

2009 MEDIA KIT

Second Bloom

10 Steps
to Reinvent, Rejuvenate,
and Realize a New Life





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About *Second Bloom*

Second Bloom: 10 Steps to Reinvent, Rejuvenate, and Realize a New Life is a passion project written by Anne Marie Smith and Michelle Gamble-Risley. *Second Bloom* is a unique tool designed for women primarily in the demographic of ages 35-60 who are experiencing what the authors call the “Big Blank”—which has caused them to go on autopilot and send their spirits out to sea.

These women often feel empty, dissatisfied or bored and ask themselves, “Is this all there is?” Some women often don’t know why they feel this way. Sometimes the Big Blank is provoked by circumstances or a life change such as the death or illness of a parent or spouse, an unhappy marriage, an empty nest or a loss of job.

Second Bloom teaches women how to:

- ~ Identify the change they want to make in their lives
- ~ Create bold and daring visions to electrify and motivate them
- ~ Smash through obstacles clearing the path to their visions
- ~ Craft a plan of action that empowers them to move from hoping and wishing to living and loving their dreams

At times irreverent but always inspirational, *Second Bloom* includes dozens of stories about ordinary women who rediscovered their spirits. Loaded with exercises, the book walks women through the process using a beautiful, easy-to-use planning template. When finished, women will have a transition plan that maps out where they want to go and what they need to do to cultivate their second bloom.

Authors Smith and Gamble-Risley were uniquely qualified to write *Second Bloom*. Each woman personally experienced what it feels like to abandon their spirits and collide head on into the Big Blank. Both women went on their own voyages of self-exploration and reinvention and created more joyful lives centered on their values and passions. Their greatest wish is for *Second Bloom* to empower its readers to grow, thrive and blossom into happy, contented women.

Smith and Gamble-Risley also conduct *Second Bloom* workshops all over the country to help and inspire women to take their lives from anemic to awesome.

About the Authors



(L-R) Michelle Gamble-Risley and Anne Marie Smith

Michelle Gamble-Risley

Michelle Gamble-Risley is a professional writer, editor and marketing and communications expert. She is the former publisher of a regional trade magazine *California Computer News*. She also worked as director of custom publications for a number of years for group called The Center for Digital Government where she provided oversight of their custom reports, white papers, magazines and Web-based publications. She left the corporate world in 2006 to launch her own marketing and public relations agency MGR Consulting (www.mgrconsultingonline.com).

Michelle completely understands what it's like to check your spirit at the door and go on autopilot. After 10 years of struggling in the corporate world to find personal fulfillment, she left to start her own business. This new phase in her life produced a rapid and profound personal transformation that led to her desire to collaborate with Anne Marie Smith on this very important book *Second Bloom*. Today, she regularly speaks with women's group about life transitions and one by one, believes she is making a difference with those women she touches.

Michelle has also written dozens of national and regional magazine articles for the *Engineering News Record*, *Government Technology*, *T.H.E. Journal*, *Access*, *Comstock's*, *Sacramento Magazine*, and others. She co-wrote a screenplay, *Virtual Seduction*, that aired on Showtime.

Anne Marie Smith

Anne Marie Smith is a professional writer, successful business consultant and entrepreneur whose passion is helping individuals and businesses achieve and excel. After spending ten years in the computer technology industry as a technical editor and writer, Smith went out on her own in 1995 and started her first company building it into a high-growth, successful venture with over 50 employees. The company was on *Inc* magazine's 500 Fastest-Growing Privately-Held Companies list for two years.

But something changed. In 2002, the year Smith turned 40, she started to experience the Big Blank. Running the business didn't give her the same thrill it once did. For more than a year, she found herself questioning her life and its meaning. She yearned to be able to do the one thing she was still passionate about but had no time to do: to write. But she felt trapped and her fear kept her in a place she no longer wanted to be. Finally, Smith devised and began executing her plan of escape. She sold the business in 2005 and started doing what she loves.

