

LET'S GET PERSONAL

ANN
DALY
PhD
do-over!
HOW WOMEN ARE REINVENTING THEIR LIVES

MOTHERHOOD

for moms who do it all



WELCOME!

**Sure he [Fred Astaire] was great, but don't forget
Ginger Rogers did everything he did backwards . . .
and in high heels!"
Bob Thaves**

If you're a mom, I suspect you can identify with Ginger. Whether you're looking to ramp up your career, go after a degree, become a mompreneur, or pursue a creative practice, the challenge is to execute the tricky turns and fancy footwork of your **do-over!** with Ginger's sense of grace and ease.

This workbook has been developed so that you can customize your own **do-over!**

For each essay of the audiobook, there is a page of exercises here to help you personalize the ideas and stories you hear.

At end, you'll have completed your own reinvention roadmap.

Tell me how it goes! Share your success stories and suggest new exercises. Email me at: do-over@anndaly.com.

(1) DREAMS

Your **do-over!** begins with a dream. More precisely, it begins with the act of dreaming. How long has it been since you were “caught” daydreaming? The following exercises are meant to get you dreaming again, because dreams are the stuff your **do-over!** is made of. Remember, dreams are surreal, fluid, and surprising, so shake out your arms and legs, do a few neck rolls, and *let loose!*

1) Cultivate a sense of **wonderment**. Take out your notebook and write this prompt at the top of a fresh page:

“I wonder . . .”

Repeatedly complete the sentence until you fill the page. Don’t stop to edit, correct, or second-guess yourself.

2) Create your own **holodeck**. Choose an image from a magazine that appeals to you for any reason, or for no apparent reason. Project yourself into the image and play out whatever scenario develops. Who are you? What are you doing? How are you feeling?

3) Claim a **talisman**. In the movie “Citizen Kane,” Charles Foster Kane’s last words hark back to the sled that brought him so much childhood joy while his parents were still alive. What’s your “Rosebud”? What object from your past symbolizes a state of being that you long to recapture?

4) Play with an **alter ego**. Who’s had more **do-overs!** than Barbie? To explore another side of yourself, take the online quiz “What’s Your Barbie Doll Personality?” at: www.barbiecollector.com/collecting/games/personality.

(2) SELF

At the center of your **do-over!** is . . . you. So I have to ask: Are you prepared to get self-centered? In a culture that prefers its mothers selfless and self-sacrificing, you likely won't be rewarded for your effort. You may even get pushback from friends and loved ones who are used to receiving every second of your attention. These exercises will help you turn the spotlight back on yourself for a while.

1) Honor your **past** selves. Gather up all the photos you have of yourself and choose your favorites. Write a caption for each one describing what you admire about the woman in the picture.

2) **Listen** to yourself. Schedule 15 minutes alone everyday to do nothing but attune to your body, heart, and mind. If you have to wake up earlier to make the time, then re-set your alarm.

3) Create your own **mirror**. Whose reflection do you see when you look in the proverbial mirror? Your own, or someone else's vision of who you are? Buy a dimestore plastic mirror and decorate it with favorite objects, ornaments, color, and fabrics. Include your name. Keep it handy to remind yourself who you really are.

4) Schedule **me-time**. It's important that you formally schedule me-time just as you schedule doctor's appointments and carpooling. Honor that obligation to yourself as you would the doctor and the kids.

(3) STYLE

Don't think of style as "what not to wear." (Except for mom jeans!) Think of style as self-expression. It's how you tell the world what you've got going on. Use these exercises to design a distinctive personal image for your **do-over!**

1) **Inventory** your closet. Go through the entire thing, trying on everything, both old and new. For each item, consider how it makes you feel and how it makes you look. Which items best resonate with your **do-over!?** How can you build on them?

2) Learn from the **pros**. Want to see the ultimate in personal style? Check out the food/lifestyle shows. Each one is built around the host's unique way-of-being. You'd never mistake down-home Paula Deen for gal-pal Rachel Ray or gracious Martha Stewart. If you had your own TV show, what would you be known for/as?

3) Brainstorm your **options**. What is the most important quality that you want to communicate about yourself to the world? Take out your notebook and write that word at the top of a fresh page. Fill the entire page with all the ways, both sublime and ridiculous, that you can express this quality in your personal style. Choose one to start cultivating right away.

4) Create a **sample book**. Start putting together a scrapbook of images that appeal to your sense of style, much like a designer's swatch book. The images can be anything from a fashion ad to a color chip to a postcard. Review it periodically in order to keep honing your **do-over!**

(4) RESOURCEFULNESS

Do-overs! can be tricky to choreograph. You've already got a life with a lot of moving parts (they're called kids), and changing gears requires imagination and persistence. Most of all, it requires resourcefulness. These exercises will help you develop the habit of working with what you have and figuring out how to arrange for the rest of what you need.

