

Transitions: Is This All There is?

BY ANN DALY, PHD



As far as life transitions go, it's the unexpected ones--divorce, widowhood, pink slips--that we hear about the most. But what about the intentional transitions?

I remember one coaching client of mine. Let's call her Bea.

Bea had recently retired and set about a spate of home improvements. One day, as she was overseeing work on the deck, Bea experienced an epiphany. "Is this all there is?"

Now, we have all heard a lot about the male "mid-life-crisis." A guy and his sports car. A guy and his trophy wife. A guy and his hair plugs.

Women's mid-life transitions, like Bea's, tend to take a more reflective form. "Is this all there is?"

By the time my clients hit their 40s, they have tired of external drivers. The rewards of being "a good girl" are no longer enough. In fact, many women find that being "a good girl" has backfired on them. They are poised to release their desire to please. Or to hire another contractor.

I love the energy of these born-again women. There's a sense of curiosity and playfulness that I find irresistible. It's like being 25 again without having to be 25 again.

Personally, I think this energy is going to save the world.

Take Impact Austin. Founded by Rebecca Powers in 2003, Impact Austin is a collective of individual women who have decided to make a difference by pooling their financial resources. More than 500 women annually donate \$1,000

each to a single fund. This year more than a half million dollars was donated to five selected non-profits. In only four years, despite the initial naysayers, these women have proven that you don't have to be to the manor born or from the tech industry retired in order to become a philanthropist. Their motto: "Ordinary women . . . extraordinary impact."

As Bea undertook her quest for a more meaningful life, she considered doing pro bono work. She thought about volunteering. But it just wasn't for her. Instead, she realized that what she really wanted was to finish her novel about growing up female in Texas.

Bea's book has the potential to change lives. It reminds me that "giving back" doesn't mean only money and time. By embracing and sharing your

talent, you carry the potential to change the world one life at a time. As my Dad often said, "It is better to light one candle than to curse the entire darkness."

For quite some time, in my former life as a professor, I resisted my odd and seemingly irrelevant propensity for clarity. I certainly didn't think of it as a "talent." When I wrote an article or delivered a speech, I wanted to hear something more than how "clear" it was. So my final academic book was as metaphorical and poetic and elliptical as I could make it.

At about the same time, about a year or so into my coaching practice, I began to ask my clients for feedback about how they were being helped. Guess what they told me. They told me that I helped them sort through their confusion. They told me that they gained precious clarity about their situations. They told me that this clarity brought with it the confidence to embrace a new future.

It was the clarity, stupid.

I'm not artistic. I'm not a born businesswoman. Don't ask me anything about calculus or chemistry. But I am the daughter of an engineer. I was raised on file folders. I can't help it, and I don't resist it any longer. However bizarre it may be, clarity is my "talent." Coaching women like Bea to live more meaningfully is how I change the world, one woman at a time. ■



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