Smith is also co-author of the business book, *60 Minute Strategic Plan: 2 Stages, 12 Steps, 300 Words...Planning and Problem-Solving for the Real World* (www.60msp.com) and conducts workshops to help business professionals create strategic plans.



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877/809-4223 (Ph)

916/671-1751 (Fax)

info@kaabrah.com

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michele Smith

Mobile: 916.230.8569

E-mail: michelesmith0914@yahoo.com

The Big Blank: Why Millions of Women are Asking, “Is this all there is?”

September 26, 2008, Sacramento, Calif. — Suzanne, 44, felt it. “I don’t necessarily love my life,” admits Suzanne, “but I’m not sure I can change it...and to what? I guess my philosophy these days is: I don’t have to like it I just have to do it. What other choice do I have?” Suzanne, like many of the 40 million women between the ages of 35 and 59, feels depressed, trapped and unsatisfied and longs for a change.

“Suzanne 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). “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 the death or illness of a parent or spouse, an unhappy marriage, an empty nest, or a loss of job. “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.

Lana, 42, a business owner felt herself changing over the last year and doesn’t know why. She no longer has the energy or patience for day-to-day business issues and conflicts. The cosmic questions of mid-life constantly swirl through her mind, the main one being “Is this all there is?” She wants to do something different but is frozen by fear of the unknown.

“The best way to get over your fear,” says Smith, “is to 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 a bad marriage, unchallenging career, or financial problems. “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.

Media: Visit www.second-bloom.com for a media kit. Contact authors for interviews or review copies at 866-282-9409. Second Bloom retails for \$19.95 and can be purchased at www.second-bloom.com.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michele Smith

Tel: 916.939.3344

Mobile: 916.230-8569

Email: Michele@mcommunicationsinc.com

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.”

(Continued on next page)

“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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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*Q: What is *Second Bloom: 10 Steps to Reinvent, Rejuvenate, and Realize a New Life* about?*

A: *Second Bloom* is a practical tool designed for women primarily in the demographic of ages 35-60 who are experiencing what the authors call the “Big Blank”— which has caused them to go on autopilot and send their spirits out to sea.

*Q: How does *Second Bloom* help women reinvent their lives?*

A: By providing a powerful 10-step planning tool to guide women through the process of identifying the issue, creating a vision and defining the steps to create a new life they can feel passionate and excited about living.

*Q: Is *Second Bloom* a textbook?*

A: No, it’s a regular book full of inspirational stories about ordinary women who were living on autopilot or, as the book calls it, were living the “Big Blank” and took measures to realize more meaningful, passionate lives.

Q: What is the “Big Blank?”

A: The Big Blank is sometimes provoked by circumstances or a life change such as the death or illness of a parent or spouse, an unhappy marriage, an empty nest or a loss of job. Women experiencing the “Big Blank” feel empty, bored, depressed or just jaded as they drift through their lives.

Q: What does the planning process teach?

A: *Second Bloom* teaches women how to: identify the change they want to make in their lives; create bold and daring visions to electrify and motivate them; smash through obstacles clearing the path to their visions; and craft a plan of action that empowers them to move from hoping and wishing to living and loving their dreams.

Q: Can you do the process alone or do you need to take a workshop?

A: Either way works. We do offer *Second Bloom* workshops for groups, organizations and associations to guide women through the process, provide assistance and insight, and create a supportive atmosphere for women to bond and share stories.

Q: What makes the authors qualified to write this book? Are they therapists?

A: No, but Anne Marie Smith and Michelle Gamble-Risley each experienced their own versions of the Big Blank, learned valuable lessons, and came out the other side happy, contented women. They wrote *Second Bloom* out of desire to help other women do the same thing.



Story Circle Book Reviews

Reviewed by Doris Anne Roop-Benner
January 1, 2009

At some point in our lives, many of us yearn for something different or feel that something is missing. What we're doing no longer has the meaning it once did. The authors of *Second Bloom* call this The Big Blank. This is exactly where I am right now—empty nest, growing old, bored with the norm. There's no pizzazz in my life. Reading this book was just what I needed to remind me to stop whining about my humdrum existence and do something about it. Maya Angelou said, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain."