- 1) Choose a **role model**. Use that role model not only for inspiration but also for information. How did she make the transition? If possible, request an informational interview to get more details about how she managed her **do-over!**
- 2) Do your **homework**. Don't assume you know everything that your **do-over!** requires, whether it's training/education, money, space, people, equipment, technology, facilities, etc. Look for information from multiple sources, both formal and informal, and make sure to double-confirm that the information is correct.
- 3) Write the **recipe**. Pull together all your research and write it up in the form of a recipe. List the ingredients and then detail the step-by-step process. How much of what ingredients put together in what order in what way will achieve your delectable **do-over!?**
- 4) **Ask** for it. Identify which ingredients you still need. Brainstorm all the possible ways you can beg, borrow, or barter them from friends, family, and colleagues.

(5) MEANING

The search for meaning is what makes us human. We need to know that we are not squandering our life on trivial pursuits. But the search for meaning is not a scavenger hunt. Meaning is not a thing that's out there somewhere waiting for us to find it. We don't *find* meaning; we *make* meaning. And we make meaning when we choose how and where to invest ourselves. That choice is a large part of your **do-over!**

- 1) Make a **collage**. Gather together images that somehow represent for you a meaningful life. Don't over-think the process; rely on your intuition. Once you've assembled the collage, step back to consider the themes you see. Ask a friend to describe the themes she sees. How will these themes inform your **do-over!?**
- 2) Take the two-week **challenge**. Want to learn more about what's really meaningful to you? Consider every request you receive with this single criterion: If it's not a resounding "YES," then it's a "no."
- 3) Write your **epitaph**. What few sentences would you inscribe on your tombstone to summarize the meaning of your life?
- 4) **Read** *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl. Schedule all the time you'll need to finish the book at a leisurely pace within one week. Feel free to take notes, highlight, annotate. This is a book you'll want to keep consulting.

(6) PURPOSE

Purpose is about defining an outcome. It says, “The world will know I was here because I made a difference.” Social justice, beauty, a healthy and happy family, a clean environment, personal or professional achievement—whatever it may be, a clear purpose will turbo-charge your **do-over!**

1) Collect some **inspiration**. Start clipping stories about moms who have dedicated themselves to a purpose, whether they’ve started a non-profit, or taken on a community cause, or fought for their loved ones. What can you learn from their examples?

2) Gauge your **passion**. Write a letter-to-the-editor or a blog comment about whatever you feel most passionate about achieving. (You can decide to send it, or not.) Afterward, measure the intensity of your experience. Was it strong enough to start up a new organization, volunteer your time, or make a donation?

3) Rewrite your **story**. The grand narrative of a purpose-driven life is the epic quest, as in Homer’s *Odyssey* and the Arthurian legends. How can you recast your life’s story (past, present, and future) as a quest, with you as the questing hero? What are you questing for? What obstacles do you overcome? How? What personal qualities will enable you to succeed?

4) Create a **tagline**. If you could boil down your purpose to a tagline explaining what you’re going to accomplish with your life, what would it be?

(7) HABITAT

I remember a world-renowned scholar recalling his childhood years. An intellectual and cosmopolitan gentleman, he had been born on a tobacco farm in Tennessee. As early as three years old, he said, he knew he didn't belong there. As you envision your **do-over!**, pay special attention to where you belong. What is the habitat—the environment and conditions—that will best support you?

- 1) **Declutter** your current life. *The Clutter Diet* by Lorie Morero is a wonderful guide. This will serve as your “spring cleanup” before seeding your **do-over!**
- 2) Write a **want ad**. What kind of fellow creatures will fill out your ecosystem? In your ad, detail the qualities of the kind of person who will nourish your growth.
- 3) Create a **spec sheet**. What specific conditions (physical, emotional, creative, spiritual, etc.) will you require? Write them out in your notebook in list form.
- 4) Begin a **daily ritual**. How will you sustain your habitat? Design something simple you can do every day to keep you focused on its health and well-being.

(8) VALUES

What values will drive your **do-over!**? There are likely a number of values to which you feel committed, but can you narrow them down to the two or three that are as essential to you as breathing? The clearer your value proposition, the more powerful your **do-over!**

- 1) Ask for **360° feedback**. Ask the people who know you best to describe, from their point of view, which values are most important to you. Make sure to get a well-rounded sampling of respondents involved in all aspects of your family, work, and community activities.
- 2) Choose your **“life words.”** My favorite necklace consists of a long silver chain with three “life words” dangling from the bottom. What three words would you choose for your necklace? (Mine are “clarity,” “curiosity,” and “adventure.”)
- 3) Answer the **“Five Why’s.”** For each life word, ask yourself, “Why is that important?” When you have an answer, ask of it again, “Why is that important?” Repeat five times until you get to the core value.
- 4) Look for **role models**. What people (ordinary or famous, real or fictional, living or dead) do you admire most? Why? What values do their lives embody? Are those values that you want to adopt?

(9) FIT

It takes particular strength and courage to leave a situation that doesn't fit, because our culture frowns on so-called "quitters." Remember that old saw? "Quitters never win and winners never quit." Mothers in particular are expected to suck it up for the greater good. But the truth is, the quicker you take a **do-over!** from a wrong fit, the better off everyone is.

