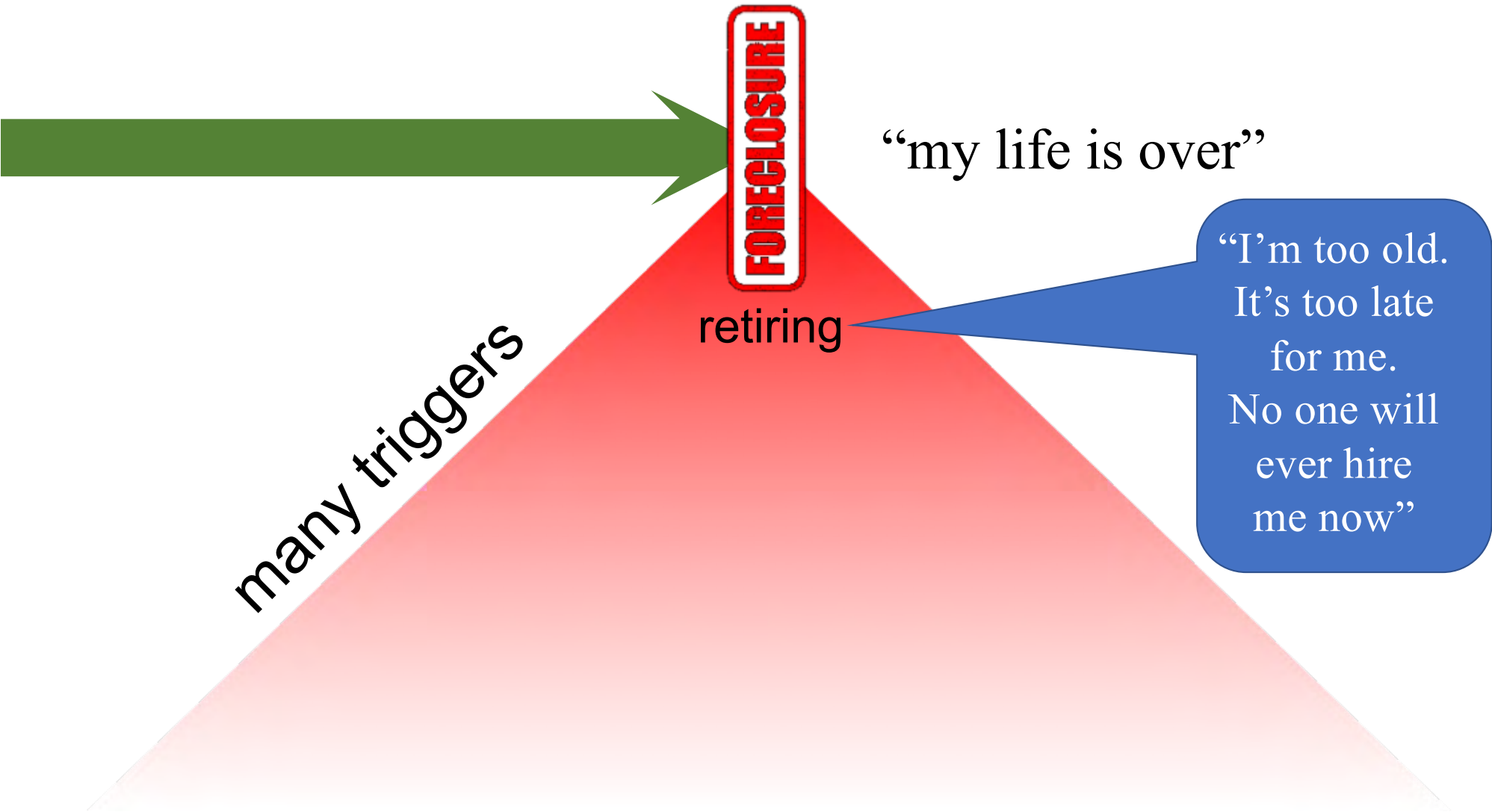
my life journey

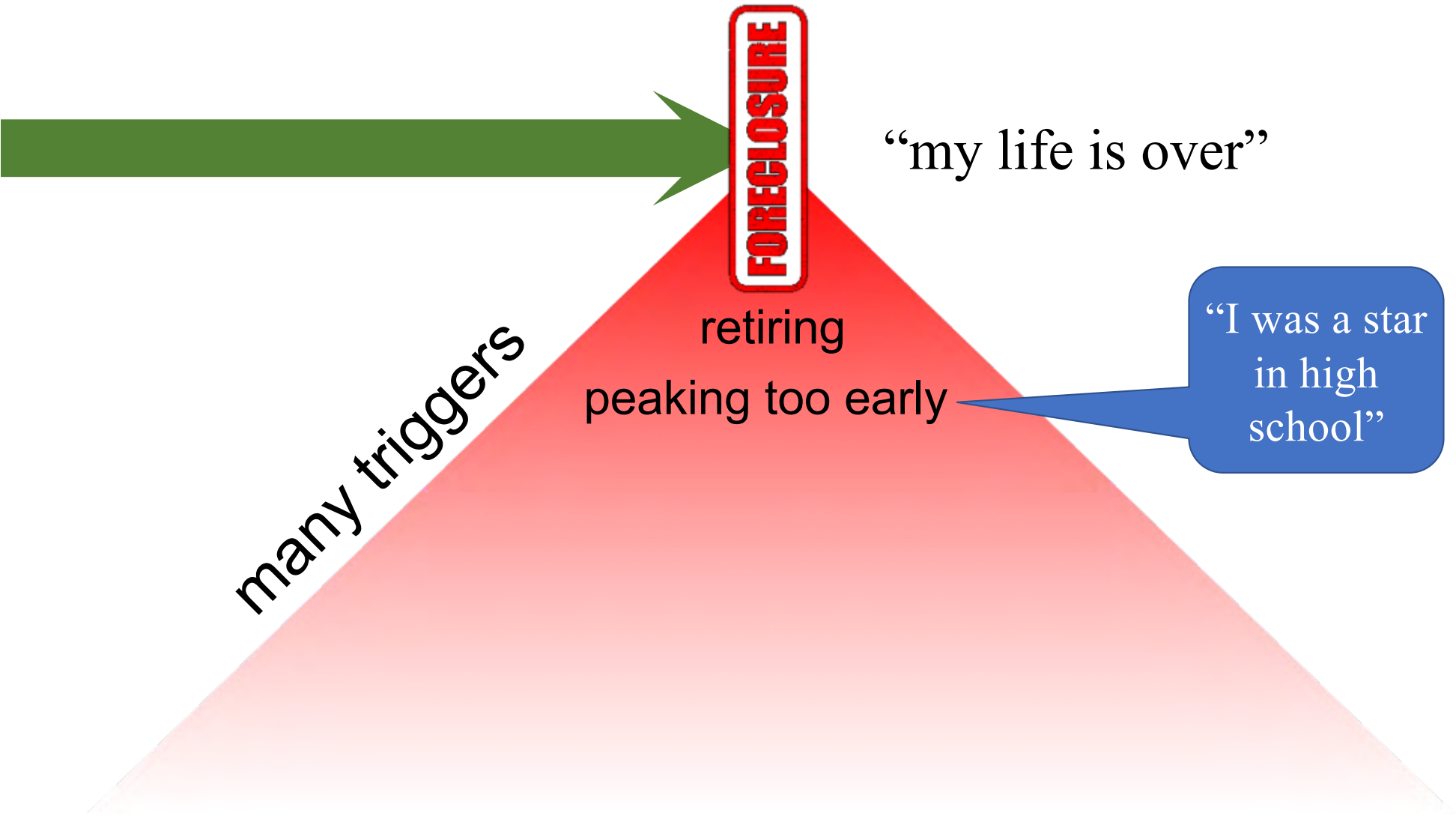


**FORECLOSURE**

“my life is over”

Life circumstances  
can trigger  
life crises,  
even career foreclosure.