How do so many of us get to the point where we only look at ourselves one-dimensionally? Why do we define ourselves by what we do? One answer is that society puts definitions on our titles and assigns status to them. Another involves the status quo—it feels safe. If we change and grow it takes us out of our comfort zone.

Anne Marie and Michelle tell us we can just decide to make our dreams come true. And we don't have to let anybody break our spirits...not our husbands, not our bosses, not our children, not ourselves. Remember, you can't hear your inner voice until you quiet the voices of others. The book includes dozens of stories of ordinary women who rediscovered their passions, and is loaded with exercises and a planning template.

The authors have laid out a transition plan: define the issue, plan how to resolve it, define your values, be clear about your vision, choose your allies, list the challenges, assess your strengths and weaknesses, form your strategies, brainstorm the actions, then name it and claim it. Each chapter tells you how to accomplish these steps. It sounds like a big undertaking, but I think it would be worth the effort and it all seems feasible.

The chance to reinvent our lives and make a conscious decision to live differently doesn't give us an instant "get out of jail free card." It does, however, give us an opportunity to be different and explore a new path. We can own our lives because we have the power and that actually liberates us from having to find the answer to the helpless question, "Why did this happen to me?" We are the puppet masters in our own play.

Anne Marie and Michelle want us to use *Second Bloom* as a tool to help us get what we want. They firmly believe we must first ask ourselves what it is and then have a plan to make it happen. And once we get started, we'll probably be surprised to learn what we can accomplish.

I've already started my transition plan: I've defined the issue. I see that my biggest hurdle is to believe that I can overcome the hurdles! I think my number one obstacle is going to be me. So I'm on to step two: planning how to resolve the issue. I want this to be my vision for the the years ahead, because, after all, it is all about me.

Chapter 1: Get Ready to Change Your Life

*“There came a time when the risk to
remain tight in the bud was more
painful than the risk it took to blossom.”
~ Anais Nin*

Have you ever heard the phrase living *unconsciously*? In essence, it means going through your day — your life — on autopilot...getting through, coasting, going through the motions, sleepwalking. Sound familiar? It should. Most of us dance the robot boogie at one time or another. For some, it’s a way of life.

Why do we do this? Pick a reason: apathy, disinterest, weariness, laziness, hopelessness. Mostly, we do it because it’s easier and requires less effort — no thinking involved. Get up, get on with it, go to bed, start all over again the next day.

“I don’t necessarily love my life,” admits Suzanne, 44, “but I’m not sure I can change it...and to what? I guess my philosophy these days is: I don’t have to like it, I just have to do it. What other choice do I have?”

The Big Blank

If getting through works for you and doesn’t bother you, then great. Keep on keepin’ on. This book then is probably not for you. But for many of us, at some point in our lives, we yearn for something different or feel that something is missing. It’s as if our spirits have flown the coop. What we’re doing no longer has the meaning it once did. This feeling of emptiness, dissatisfaction, or boredom — we call it “The Big Blank” — can happen any time in our lives, certainly, but it most often occurs between our late 30s and late-50s.

The Big Blank happens for a variety of reasons and is often provoked by a major life change such as the death or illness of a parent or spouse, early retire-

ment, a divorce, an empty nest, or a loss of job. But many times the Big Blank sneaks up gradually, for seemingly no reason, and grabs us by the throat, slowly squeezing the joy out of life.

“I’m just tired of the corporate b.s.,” says investment banker Linda, 49. “It’s really wearing at me and driving me nuts. My tolerance level for that type of time-wasting drama has hit an all-time low. It’s strange but it used to never bother me a bit.”

Dana, 47, a former grade school teacher, needs to find a new career now that her youngest is off to college but wants to find something that she can get excited about. “I was a full-time mom for 20 years. I’m substitute teaching now but it’s just not what I want to do anymore. It’s what I know, but it doesn’t ring my bell the way it used to.”

