

# second acts

Big changes in  
your life or career?  
Join the crowd.  
Here's how to be  
better prepared

By **Donna Lynn Rhodes**

Second acts – and third and fourth – in life and in careers are normal in today's world. For each act, we can be fortunate enough to choose what we want to do and be, or have it foisted on us. The question is, how do we make these transitions work, and ultimately positive? We check in with a few intimately acquainted with life's curveballs.





Jessamyn Photography

Life coach Dory Willer says most people are not prepared for change, yet change is inevitable.

## The coach

Dory Willer is owner of Beacon Quest Coaching in the Bay Area, which helps people design and live purposeful lives. She is an internationally recognized expert in business and life coaching, working with individuals as well as powerhouse companies such as Yahoo, Cisco, Kaiser Permanente and Wells Fargo. A prominent speaker, Willer is co-author of four books, including “Living an Extraordinary Life” and “Best Year Yet for Teens.”

### Are most people prepared for dramatic changes in their life and their career?

No. Only 10 percent of the population are known to be “change agents,” which means they thrive on change. That leaves the other 90 percent resisting even minor changes, let alone a dramatic shift. Change brings risk, and risk takes someone outside their comfort zone – two things most people resist.

### What can people do to prepare themselves?

Embrace the possibility that things are probably going to change, and adjust your emotional response to it. Instead of looking at change as a bad thing, welcome this new phase and the limitless possibilities it now brings.

My client “Joan” was out of work for 18 months and getting more frustrated as time went by. Losing her job and missing her family back East was bad enough, but then she found out her house was going into foreclosure. When I first met with her, she was very resistant to the silver lining I tried to get her to see: Without a house or a job, she was free to move back East, and a world of new possibilities was hers to explore. We worked on exercises, and her resistance turned to acceptance and excitement. Now

## Dory Willer: 5 things . . .

...to get back on track, whether you’re changing jobs or changing husbands:

- 1. Hold a pity party for yourself.** You earned it. But every party has a start time and stop time, and this is no different. Make sure the party ends.
- 2. When you’re ready to move on, make sure your “what ifs” are what-if-ups and not what-if-downs.** Instead of saying, “There’s too much competition out there for me to get a job,” ask yourself, “Now that I have no restrictions and nothing tying me down, what do I really want to do, and where would I really like to work?”
- 3. Identify what truly makes you happy.** When you combine your passions with your skills, especially midcareer, you are renewing your true self.
- 4. Be open** to the possibility that change forces us to be creative and gives us permission to take risks.
- 5. Create the person you were meant to be.** Recognize that what you once thought was the best you could be or most you could have is not necessarily true. Embrace the newness and welcome all the possibilities that are now open.

when Joan looks back, she sees that her future was just waiting for her, surrounded by her family. She not only has a wonderful a job, but also met the love of her life.

### Do people’s “dream job” or “dream career” change over time?

Absolutely. From our cars to our clothes to the food we

like, what we wanted at 21 is not the same as what we want at 41 or 61. It's called life. Life is full of experiences, and these experiences lead to more decisions and more experiences. We are constantly changing our focus of what is important to us.

**How do you help people identify what they want, what they're good at – especially those in midcareer or at their peak and looking to make a change?**

First thing we do is work on busting negative paradigms and beliefs. Most of us love to hang our hats on beliefs that don't serve us well simply because they are not true, such as: You're too old to get a new job, or no one is hiring. I work with businesses every single day, and they are hiring people every single day. If you don't believe you're worth hiring, no one else will. Seventy-five percent of my current clients are in midcareer changes and are excited about going to the next level. For most, the next level comes from identifying their passion and combining that with their skill set.

For example, after 28 years with a company, 54-year-old "Bill" was laid off. Too young to retire and still supporting two kids in college, he was in quite a state when I met with him. I asked him what his passion was. He said, "If I could golf every day, I would." The coaching we did took him into the land of possibilities, combining his profession,

his passion and his interests. At first he dismissed it, but then I opened the door in his mind with one simple question: "Do you think there might be companies in the golfing industry that are significant in size and revenue and would have room for a controller with your skills?" Today Bill is the CFO (a title he didn't hold before) of one of the largest golf club manufacturers in the country.

**You talk about the theory of attraction and the science of deliberate creation. How does this translate into skills that people can use to cope with, say, getting downsized, or getting a divorce?**

It's all about managing your energy – which is something you control through your thoughts. If your beliefs are negative, like, "I am never going to get a new job," or "How can I possibly take care of myself and my kids with this divorce," then those thoughts become actions and those actions limit you. In all that's been written about positive energy and the laws of attraction, perhaps no one said it better than Henry Ford: "Whether you think you can or can't, you're right."