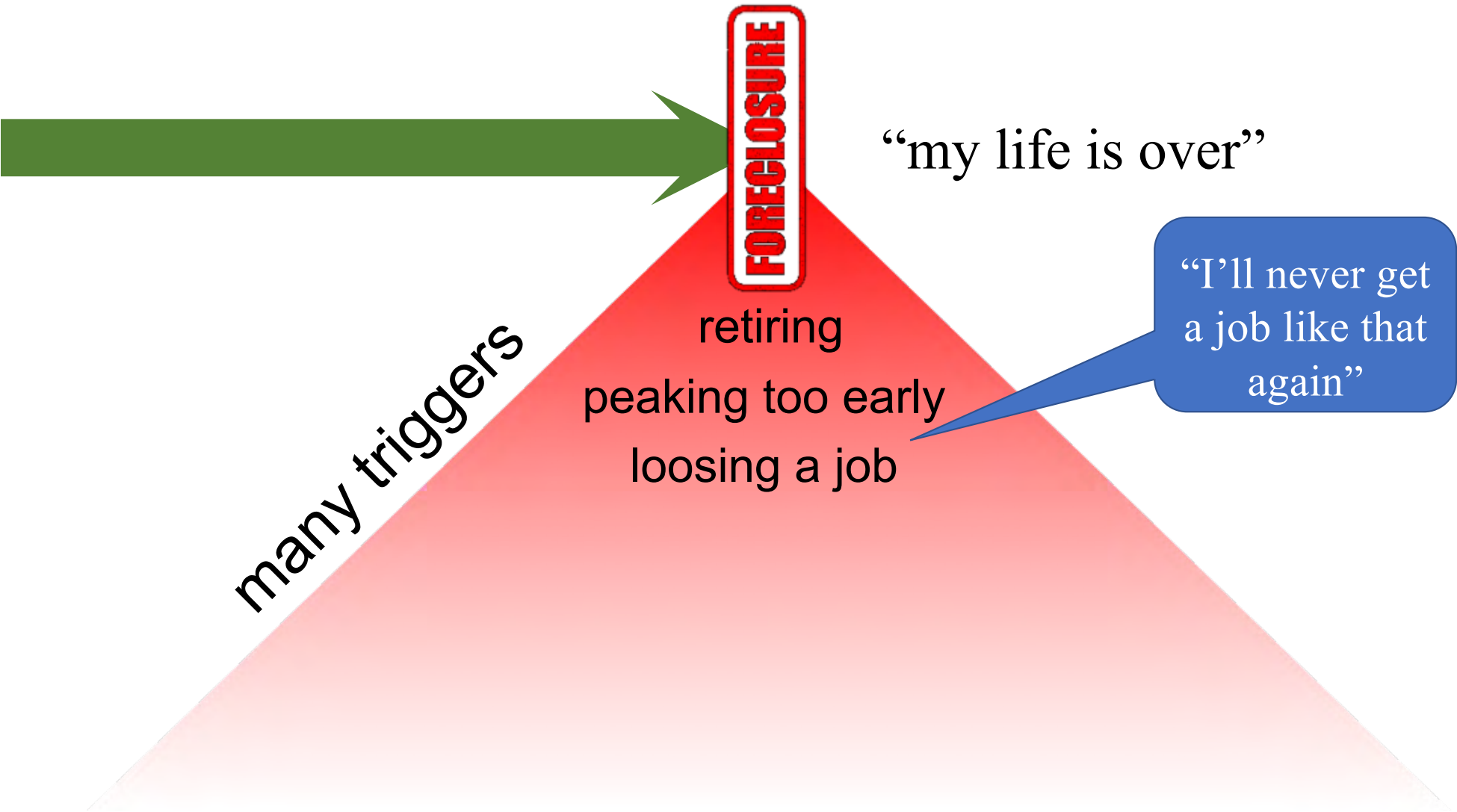
**FORECLOSURE**

“my life is over”

many triggers

retiring  
peaking too early

“I was a star  
in high  
school”



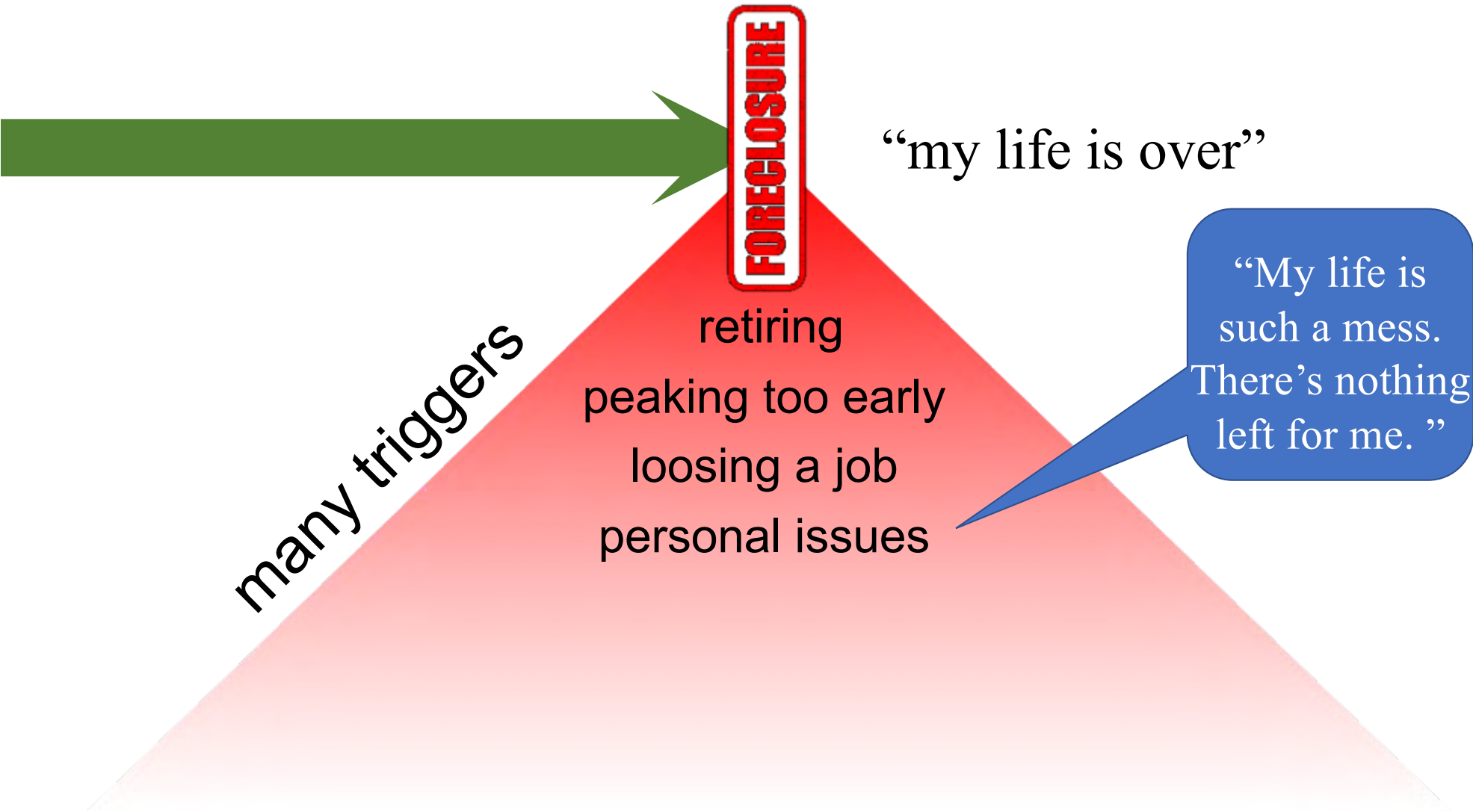
**FORECLOSURE**

“my life is over”

many triggers

retiring  
peaking too early  
loosing a job

“I’ll never get a job like that again”