Lynn, 42, a former corporate executive, was for 10 years solely focused on becoming pregnant. She and her husband were unable to conceive naturally and had to resort to high-tech methods, which were emotionally and physically draining. “I had to earn and save thousands of dollars as we tried to have our two children,” she said. “It didn’t matter what was happening at work. I was driven and consumed by the desire to get pregnant and become a mother. My life, in general, just kind of took a back seat.”

After Lynn had her second baby and finally was able to relax, she hit the Big Blank. The “down time” magnified the real issue that lay in front of her. She finally had time to think. “I was nursing my daughter and vaguely aware that I did not want

to go back to work,” she said. “But even that vague feeling of discontent wasn’t enough to stop me long enough to make a change.”

After maternity leave was over, Lynn found it was easier to focus on the joy her children brought her rather than confront her discontent about her go-no-where career. Her solution to coping with a go-no-where job was to simply sink into apathy, come home every day, and play with her kids.

“I actually found a way to create this kind of boundary around myself,” she said. “I just ignored the big problem and when I got home I kind of turned it all off and focused on my babies. I did this for a long, long time.”

Is Your Heart Gaining Weight?

Like many women, Lana spent her 20s and 30s pursuing professional and financial success. At 42, and at the top of her game, Lana is co-owner of a thriving business, well-known and thought of in the business community, has a wonderful family, and is utterly miserable.

For the past year, Lana has felt herself changing and doesn’t know why. She doesn’t have the energy or patience for day-to-day business issues and conflicts. She and her business partner no longer have the same ideals or goals. The cosmic questions of mid-life swirl through her mind constantly causing her emotions to flip between depression and panic at a distressing rate.

Each day her discontent, along with a feeling of hopelessness, grows a little more. Lana knows she needs to move on but fear paralyzes her into inaction. “My thoughts and emotions are so jumbled in my mind that it feels like an immense brain fog is preventing me from finding a solution,” says Lana. “How can I leave? This business is who I am and how I define myself. What would I do? Who would I be? How do I make it happen?” Lana feels trapped. No way out.

At some point, Lana checked her spirit at the door and switched into cruise control. “I’m a drone,” Lana admits, “My life is a series of uninteresting, duty-driven moments accented with occasional smatterings of anger and sadness. Every day, I feel my heart getting heavier and heavier.”

Would You Like Some Cheese with That Whine?

Helena, 48, doesn’t like her job. Every day after work when her husband, Nick, asks how her day went she complains about something: her boss, her gossipy co-workers, the project she’s assigned to, the ancient computer she’s forced to use, the impossible deadline, the intolerable office politics, the work that’s beneath her abilities. “Well, why don’t you find something else, then?” Nick asks periodically. “If you don’t like it, move on.” Helena ignores Nick and continues to complain. The complaints become more frequent and Nick gives Helena suggestions. Helena ignores Nick and continues to complain. You can guess what happens next. Eventually, Nick tunes Helena out. Helena, of course, becomes angry with Nick for not supporting her.

We’ve all been around someone like Helena. Perhaps it’s your spouse or some other relative, maybe it’s a neighbor or co-worker, and possibly it’s even...you.

Whatever the issue — job, marriage, lack of direction, business — it’s time to stop talking (or whining) about whatever it is and start doing something about it.

Maya Angelou said, “If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude. Don’t complain.”

When you find yourself or others around you complaining, a great way to recognize and stomp out this worthless activity is to make light fun of it. A favorite method that Dana’s family uses was originated by her son, Declan.

One day at school Amanda, a classmate of Declan's, brought her pet rat, Rex, for Show-and-Tell day. After displaying and discussing Rex, she picked up the cage to take it back to her desk. Unfortunately, the bottom of the cage dropped out and Rex scampered away. Chaos ensued. Amanda cried and whined while others ran around looking for the errant rodent. Declan, after observing Amanda and the entire scene, put his hands on his hips, shook his head, and said calmly, "That's what you get for bringing a rat to school."

From that day on, whenever anyone in Dana's house starts to whine excessively someone else says, "That's what you get for bringing a rat to school." The intention is to knock the whiner out of complaint mode and make him or her think instead of just spewing negative "stuff" into the atmosphere — a great attitude adjuster.

