

Mid-Life Career Change

Joan had come to me to talk about a possible career change. She was currently in a high level job with a major university. She was well established in her community with a circle of friends, church, activities and was happy with her life. However, she had a dream that she had been holding for many years.

Several years prior Joan had applied to a graduate program in Marine Ecology in another state. She had been accepted and decided to turn it down. Now, the opportunity had presented itself again to her. She was in a quandary as to what to do, pursue her dream which would mean moving, starting over, making less money or staying put where she knew what to expect and was not unhappy.

I love coaching people in this place. It is an act of courage that is required to live your dream. It does mean some sacrifice, change, and can be quite scary. Joan and I began meeting once a month to talk about this opportunity.

We explored all aspects from finances, to going back to school at her age, to moving and leaving behind her friends and lifestyle. Every change was going to require a re-thinking or “re-framing” of how Joan perceived herself and her life. There were many times she questioned the intelligence of making such a move. Every time that question came up I asked her what would happen if she turned down this opportunity for the second time. How committed to this passionate dream of hers was she?

A book I always recommend to my clients who are at this point in their lives is “Transitions, Making Sense of Life’s Changes” by William Bridges. This book helped me through my shift to living my dream (that and working with a coach, but that is another story). William Bridges states in this book that change is an event. Once you make the change, moving across the country, changing jobs, new home, that event is done. It is the transition into the event of change that causes us so much difficulty.

Joan and I worked for several months. She reapplied to the program and once again, was accepted. Now, she had to make a decision. Up until now it was talk. We had talked through and strategized about all the logistical aspects of making a move, change of this nature and had developed plans. She decided to take the spot in the program.

We stayed in touch and while being back in school was a very new experience she did quite well. She graduated and is now working for a non-profit to monitor marine life of the Pacific Ocean. She is happy with her new life and it has brought changes, new friends and a new way of life she enjoys.

Joan’s journey brought with it all a journey can; peaks and valleys, joys, days of missing the old life and days of satisfaction. These journeys start with what I call “an itch”. We have something

we have always longed to do but put so many obstacles in our way that we find it nearly impossible to imagine we could accomplish it.

Scratch your itch and find out what is possible for you!



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