**FORECLOSURE**

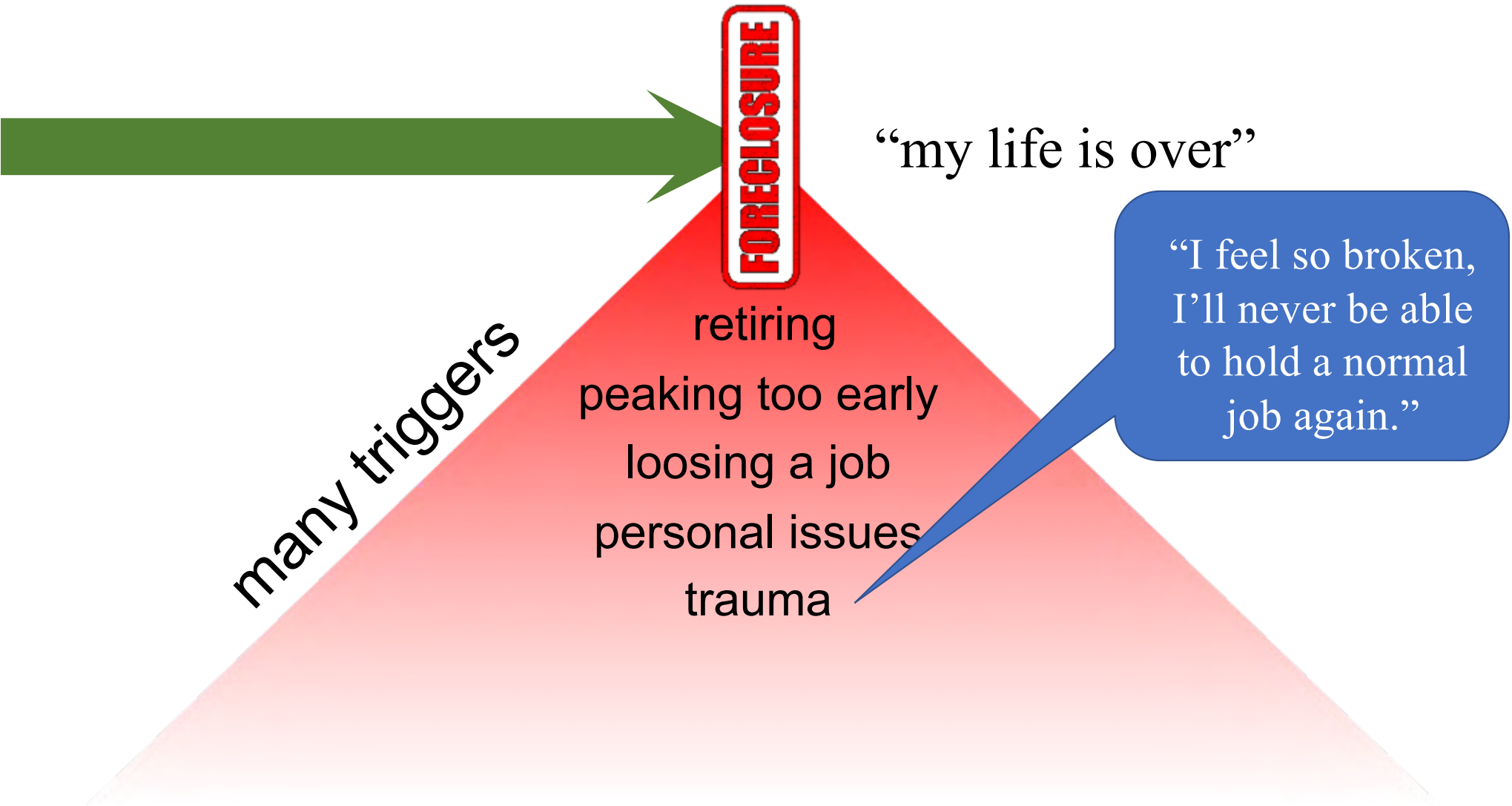
“my life is over”

