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10-Step Planning Process For a New Year and New You

January 6, 2009, Gold River, Calif.—Robyn, age 50, a lobbyist recently lost her job working for a high-profile politician’s office. While not happy about the job loss, it came at a time when Robyn was already questioning her career track and wondering, “What’s next?” For years, she had become weary of the political environment and some of the disingenuous behavior she witnessed almost daily but didn’t know where to begin to make a change. Now faced with job loss, she quickly decided to take it as an opportunity to start over.

Robyn is like the millions of women across the country now being forced to make their New Year’s resolution to reinvent their careers because of the rapidly growing number of layoffs already taking place.

Recent projections for Goldman Sachs Group Inc. suggest unemployment will top 9 percent by the fourth quarter of 2009. Now that women comprise 50 percent of the workforce, half of that rate will include women left without jobs, asking themselves, “Now what do I do?”

Why do women feel compelled to reinvent their careers vs. pound the pavement and continue their paths? Like Robyn, some 40 million women between the ages of 35 and 50 already feel depressed, trapped, unsatisfied and long for a change.”Robyn hit what we call the ‘Big Blank,’ explains Anne Marie Smith, co-author of *Second Bloom: 10 Steps to Reinvent, Rejuvenate, and Realize a New Life* (Kaabrah Publishing, January 2009). “She was already experiencing the Big Blank when she lost her job and now has an opportunity to use the time to really consider what she wants to do with the rest of her life.”

“The Big Blank often causes us to start living unconsciously; that is, we put ourselves on autopilot just to get through each day,” says Smith. But what causes the Big Blank? Says Smith, the Big Blank is often rooted in a major life change such as a job loss, the death or illness of a parent or spouse, an unhappy marriage, or an empty nest. “But sometimes, it just sneaks up gradually, for no known reason.”

And Smith should know. She hit the Big Blank when she was in her early 40s as did co-author, Michelle Gamble-Risley. “Like the two of us, many women want and know they need to make a change, but don’t know how,” says Gamble-Risley. “A job layoff can offer an unexpected gift to evaluate and plan for your ‘new you’ rather than just continue living in Big Blankland. We know it can be scary to suddenly and unexpectedly lose your job. So go ahead and cry for a few days but then adjust your thinking and figure out how to move forward in a positive direction.”

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“We realize it is not only scary to lose your job but then to make the apparently ‘insane’ decision to change directions seems even more foolish,” says Smith, “Rather than go out on a limb and figure this out on your own, we suggest you create a transition plan that maps out exactly what you need to do to move from your current life to a new-and-improved, happier life.” Smith and Gamble-Risley developed a 10-step process that helps women create their transition plans.

The first step is to define exactly what the issue is such as an unchallenging career and need for a new direction. “From there, you describe the significance of solving or not solving this issue, identify your core values to realign your life’s purpose to match those values and create a bold and daring vision for the issue,” explains Gamble-Risley.

The transition plan should also identify your allies. That is, those people who you need to help you pull off your vision and resolve your issue. And it’s critical to know what you’re up against, so you must identify obstacles that are in the way of your vision and assess your personal strengths that will help and weaknesses that will hinder your progress. Finally, you need to get tactical and create strategies and actions that are necessary to realize your vision.

“The key is to get your thoughts on paper and organize them. People are always more successful when they have goals and plans,” advises Smith.

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