I recognize that it's hard for someone to change overnight, and that's where I come in. All someone has to do is be open to the possibility that a different way exists, and that new beliefs and truths will bring different results, and they are well on their way to their next phase in life.



Courtesy NBC11

When newswoman Jessica Aguirre learned her contract was not going to be renewed, she took charge of the situation.

## The anchor

In the spring of 2007, Jessica Aguirre, KGO/ABC7 evening news anchor and Emmy award winner, was told that her contract would not be renewed at the end of the year. She was stunned – her newscasts were rated No. 1 in the Bay Area, and she had been with the station for much of her career. (A daughter of immigrants, Aguirre previously reported and anchored newscasts in Miami and Los Angeles.) It became public when ABC7 fired her after she accepted a job at NBC11. "People were coming up to me saying, 'I'm so, so sorry,'" she says. "My youngest daughter asked, 'You were fired?'" Aguirre, her husband Jay Huyler and their two girls moved from Walnut Creek to Pleasanton to be closer to her new job in San Jose. She is now lead anchor of NBC11's 6 and 11 p.m. newscasts. In addition, she hosts "Class Action," a weekly show about public education in California.

**Describe how you felt when you found out that your contract at ABC7 wasn't going to be renewed.**

I was shocked – but mostly, I just felt betrayed. I had dedicated my life to the station and put their needs before anyone else's – including my own family. But then I realized that their decision was a reflection on them, not me, and I

was not going to let their decision determine my value. My standards are higher than anyone else's, and I know that I am an outstanding journalist and hard worker. You can't let any outside sources determine the direction of your internal compass – jobs come and go, and you have to feel good about yourself. And I did.

**Did you consider changing careers or moving out of the area to look for another job?**

I never thought of changing careers – not even for a second. I love what I do. I wanted to live and work in the Bay Area, and my focus was to stay here and make it happen.

**What did this experience teach you about yourself?**

That leaving one position for another always forces you to grow. When you leave a job, whether by choice or not, you have the opportunity to re-create yourself and take your game up a notch. Sometimes being too comfortable in a job just makes you too comfortable, and you stop reassessing who you are and what you want to do. New experiences bring new energy, and new energy means you're learning new things.

**So what have you learned?**

The transition allowed me to take the lead at KNTV. This opportunity has given me a sense of confidence as a woman and as a broadcaster that I didn't have before. And looking back, I wish that when I wasn't working, I had taken more time to just be in the moment and enjoy the moment – especially with my children. Maybe taken a bit more time to rejuvenate myself.

**How would you advise a friend, or your daughters, to be prepared for unexpected career turns?**

Easy: Expect that change is coming, because it always does. Anticipate that changes are just around the corner so when they do happen, you won't be rattled. One of my best qualities is resilience, and I try to instill that in my girls. Whether it's in the schoolyard or in the workplace, you shouldn't let other people judge you. You are always going to get knocked down by someone or something, and it's OK to nurse your wound, but you only fail if you don't get back up and keep going. You have to believe in yourself.

---

## The survivor

Danville resident Shiera Brady Henderson is no stranger to adversity. But in response to life's difficulties, she developed an inner strength and invincible spirit that powered her ascent to the top of the mountain – literally. She is author of "Survival Through Laughter: Shiera vs. Breast Cancer" (Digital 1 Presentations, 2004).

"My 'second act' hit me when I entered my 40s with a bald head and no eyelashes. I had to rethink and redefine beauty and my self-image.

"Being diagnosed with cancer reshaped not only my breast but also my self-image for the next decade. My new sense of self was shattered again in 2007 when my husband of nearly 20 years announced he was no longer attracted to me and replaced me with the more traditional version of beauty.

"Some would say my journey has been anything but beautiful. But the battlefield of surgeries and devastating rejection has been the very reason I've discovered the beauty of inner strength. Strength that helped me snowshoe across Antarctica and climb to the top of 14,000-foot peaks. The beauty of our natural world and a newfound sense of adventure fill my soul with what perhaps has been missing all along — feeling fabulous from within."

To celebrate her 10-year milestone of being cancer-free, Henderson is raising money for the Breast Cancer Fund through a climbing expedition on Mount Shasta in June.



Courtesy Shiera Brady Henderson

Shiera Brady Henderson is celebrating 10 years of being cancer-free by taking part in a mountain-climbing expedition this summer.

To contribute, see [breastcancerfund.org/2011climb/sbrady](http://breastcancerfund.org/2011climb/sbrady). A full version of Henderson's story on redefining beauty is featured on [More.com](http://More.com). 