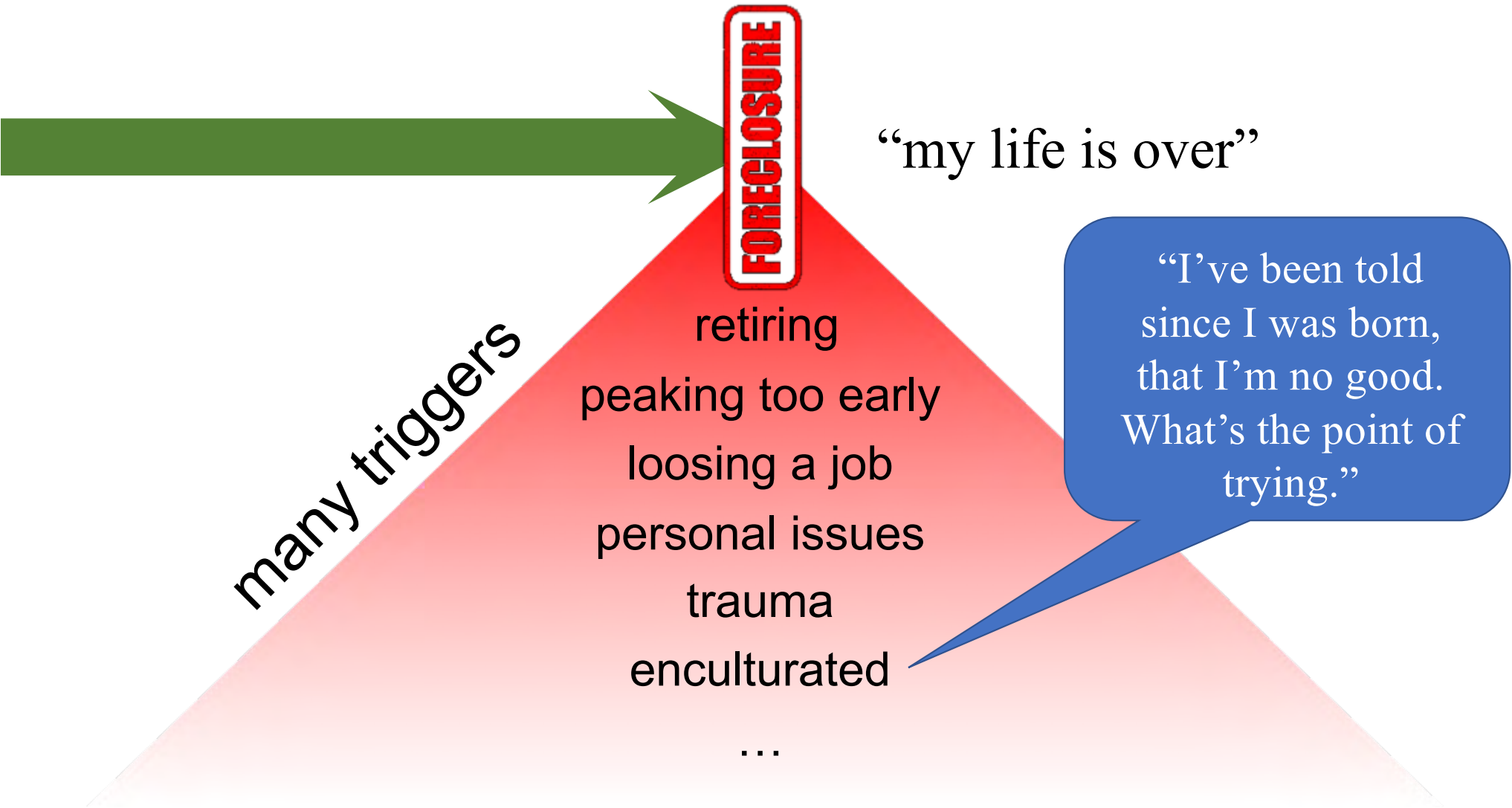
many triggers

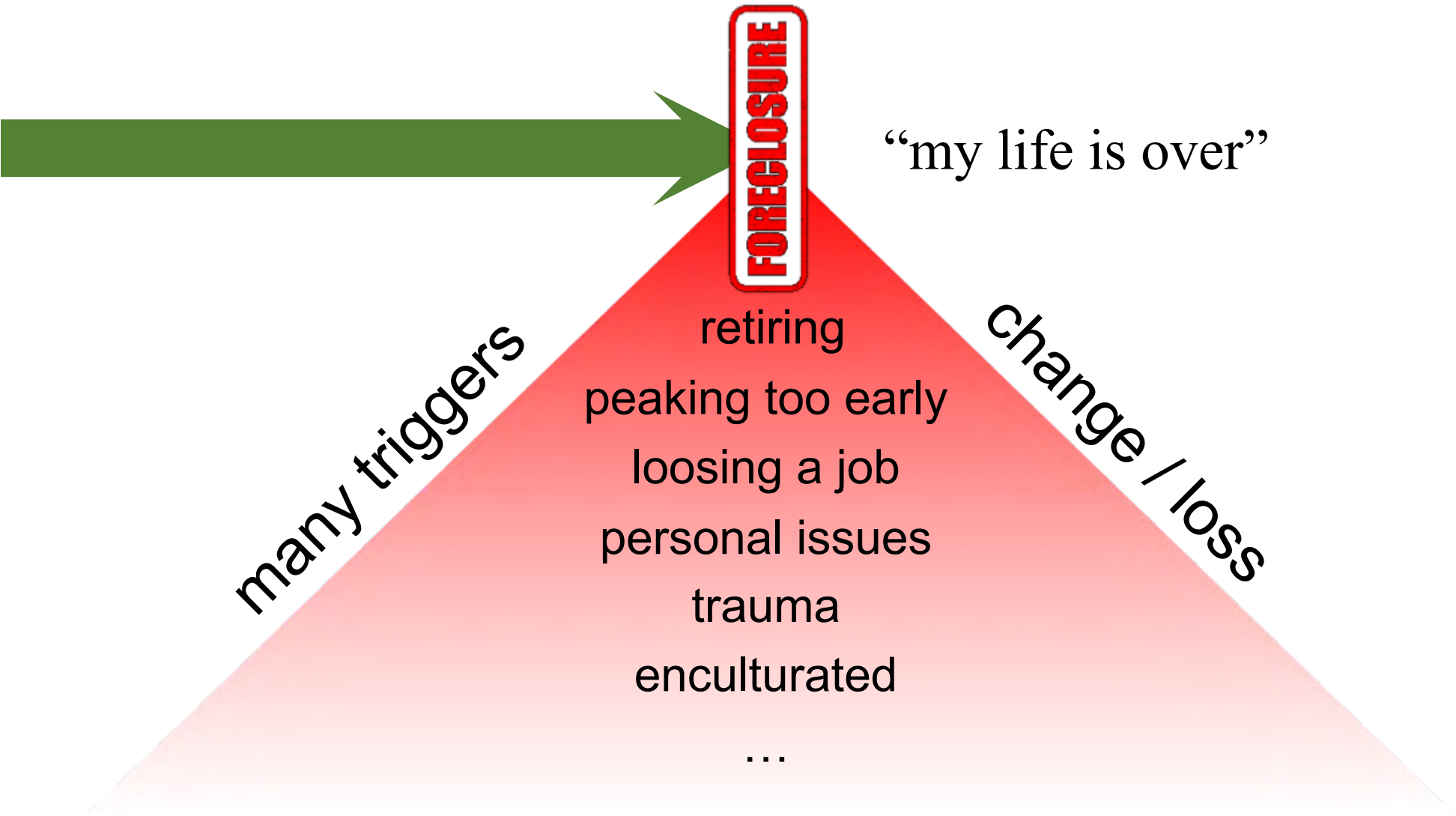
retiring  
peaking too early  
loosing a job  
personal issues

“My life is such a mess. There’s nothing left for me.”









**FORECLOSURE**

“my life is over”

many triggers

- retiring
- peaking too early
- losing a job
- personal issues
- trauma
- enculturated
- ...