How much complaining are you willing to bear by the way? If you are chronically complaining you are in pain. If you had an arm or gut that hurt that bad you'd get it taken care of. Get a diagnosis. Prescribe something for yourself.

Ultimately, when you blame others instead of looking to yourself for the solution, you surrender your power to resolve the problem and move forward. Many of you reading this right now are coming up with dozens of reasons as to why you can't move forward. I can't start my own business because I don't have enough money; I can't change directions because it's too complicated; I can't change my relationship because I'm too afraid.

We all know the excuses and can recite them ad infinitum. It's time to stop coming up with reasons why not and ask instead: "Why not?"

Reviving Your Spirit

Oprah Winfrey said, "You are built not to shrink down to less but to blossom into more." A delightful example of this is the story of a woman named Tess. Jan, 59, met Tess, a woman she will never for-

get, in the early 1970s. At the time, Jan was in her 20s, armed with a master's degree, just starting her first job and on her first business trip.

"I was so full of myself. Look at me...I'm a trail-blazer, a maverick, a model for the contemporary woman. I was a successful businesswoman in times when not many women had 'real' careers."

As Jan boarded the plane for her trip, she groaned inwardly when she realized she was going to be seated next to what at the time she thought was an old-as-an-iceberg woman. "Lord, I thought, she must be at least 100. She's going to talk my ear off about her 63 grandchildren and latest crocheting project. Swell."

At first, Jan ignored her. Eventually, though, they began to chat politely. Jan learned that the woman, Tess, was in her mid-80s, lived in a nursing home and had many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Before long, Tess told Jan her life story.

Tess started her life traditionally, typical for the 1920s: Marriage very young, children, a home maker. Then her husband began to abuse her both verbally and physically. She put up with it for a while but then said, "No more."

Tess divorced him, a scandal in those days. "You didn't divorce back then," Tess said, "you lived with it. But no way was I going to do that."

Now on her own and with small children, Tess got a job and supported herself and them. In the 1930s, once her children were a little older, she went back to school, earned a college degree, and started a successful career in business — nearly unheard of at that time.

"I was humbled," says Jan. "What an amazing, inspiring lady."

Then Tess said something that Jan has always remembered, especially at those points in her life

when she needed it most. Tess said, “Don’t let anybody break your spirit...not your husband, not your boss, not your children, not yourself.”

As they were getting ready to land, it occurred to Jan to ask Tess why, if she lived in a nursing home, she was on a plane. Tess looked at Jan with the loveliest smile and said, “Because I’m in love.” When Jan looked at Tess curiously, Tess said, “I met a man at the nursing home and we fell in love. We’re going to get married. I’m flying down to meet his children.”

Don’t let *anybody* break your spirit.

Cultivating Change

Whenever and for whatever reason the Big Blank occurs, it should serve as a massive clue to you that something needs to change. By the way, just the fact that you can use the words “big” and “blank” to describe what you’re feeling should alarm you. Why? No one should live in a void where they merely subsist passively and without joy.

Wouldn’t you rather live your life with passion and happiness? Wouldn’t you love to renew your zest for life and be in a place where you bounce out of bed (and off the walls and the ceiling) looking forward to every single day? If you said yes to both questions, congratulations, consider yourself ready for change.

Author and futurist Alvin Toffler said, “Change is not merely necessary to life, it is life.” To stagnate is to admit defeat, to change is to grow. Within all of us — within you — is the power to do things you never dreamed possible. How exciting and empowering it would be to cultivate a new life with a clear, daring vision for the remainder of your future.

Cultivate: To plant, grow, tend, nurture, develop. As a woman, this is one of the things you do best for others. Why can’t you do it for yourself? The fact is you can. All you need is the desire and will to do it

— yeah, that’s all — and the time, and the money, and the knowledge of just what in the world you want and how to get it...and the guts.

Change is Scary

“You will either step forward into growth or you will step back into safety,” psychologist Abraham Maslow said. The greatest hurdle to any change is the fear of change itself.

