

LET'S GET PERSONAL

ANN  
DALY  
PhD

do-over!  
HOW WOMEN ARE REINVENTING THEIR LIVES

**TRANSITION**

for women who are reaching  
for something more



# WELCOME!

**do-over!** diva Jane Fonda, who boldly called the final section of her memoir “Beginning,” reminds us that:

**It's never too late—  
never too late to start over,  
never too late to be happy.**

Maybe the converse should also be stated: It's never too soon to claim a **do-over!** Melita, my BFF from college, reckons that she gets the urge every seven years. “Looking back, I can see I have a natural growth spurt every seven years and need to pursue something more fulfilling, either at work or through my hobby, needlepoint.”

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](mailto: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” day-dreaming? 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 <http://www.barbiecollector.com/collecting/games/personality>.

## ( 2 ) SELF

At the center of your **do-over!** is . . . you. So I have to ask: How prepared are you to get self-centered? In a culture that prefers its women 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 all 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.
- 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 ) Go on a **date**. With yourself. Once a week, schedule a solo activity of any kind—whether it's sublime, like an art exhibit, or ridiculous, like the latest chick flick. Make it all about you.

## ( 3 ) STYLE

Don't think of style as "what not to wear." 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. Schedule a full three hours to 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 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 three 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 in place, and changing gears in the middle of the road requires creativity 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 you can, 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. Start asking around, too. Use your networks (both online and off) to find even more resources.

## ( 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) **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.
- 2) Take the **essay** exam (but no one's grading you). How do these two principles from Frankl's book apply to your own life? 1) People make meaning in four broad categories: love, art, nature, achievement. 2) Meaning can be made by how we choose to deal with the cards we're dealt.
- 3) 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," it's a "no."
- 4) Write your **epitaph**. What few sentences would you inscribe on your tombstone to describe the meaning of your life?

## ( 6 ) PURPOSE

Purpose is about outcomes and accomplishment. It is public. It says, “You will know I was here because I left behind tangible evidence.” By committing to a purpose, even if we play a small part in a grand-scale effort, we’re assured that we’re making a positive difference in the world.

- 1) Collect some **inspiration**. Start clipping stories about women 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. 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 transition? There are likely a number of values to which you feel committed, but can you identify which one is as essential to you as breathing? The more focused your commitment, 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 very foundation of that 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." Women in particular are expected to stick it out for the greater good. The truth is, the quicker you take a **do-over!** from a wrong fit, the better off everyone is.

- 1) **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.
- 2) 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 committee meeting or turn down one invitation. Instead, invest that energy and time into something that brings you joy. Joy will eventually overtake fear.
- 3) **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.
- 4) Take a **needs assessment**. In many cases, we've outgrown what did fit once-upon-a-time. As you move ahead with your **do-over!**, take time to understand what you need from any given situation—say, the personality traits of a new friend or the workload of a new volunteer activity.

## ( 10 ) REFLECTION

I often meet women 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 stuck wondering what to do next with your life, 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.

- 1) Put it in **low gear**. Drive in the slow lane, at or under the speed limit. No passing. Slow down for yellow lights.
- 2) Practice **listening**. In your next substantive conversation, be a complete listener. Your only verbal response will be either "Yes" or "Tell me more."
- 3) **Uni-task**. Do one thing and only one thing at a time. Period.
- 4) Ritualize your **down-time**. Reinvent your own version of mint-juleps-on-the-veranda.

## ( 11 ) CHANGE

In the business world, there's a name for the avid **do-over!** practitioner. She's called a "change agent." As the change agent of your own life, you can learn how to avoid either over-planning or under-managing the 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 *Personal History*, Katharine Graham's autobiography.
- 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. A centered body will help you avoid making extreme decisions and taking extreme actions.
- 3 ) Learn from **collective wisdom**. Assemble a group of fellow change agents who can share their experiences and support your progress.
- 4 ) Learn from **paying attention**. Do nothing for 15 minutes a day. Use that time to "take the temperature" of your change process.

## ( 12 ) FOCUS

It's so easy to get distracted from the work of a **do-over!** But that's okay, because doubt and resistance are an inevitable part of the process. The important thing is to acknowledge when you have glanced away from your goal. At that moment, language and writing will help re-focus your eyes on the prize.

- 1) Change your **language**. Eliminate the word "should" from your vocabulary, both out loud and in your head. Find other words that claim the power of your intentions, like "want" and "will."
- 2) Roll the **camera**. Spend ten minutes every day writing a description of what your dream will look and feel like. Try to make the description as vivid as watching a film.
- 3) Take time-out to **check-in**. The next time you find yourself in that dark place of self-doubt, take 10 minutes to free-write about this prompt: "What's happening?"
- 4) Design your own **freewriting prompt**. What is the one question you're most afraid to ask and answer?

## ( 13 ) LEGACY

When we were children, we asked for permission from our parents and teachers. As adults, we must give ourselves permission to take a **do-over!** Sometimes that's harder than it sounds.

- 1) Make a **shrine**. In the past, what key people have given you literal or symbolic permission to follow your dream? Keep that spirit alive by putting together a shrine filled with their keepsakes and mementos.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Assemble a **playlist**. What songs inspire you to get up and claim your **do-over!?** Make them into a playlist, so you can call up that power wherever and whenever you feel the need.
- 4) **Confront** the hesitations. Complete this sentence as many times as possible as quickly as possible: "It's okay for me to [your desired action], because \_\_\_\_\_."