change / loss



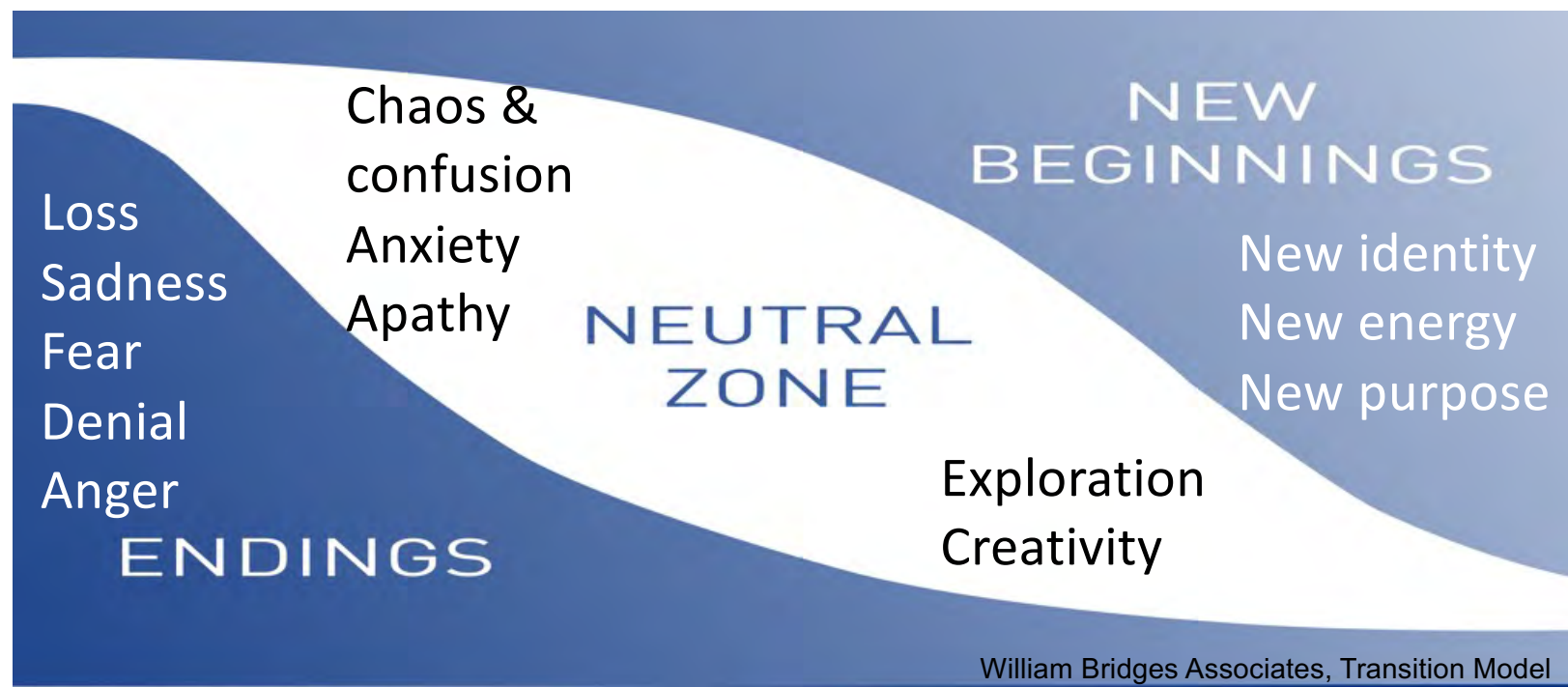
my story should enable me  
to make sense  
of my life circumstances,  
good or bad,  
even when I don't understand



inner story

outer  
story

my story should enable me  
to keep going  
as I work through  
my life circumstances





# narrative

## FORECLOSURE

"we shut our stories down,  
even as our lives themselves  
continue to unfold.

We stop developing and, story-wise, give in  
to getting-old as opposed to growing-old."

- William L. Randall, Elizabeth McKim.

*Reading Our Lives: The Poetics of Growing Old*





my life is over

my life journey continues

**FORECLOSURE**

my story ends

Loss  
Sadness  
Fear  
Denial  
Anger

Chaos &  
Confusion  
Anxiety  
Apathy

NEUTRAL  
ZONE

ENDINGS

when my story  
is not big enough,  
not dynamic and flexible enough  
to handle change,  
career foreclosure can occur

my life is over

my life journey continues

**FORECLOSURE**

my story ends



Stuck in  
Endings and Neutral Zone

my life is over

my life journey continues

my story ends

the "living dead"

**FORECLOSURE**

OTHER  
ONGOING EFFECTS

loss of story  
loss of purpose & meaning  
loss of identity  
hopelessness  
giving up

...

my life is over

my life journey continues

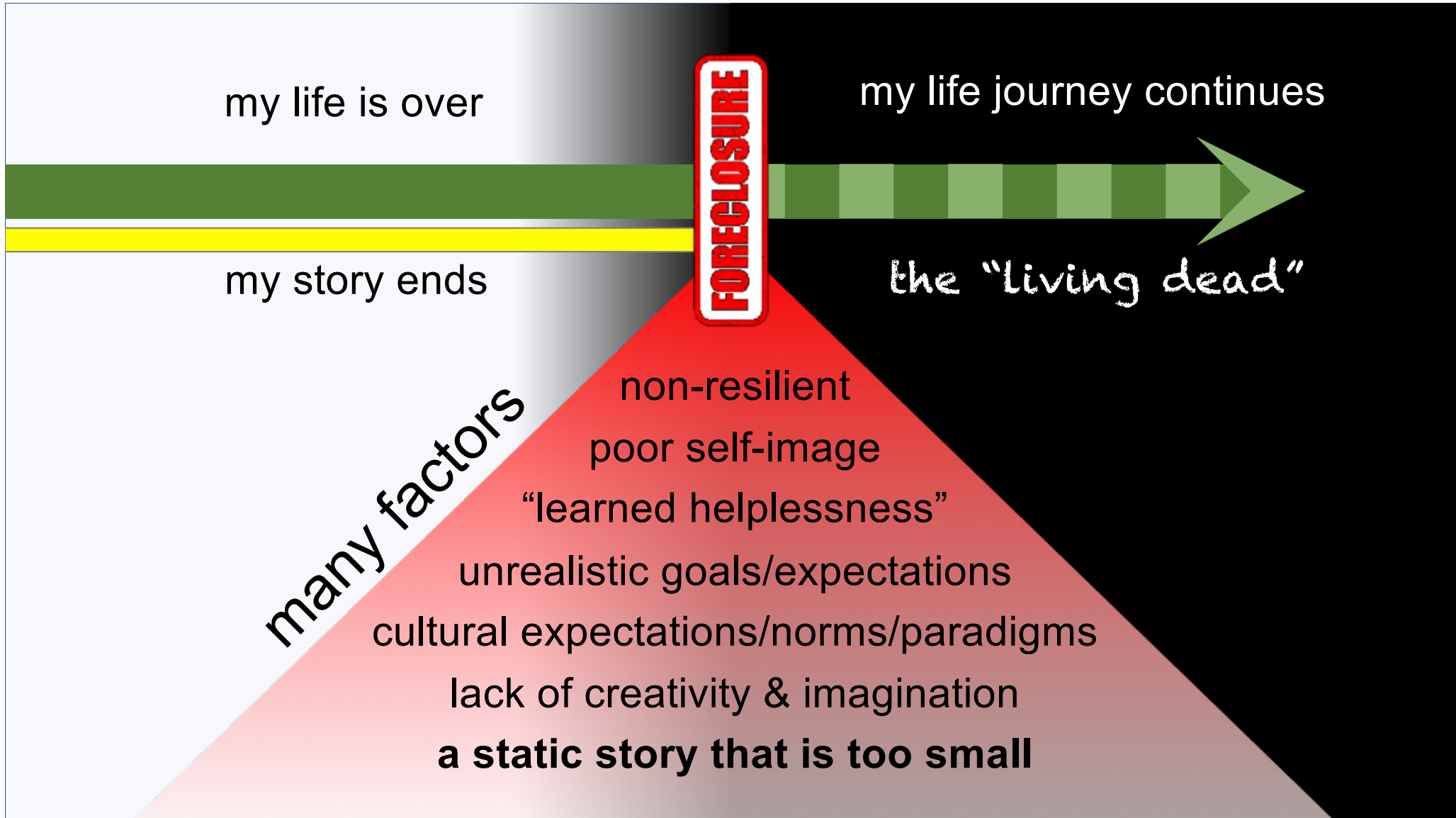
my story ends

the "living dead"

**FORECLOSURE**

*many factors*

non-resilient  
poor self-image  
"learned helplessness"  
unrealistic goals/expectations  
cultural expectations/norms/paradigms  
lack of creativity & imagination  
**a static story that is too small**



my life is over

my life journey continues

my story ends

FORECLOSURE

The challenge is  
to assist people  
to create a story  
that energizes  
rather than  
debilitates.

A Better Story  
can help  
people find new life,  
find new possibilities,  
and find new hope.