In fact, fear alone prevents many people from shedding the old and trying something new. Fear of change can be downright toxic and is without doubt a spirit killer. Fear is also a monumental waste of time. Allow fear to direct your life and one day, before long, you’ll look in the mirror and see a tired, old person who lived a “safe” but empty life — that in and of itself should scare you.

It’s interesting but not surprising what great lengths many people go to avoid change. Like Helena, they grumble and carry on about how awful their lives are but don’t do anything to change it.

That’s because change is frightening. Change means risk — moving from the known to the unknown. Change and growth take us out of our comfort zones. It’s akin to stepping into the abyss. What’s on the other side? What if I crash and burn?

Cathy stayed in a marriage for over 20 years with an abusive, controlling husband because of fear. “Even though I made more money than he did and I carried all the health benefits, I listened to my older, wiser spouse and stuck around accepting the emotional abuse he heaped on me because I was too scared to do anything else.”

Jan, the woman who told the story about Tess, spent a large part of her career working for the same high-tech company. In the 21 years she was there she worked her way up from newbie to division vice president. As her responsibilities grew, the workload became oppressive. “I was regularly working

60- and 70-hour weeks. My life was no longer my own. I missed a lot of my son's activities. My husband and I had become massive schedule jugglers and had little time for just being with each other." A company merger forced Jan, 52 at the time, to confront what she already knew. "I was miserable and had been for several years but I didn't know how to get off of the treadmill. I feared the loss of my retirement benefits, which I had worked hard to earn, and the prestige that comes with working for a Fortune 50 company."

But Jan took a big gulp, got her financial affairs in order, and made the plunge — she resigned. "Some moments I felt sheer panic. What did I just do? Other times, I felt pure, exhilarating freedom."

But, says Jan, it was worth every panic attack and heart palpitation. "The number one thing I value about my decision is that I took control of my own life. I chose not to let retirement benefits or image or anyone else determine my future. I took a big risk to change my life for the better, but that made the transition that much more sweet when I landed on my feet in a new job that I love."

Joan, 62, wanted to leave her high-level position and start her own consulting business but was afraid of losing a stable income. That fear kept her frozen in place for a long time until she made herself physically ill. "It's like I had to push myself so that my pain was acute before I did anything about it." So Joan, 53 at the time, made a monumental decision with her husband to quit their jobs and travel around Europe. "I think, in some ways, it was necessary for me to do something really dramatic and completely different," explains Joan. "If I could trust living for a year as a vagabond without an income then I felt that I could do anything including start my own business." And it worked. Joan spent the entire year traveling Europe in a 1982 VW van with a peanut butter jar as her bathroom. When she returned, she felt fearless and moved full steam ahead with her business venture.

If you're not willing to take a risk, how can you explore where or how far you can go? Avoiding risk means you avoid living life to its fullest and fulfilling your potential.

"Living at risk is jumping off the cliff and building your wings on the way down," said author Ray Bradbury.

So, why not go out on a limb?

Identity Crisis

A showstopper for many women as they contemplate making a transition is the issue of identity. Lana, the business owner, asked, "Who would I be?" Our answer is, you'd be Lana, of course. But we know what Lana means. She has been in the role of "company president" for 10 years so that's how she defines herself and that's how others define her. Says Lana, "I can't imagine myself as anything else but I'm not happy being what I do, either." That dilemma froze Lana into inaction and consequently, she stayed far too long in an unsatisfying and unhappy situation.

Dana has thought of herself as a mother for the past 20 years. Facing an empty nest, she struggles to find a new identity. "I knew exactly what I was for a long time. It was comfortable and comforting being 'mom.' But now as I'm contemplating the next phase of my life I don't know what else I can be. I know I need to come up with something. I've got a lot of years left."

Joan ran into the same issue. "I had been at my company for over 20 years working my way up to an executive level position." She was proud of her accomplishments and the thought of not being able to introduce herself as "Director of HR" stopped her in her tracks. "So even though I was making myself emotionally and physically ill, I stayed."