1) Reassess your definition of a "good mother." Our culture idolizes motherhood as a cross between Martha Stewart and Mother Teresa. If that's not a good fit for you and your **do-over!**, then custom-tailor your own style of motherhood. Consider alternative models (from Rosie O'Donnell to Sharon Osbourne): <http://www.legacyproject.org/guides/mdfamous.html>

2) **Measure** the fit. Take an inventory of all your commitments as a friend, colleague, family member, or volunteer. Assess which ones are still a good fit and which aren't.

3) Don't go cold turkey; wear the **patch**. People generally prefer the devil they know. If you're fearful about leaving what's familiar for what's unknown, then wean yourself one step at a time. Skip one meeting or turn down one invitation. Instead, invest that energy and time into something that brings you joy. Joy will eventually overtake fear.

4) **Role play**. Anticipate and neutralize the pushback you're likely to receive when you withdraw from ill-fitting situations. Make a list of all the objections you're likely to hear. Read them all out loud in your most critical voice until they no longer affect you.

(10) REFLECTION

I often meet moms who long for a **do-over!** but have no idea what it might look like. I feel their frustration and disappointment. Alas, I have no silver bullet to offer. If you're feeling stuck or stymied, the only place you'll find the answer is in reflection. Here are a few strategies for cultivating a reflective posture, which means slowing down, idling, and pausing. And remember: "Time is a created thing. To say 'I don't have time' is to say 'I don't want to.'" (Lao Tzu)

- 1) **Downshift.** Drive in the slow lane, at or under the speed limit. No passing. Slow down for yellow lights.
- 2) Practice **listening.** In your next personal conversation, be a complete listener. Your only verbal response will be either "Yes" or "Tell me more."
- 3) Create a **sacred space.** Find a spot in your home or yard to designate as your place for private reflection. It doesn't have to be large, just solitary. One mom I know retreats to an over-stuffed chair she hauled up to the attic.
- 4) Take advantage of unexpected **waiting time.** The next time soccer practice runs over or the piano teacher is running late, use these few extra moments to write about your **do-over!** in your journal. (Find one small enough to fit in your purse.) You'll be surprised how you can train yourself to quickly shift into a reflective mode.

(11) CHANGE

For busy moms, routine and consistency are the way to sanity and survival. But when you're committed to a **do-over!**, change becomes the name of the game. You become a "change agent." Here are a few strategies for learning how to embrace and manage your transition.

- 1) Learn from a **good book**. Learn from the best change agents by reading their biographies and autobiographies. Among my favorites: Blanche Wiesen Cook's multi-volume biography of Eleanor Roosevelt and *Madam Secretary*, Madeleine Albright's memoir.
- 2) Learn from your **body**. Start a physical practice that is calming and centering. Yoga, walking, gardening, and knitting are all good ones to consider.
- 3) Learn from **collective wisdom**. Assemble a group of fellow change agents who can share their experiences and support your progress.
- 4) Learn from your **kids**. Growing up is an endless series of **do-overs!** How do your kids cope with the constant change? What advice or help do you offer them that you can use yourself?

(12) FOCUS

It's so easy to get distracted from the work of a **do-over!** when the laundry needs to be done or the kids are hollering for you. And sometimes it's easier to manufacture a distraction than to do the work of a **do-over!** Here are strategies you can use to sharpen your focus.

- 1) Do a light **pruning**. Make a list of all your commitments—to family, work, and community. Now cross out any commitment that can be dropped or outsourced. Be brutal. Pruning may seem extreme, but it's the best way to encourage new growth.
- 2) Keep a **do-over! journal**. Writing down your goals, planning your progress, and reviewing the results will help you keep your eyes on the prize.
- 3) Refuse to operate in **crisis** mode. Plan ahead as much as you can and institute policies to deal with last-minute issues. The goal is to stop getting distracted by what's urgent and begin focusing on what's important.
- 4) Renegotiate household **chores**. There is no biological imperative or logical reason that Mom has to do it all. If you have a partner, make sure the chores are equitably shared. Required reading: *Getting to 50/50* by Sharon Meers and Joanna Strober.

(13) LEGACY

**"And so our mothers and grandmothers have,
more often than not anonymously,
handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower
they themselves never hoped to see—
or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read."**

Alice Walker

- 1) Create a **shrine**. What spark, or seed, did you receive from your mother and grandmothers? Keep their legacies alive by putting together a shrine filled with keepsakes and mementos.
- 2) Write that **letter**. To your children. And sign it. Let them know about your **do-over!** journey and what you are learning from it. Urge them toward their own life adventures.
- 3) Write it in **six words**. In six words, write the legacy you want to leave to the world. Then use those six words as your mantra.
- 4) Prepare a **do-over! heirloom**. Think of this heirloom as a token of your life's legacy. What object—literal or symbolic—might you pass down to commemorate your **do-over!?**