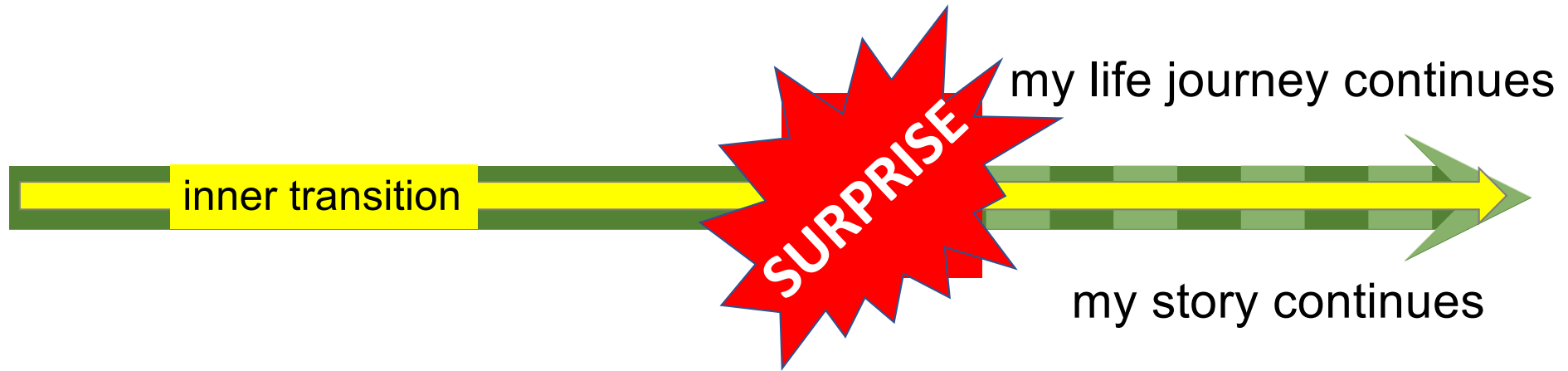


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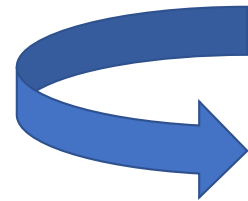


What can we do?

A Better Story  
can help  
people find new life,  
find new possibilities,  
and find new hope.



Activities  
to impact  
people  
in 3 key ways.



**TURN  
AROUND**



**KEEP  
GOING**





## The power of the unexpected



**very powerful:**  
you can't  
challenge  
something  
if you don't know  
it exists

# The OOBLECK Effect

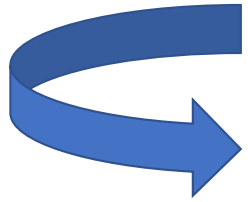
Sometimes  
people harden  
when you challenge  
their story.



## The power of the unexpected

**A surprise can  
sometimes go  
around  
potential  
barriers**

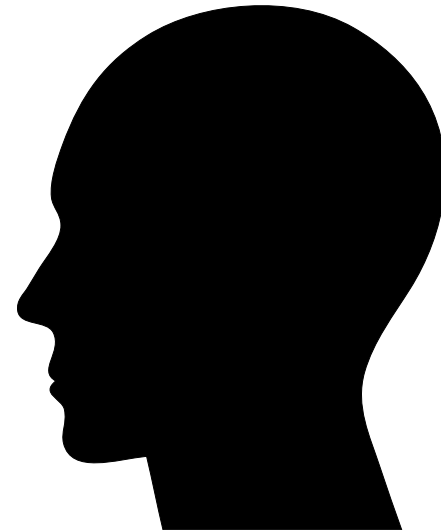




**TURN  
AROUND**

The power of changing perspective

Sometimes all  
that is needed is  
to look at things  
differently



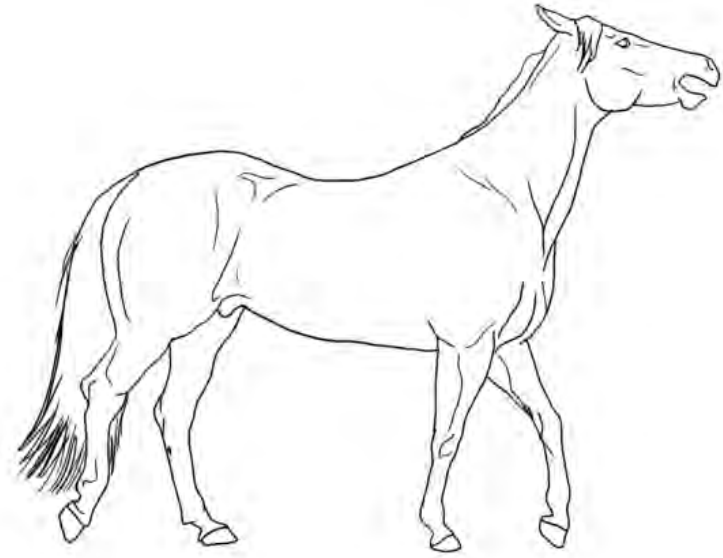
*Expanded  
& Updated*

The definitive, 4th edition of the  
**New York Times** bestseller

# DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN

*A course  
in enhancing  
creativity  
and artistic  
confidence*

BETTY EDWARDS



You can draw more  
accurately if you  
draw the picture  
upside down.

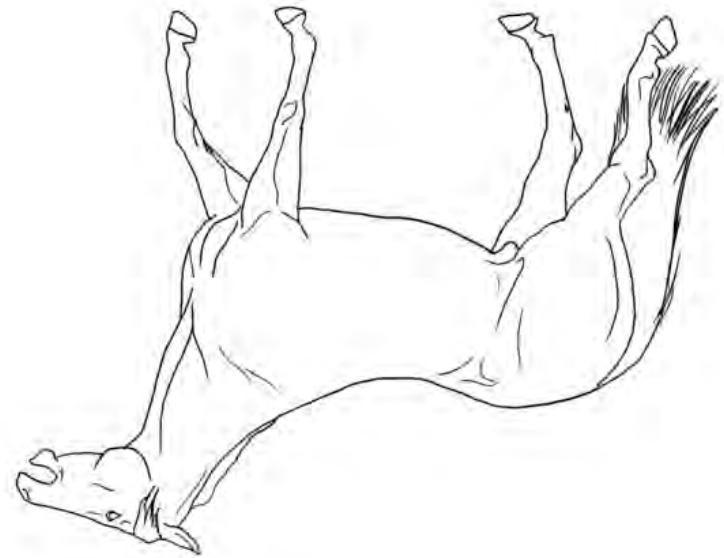
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It bypasses the  
image you have in  
your brain of what  
a horse looks like.