How do so many of us get to the point that we only look at ourselves one-dimensionally? Why do we define ourselves as what we do? One answer is

that society puts definitions around our titles and assigns status to them. Another answer involves the status quo, which feels safe. Of course it may not be a truly happy status quo, but we may be a lot less happy if we tried something different. Why rock the boat?

Plan to Change

Knowing that you want and need to change is great, but for most of us, it's not enough. The type of change we are talking about needs and deserves a well-thought-out plan — a strategy — to ensure that your transition is successful.

The remainder of this book guides you through a step-by-step process for creating a transition plan that will help move you from your current life to a new life. Follow each step and, by the end, you should have a clear vision of what you want and an action plan that moves your vision from wish and hope and dream to reality.



Reviews

“The inclusion of real life stories from real life women made the process and the book more believable—more doable. It shows that others have been in this gut wrenching situation and lived to tell about it. (I’m really NOT alone!) The process is logical and very helpful. It brings order to an otherwise disorderly situation. It allows one to step back, look at the whole situation and then take small steps forward. For some, the whole picture can be very overwhelming. “*Second Bloom*” breaks it down into those small steps which make the process manageable.”

~ Cathy Johnson

“Loved it: The issues the book touches on concerning women—specifically self-esteem and selflessness (sacrificing needs and wants for the good of the family, children, husband, etc.)—were so very on target. As I read, I felt the authors were very knowledgeable and attune with these roadblocks women so often put down in front of themselves. This gave me confidence in trusting what they were telling me in the rest of the book about creating a plan. It was very easy to relate to many of the personal stories. The book includes a variety of situations and issues. This makes it easy to find at least one that sounds exactly like “you”, the reader.”

~ Sue Nesin

“I loved the line about “That’s what you get for bringing a rat to school” and plan to incorporate it into my repertoire. The quotes and cultivation clues are great. I loved the list of qualities and spent an entire dinner discussing the difference between knowledge, wisdom and growth. Do we need a list of qualities we don’t value or do those come from the same list? Overall it was a wonderful exercise.”

~ JT Long

“*Second Bloom* is a book as arresting as its title and as appealing as its cover. In other words, the pretty face delivers! Few self-help books written specifically for women meet *Second Bloom*’s demanding mix of variables: ingenious, lighthearted copy that never misses a chance to take the reader deep into the woods of change. Its spirit is contagious and supportive, yet unflinching in its honesty about what is required to bloom a second time. And just to make sure the gift within these pages isn’t lost to the strong tides of inaction, the authors provide a fold-out template that serves as a step-by-step guide for all who are serious about moving from the Big Blank to the Big Blossom. As a therapist of twenty-five years, I endorse *Second Bloom* as a catalyst for the kind of inner change that makes outer change last season after season.”

~ Maridel Bowes M.A., Therapist, Author

“*Second Bloom* rounds the circle by turning years of psychological research into techniques that make changes in life easier and more attainable. This unputdownable book was written with women in mind. It is my belief that the ten steps described apply to all persons in transition. I will be recommending it to those I meet in the course of my everyday work.”

~ Vincent Molony, Consultant Psychiatrist and Author, Dublin, Ireland

“As a sociologist, I believe that *Second Bloom* has excellent insight into the dilemmas faced by women in transition. It identifies how women can live their lives in conflict with their values. Through the ten steps, this book helps women create a new plan and vision for their world. It does not limit their goals to just realistic and sensible ones, which they often do because of their doubts and fears. This book has a very practical plan for recreating the ordinary woman’s vision.”

~ Nuala O’Hanlon, Sociologist and Author, Dublin, Ireland

“The idea of creating a new life for yourself can be a life-saver for women and *Second Bloom* also shows you how. In working with many women and in my own personal life, those moments arrive, sometimes suddenly, and often they creep up like a growing shadow. Recognizing the challenge for what it is and then having a guided path for how to create a new solution is a powerful message. Straightforward, frank and inspiring, *Second Bloom* is a woman’s voice and wisdom that coaches you through every step. Can books change your life? You bet they can!”

~ Carole Peccorini, RN, MA, Breakthrough Technologies in Wellness,
Emotional Growth and Development for Women in Midlife