

A person is shown from the side, writing in a notebook. The image is in a soft, sepia tone. The person's hand is visible, holding a pen and writing on a page. The notebook is open, and the person appears to be focused on their work.

## IDEAS FOR LIVING

### PUTTING PROBLEMS TO WORK

A few years ago, I was a writer with no time to write. Half-finished projects lay in basement boxes, in file cabinets, and on disks. At home with two preschoolers, I found my days were full. Time to myself when, say, the children were napping was not used for writing. I couldn't focus with the possibility of an interruption looming.

Then I began waking before dawn. I tried a later bedtime to stave this off, but it was no good. I'd still awaken in what felt like the middle of the night. Soon after, a small epiphany: Those early hours were my opportunity. I rose and devoted full attention to writing. I thought I would be double tired. Instead, the fun of finally writing energized me.

Years before that, another problem had proved an opportunity. At bedtime, my first child would cry and scream. It became the worst time of my day. A friend suggested I try sitting outside his room and reading a good book. My son would know I was there, and I would have some time to myself. I love to read, and with this plan I could do so guilt-free. I wasn't shirking chores to read a novel. I was solving my son's bedtime terrors! I tried it. It worked. And it became my favorite time of day.

Wouldn't it be nice if life were a pet you could keep on a leash? Give it a good yank when it wanted to go in a different direction, and praise it when it tagged along? Of course, anyone with a dog knows that the best walks are the ones without the leash, when you follow your dog as he explores. My guess is each life provides paths to dreams. They just may not be the paths we imagined.

— Creative Living reader *Cathleen Burnham*  
*Pittsford, New York*

*Send your life-enhancing ideas to Catherine O'Neill Grace, Editor, Creative Living, 75 Arlington Street, Suite 701, Boston MA 02116, or [cgrace@forbes.com](mailto:cgrace@forbes.com). Fifty dollars for each one published.*