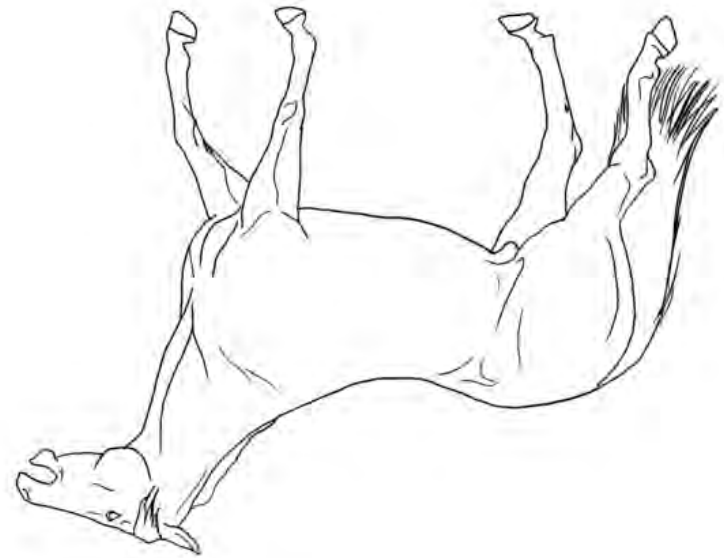
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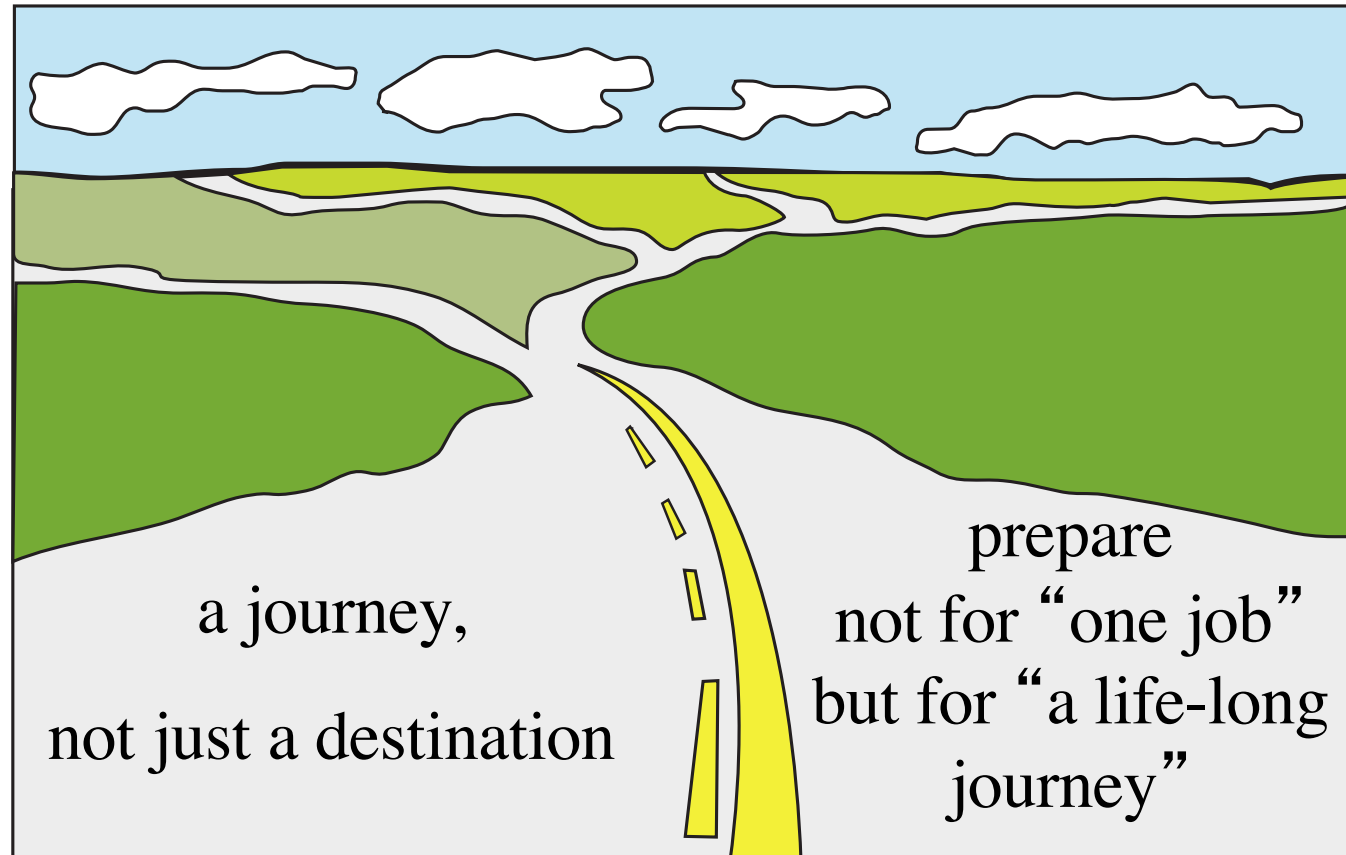
Sometimes I need  
to bypass the story  
I have about who I am  
and what I can do.



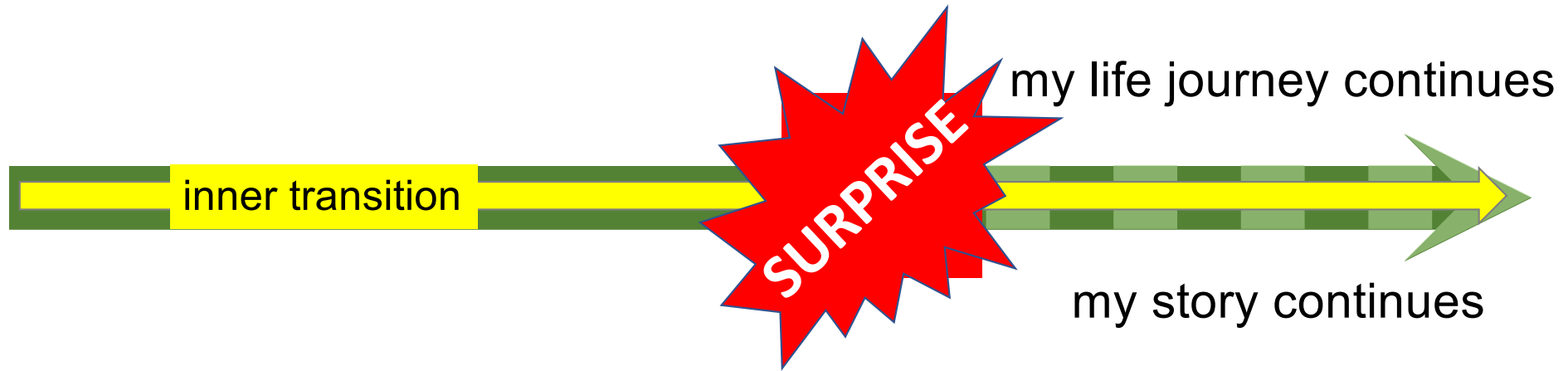
## The power of the journey

### KEEP GOING

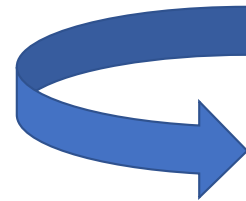
Ensure that  
concepts,  
language, tools,  
and activities  
are dynamic  
and not static







Some  
examples



**TURN  
AROUND**



**KEEP  
GOING**

Career  
Explanations



## CAREER

is about you,

is about your world and your part in it,

is about your journey in this world,

is about crafting the life you really want to live  
on your journey in this world.

