

Title:

Finding Fulfillment at Midlife: The Second Chance Career

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Summary:

Are you ready to make a change? Get some tips for getting started on a successful second career.

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Article Body:

For more than twenty-years, Carla's primary focus was working her way up the corporate ladder in the Human Resources department of a large publicly traded company. Day after day she worked hard to meet the demands of her superiors and colleagues, until one morning she woke up with a sickened, sinking feeling in her stomach.

It was her career, she realized. Having spent nearly half of her life working in an unsatisfying job, with few genuine accomplishments and the goals of her youth long forgotten, Carla had hit midlife and she didn't like it. To alleviate the feeling in her stomach, Carla began making a conscious effort to pay more attention to the gap between the reality of her life and the dreams and passions she once had. She was determined to pounce on her one last chance for a career that could make the second half of her life more meaningful and fulfilling.

In 2004, Carla decided to nourish her passion to serve the elderly and today, is the owner and operator of an adult day care facility in Houston, Texas. She is now planning her next venture—an assisted living program for low-income elderly residents.

Is Carla's story unusual? According to a study reported in Prevention Magazine, not in the slightest; "79% of baby boomers will expect to work at least part-time well into their golden years," the study has revealed. "A growing number of adults are looking at their 40s, 50s, and 60s as the right time to start fresh in an entirely new field." What drives adults to change their careers? The answer, in a word, is midlife.

Craving a more fulfilling and meaningful career is just one area of focus during midlife adjustment. As adults reach midlife, at a time when parents and older relatives begin to die, the realization that their lives, too, will come to an end begins to hit home. Suddenly the importance of achieving goals and doing what makes us happy becomes much more important. This is the time closet authors, entrepreneurs, musicians or artists will begin thinking about careers to match their energy, vitality, and passion for life.

The life cycle is, for most of us, fairly predictable. From adolescence to age 30, most of us are consumed with learning how to become who we think we want to be. We go from our 30s to our 40s working and living that role. But at age 40, midlife, after having reached this goal, many discover it wasn't what we wanted to do after all. At this midlife point, after having worked so hard only to find ourselves wanting, many are willing to take on the challenge of more risk and freeing ourselves from the burden of other's expectations.

Longer life expectancy plays a part, too. At midlife, says Deborah Carr, sociology professor at Rutgers University, people realize they still have nearly half a lifetime yet to live and wonder how they will spend those years. "They know they're going to have lots of healthy years, so I think it's a period of making choices to live out one's dreams that got put on the shelf during younger years."

Women are well represented in this mindset, with more women than ever using their midlife as a springboard to experience positive career transformations. They want a career that matches their energy and allows them to be successful as individuals. More and more often you will find women starting businesses, gaining respect, and finding purpose in their midlife.

The lesson we can take for Carla's story is that midlife should not be feared, and that the sinking feeling in your stomach should not be ignored. Both are an accepted call to action. Changing your job, career, or lifestyle may take some work. But if you truly follow your passion, the effort will provide infinitely positive results.

Are you ready to make a change? Here are a few tips for getting started on a successful second career.

Make a list of the things missing in your life

Do you long to revive a passion from your youth that you never found time to pursue? Is it music, a sport, writing, cooking, entrepreneurship? It doesn't matter what, as long as it's something you truly have a desire to do. If you've

already got a clear picture of the passions you'd like to pursue, then identify small, achievable ways you can start incorporating them into your life.

Imagine that you already have one million dollars in the bank. How would you spend your time each day? Think of the environment you'd like to be in, the people you'd want to know, and how you would relate to them. What activities would you engage in? Chances are your passions come to the surface when you play-out your "winning the lottery" fantasies. Although we're not all destined to be millionaires, that shouldn't hold you back from following your desires and placing more value in yourself, regardless of your bank account balance.

Tap into your wisdom and experience to re-evaluate your current career. Ask yourself what's not working and what you want to change. Use this time to reflect on your life. Are there any passions or dreams that you abandoned in your youth? If you don't know what you want to do, try volunteering as a way to develop new interests. Find a way to live your passion everyday. I once heard someone say, "You don't get what you want out of life, but what you believe."

Understand your passion, but also where your strengths lie. It's critical to take an inventory of your life and to determine what is really important. Make a list of the things you are passionate about, and then narrow the list to items that present an opportunity to generate income. If you're not pursuing your passion, what's in the way? What do you need to do to move forward with pursuing your plan?

Keep your day job

You don't have to quit your day job to focus on your passion. It's not an all or nothing proposition. I meet people all the time who say they're working full-time and pursuing their dreams on the side, in their free time. You may still need to earn a living while you transition onto your new path. This is true whether you're planning to start a business or preparing to establish a new career.

Start right now

Over the next 30 days; make a commitment to yourself to identify one thing you can do to begin pursuing your passion—and start doing it! Research ways to integrate your passion with your current obligations and take those first steps into your second career with achievable goals. You'll soon discover that living and working your passion is being in control of your own life.