Alternative  
Explanations



"Pessimistic explanatory style ...

personal

("It's my fault"),

permanent

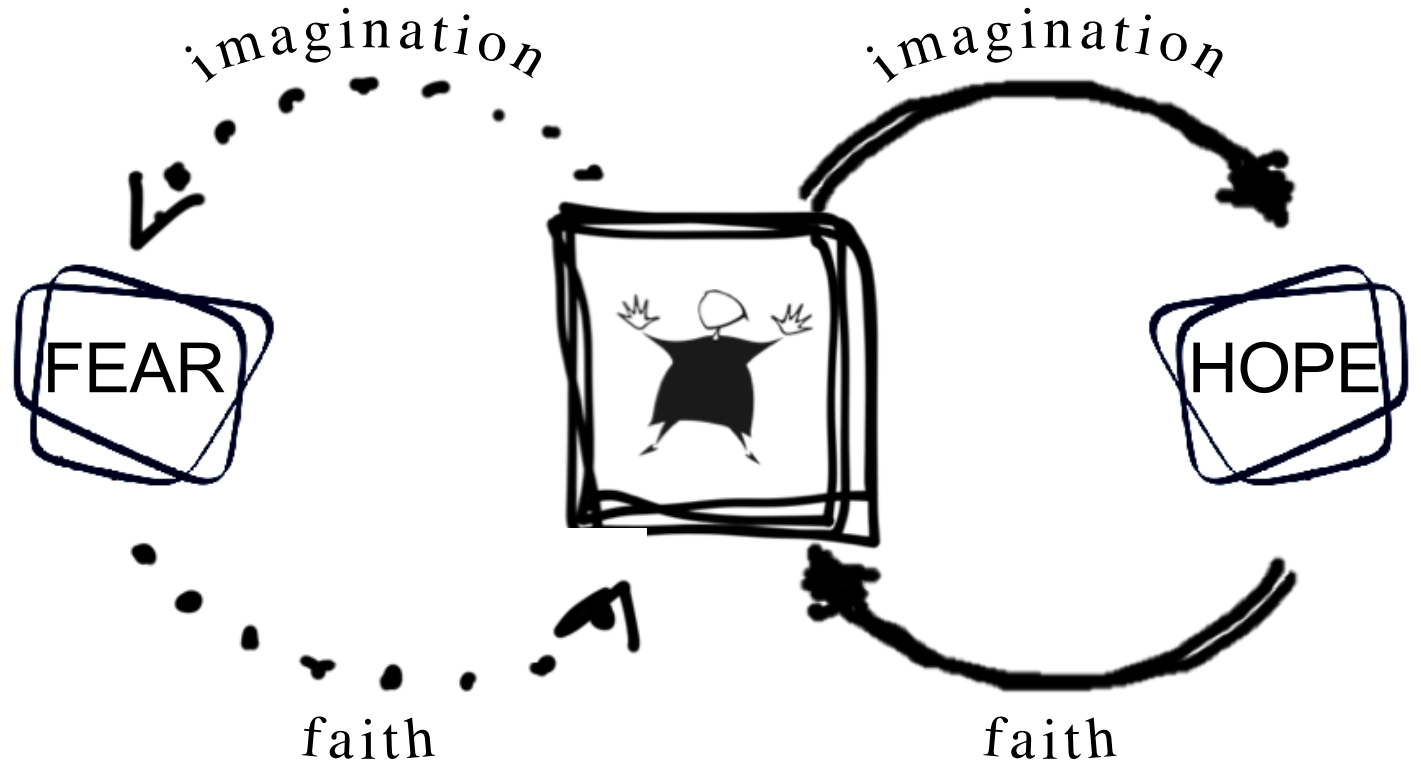
("It's always going to be like this"),

and pervasive

("It's going to undermine every aspect  
of my life")."

Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life"  
by Martin E.P. Seligman

Hardwired  
for Hope



Can you  
see me?



Can you  
see me?



Role models  
doing what you  
think you can't



Adventure is for All



<https://www.adventure.travel/adventure-in-motion>



## Harriette Thompson: The Matriarch of Marathons

76 years old  
ran her first marathon

92 years old  
oldest woman to complete  
a 26-mile marathon  
(7hrs 24min 36 sec)

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/senior-health-pictures/10-super-seniors-we-admire>





## **Nola Ochs: The Senior Freshman**

1930 – first went to college

2007 – finished degree  
at 95

2010 – finished her  
master's at 98

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/senior-health-pictures/10-super-seniors-we-admire>



## **Georgina Harwood: Skydiver and Shark Diver**

Celebrated 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

by tandem skydiving

& by cage-diving  
with great white sharks  
to draw attention  
to overfishing practices

<https://www.everydayhealth.com/senior-health-pictures/10-super-seniors-we-admire>

Favourite  
Things



Do mazes  
have dead  
ends?



[https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/plant-of-labyrinth-at-parc-del-laberint-de-horta-in-barcelona\\_1489247.htm](https://www.freepik.com/free-photo/plant-of-labyrinth-at-parc-del-laberint-de-horta-in-barcelona_1489247.htm)  
Designed by Bearfotos

Work/Life  
Roles



What are some  
of the work/life roles  
you've had  
in your life so far?

Storytelling



A story is a trick  
for sneaking  
a message  
into the fortified citadel  
of the human mind.

**Jonathan Gottschal, Why Storytelling Is  
The Ultimate Weapon**

[https://www.fastcompany.com/1680581/  
/why-storytelling-is-the-ultimate-weapon](https://www.fastcompany.com/1680581/why-storytelling-is-the-ultimate-weapon)

Storytelling



When we tell stories  
of our favourite things,  
we can relive  
the good experience.

my story ends

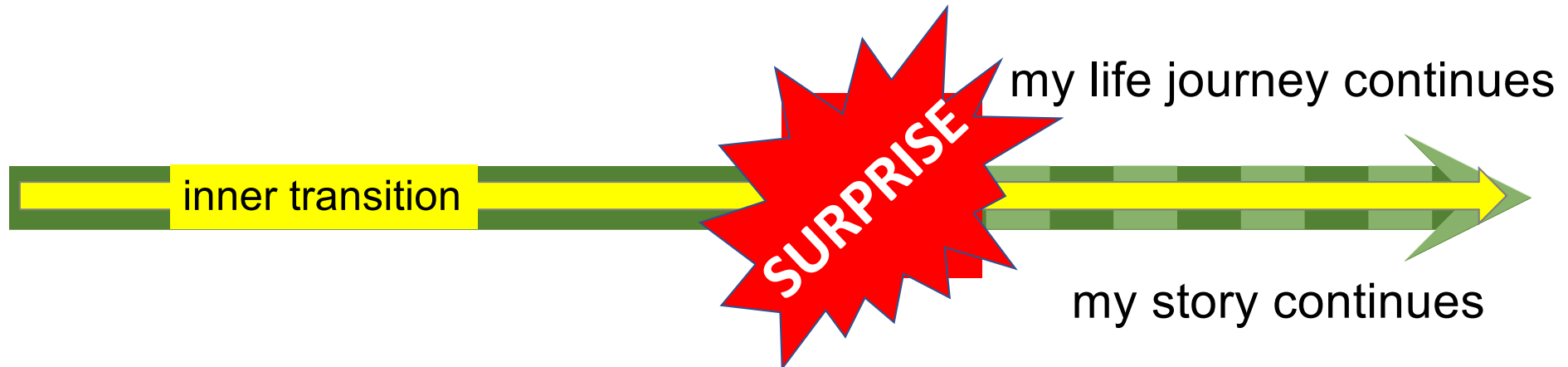
**FORECLOSURE**

my life journey continues

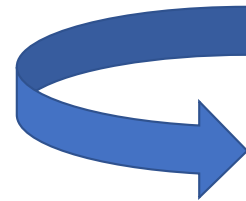
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