



Reinventing Yourself

*What do you REALLY want to be
when you grow up?*

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Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

Think back to when you were a child. Did you have a special dream of what you wanted to do when you grew up? A passion to be a police officer, or a dancer, or perhaps an astronaut? Do you remember the feeling of joy you had when you played “cops and robbers,” or painted on your easel? Did you discover an early aptitude or skill that stayed with you?

When you got older and entered high school, did you discover a talent for debate? For the yearbook committee? Did you love to take things apart? Go back there for a moment and feel the feeling – the excitement, fun and ease of doing what you loved to do. Is there something that really stuck with you? Something from those childhood joys that is with you today? For instance, did your love of debate lead you into practicing law?

When I was a child, I loved to sort. You know those infant toys that teach little ones their shapes? Or the colored blocks? Well I was the child who got great joy out of sorting things – buttons, beads, crayons. I loved to play “office” and pretend I was sorting mail (okay, I know, I was a little strange). It was the creating order that I enjoyed. I always wanted to know how things worked, and to understand sequences of events, cause and effect, classification and order.

As an older child, I would get lost in my creativity, but always building on a framework. I loved paint-by-numbers (a structure to follow but I could tweak as I wished). I loved to paint whiteware figurines and decorative items (plaster-craft...again, a structure to follow). I still love photography (God provides the framework and I capture it).

In my career, the tasks I have most enjoyed have been, logically, those that create order. I love to clear up organizational messes, create and fine-tune procedures and processes. I enjoy making other people’s jobs easier by doing so. These same skills make me a very good process and project manager.

Also I still excel at building upon frameworks: creative writing based on an outline; making marketing communications that reflect clients’ branding; websites and emails using drag-and-drop software.

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

I am a firm believer that we create our worlds by our thoughts and actions. When we focus on the things we really don't like, or the people we don't get along with, we put so much energy into the dis-like that we create more of that – ask and you shall receive! But when we learn to put our attention instead on the things that give us joy, we get more of that. My work life is a great example of that.

I was an administrative, marketing and executive assistant for over twenty years when I was laid off in 2009. I'd always worked under other people's agendas, doing everything I could to please Corporate America and to keep my job. At the time I was laid off I had been acting as an assistant to a spiritual motivational speaker in my spare time, and in working with him I met two other spiritual entrepreneurs who asked for my help. So, when I was laid off I put thought and intention into developing a full-time business, using my administrative talents to support the kinds of people whose service to their clients is intended to help them grow and achieve success. It was incredibly freeing to realize that I could follow my own agenda, my own schedule, and create a life I love.

Over time, I found myself working for a wide variety of people in marketing and promotion, client services, proofing and editing, scheduling, and organizing. I was provided a great logo, I created a website and promo materials, and made it official: I was the proud owner of Lightseeds Office. It has taken some time to develop, but I am now doing the kind of work that gives me joy, with my own agenda and at my own pace. My clients are numerologists, authors, speakers, stylists, business consultants, churches, financial consultants, and more. What I have discovered in these intervening three years is that when my passion of helping these clients of mine build their foundations, reaches their passion of uplifting their own clients and helping those people find their own passions, the growth is exponential.

Let's talk about some people I know of who have reinvented themselves as I did.

*"Oh, you hate your job?
Why didn't you say so?
There's a support group for
that. It's called EVERYBODY
and they meet at the bar."*

George Carlin

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

A woman who loves to bake creates recipes her family and friends love. She gives away cakes to tv/radio stations, festivals, non-profit events, with business cards and brochures. Now she's so busy selling bakery she opened a storefront.

A man retires from teaching, and because he's always loved to work on cars, he decides to tinker with cars, mowers, that sort of thing. Word spreads, and soon he's in business.

A yoga student loves yoga so much that she decides to take teacher training, and starts a very successful studio in an area that did not have one. Soon she quits her job to focus on it.

A bilingual woman is laid off from her corporate job but worked a few hours a week for Berlitz. They were thrilled she was free and hired her full time to teach English as a second language.

A woman was laid off from her Wall Street job. While observing how much her children enjoyed working in the kitchen with her, she started a children's cooking class, and now creates cooking events for children.

A woman on maternity leave changes favorite nursery rhymes and lullabies into personalized songs for her baby. She and her musician husband start a line of custom cds for children which is now the world's leading personalized label.

A banker finds training his new puppy very easy, and after neighbors and friends ask for his help training their pets, he quits and trains dogs full time.

A rabbi hears from congregants how funny he is, so as he prepares to retire he tries the comedy club open mike night, and he's a hit, now earning his income from the comedy circuit.

A woman who is happy in her job helps a family member through the last stages of cancer. She decides to take massage therapy training so she can help cancer patients and their families with the physical comfort of massage. She added several modalities of energy healing to her skills, and volunteers in cancer centers and hospitals.

A professional photographer retires, and realized he missed the world travel he had experienced. He and his wife started a photography touring company, taking people all around the world on photo safaris.

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

Who do you know, what stories have you heard of other people who have started new ventures? Research and find some inspiring people online who have similar interests and have reinvented themselves.

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

Here are some interesting statistics:

- ✚ Between 1977 and 2005, startups added an average of 3 million jobs each year, while existing firms lost 1 million jobs each year.
- ✚ Nearly 14 million Americans are self-employed – 7% of labor force. Of those, 23% are in the 55-64 age group as I am – people nearing retirement turn to self-employment.
- ✚ 33% of small businesses are run by women.
- ✚ 80% of people age 45+ consider changing careers; only 6% actually do. Does that mean that all the rest give up and settle?

I'd love to know what percentage of those that are self-employed are following their bliss, as opposed to working in whatever field they happen upon.

Whether you want to be an entrepreneur or not, let's explore some ways to recapture the joys of your early dreams, and bring that to the present so you can act on them to create your future, whether it's working for yourself or for someone else. Why settle, like I did for so many years?

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

1. Where have you been?

In the same way, think about what you have left behind. What did you love early in your career or your youth that you don't do now? What did you dislike you don't want to return to? What got you where you are today? Many years ago when I was in retail I absolutely loved display and setting up new product. I enjoyed when a new product line came in and I needed to find the best and most logical place to put it, setting it up in the best way for viewing – organizing and sorting again! I can relate that to my love of doing the same thing electronically: creating marketing materials and websites – electronic rather than physical layout and design, organization, presentation.



Think of the specific tasks you used to enjoy in your childhood or adolescence, work life or avocation, as well as those you didn't enjoy. Write some ideas below. Be as specific as possible – you see how I did it earlier (sorting, framework, etc.). Think of these tasks and go a step or two deeper with each question you ask yourself. In my early childhood, it might look like this:

“I love playing with buttons.” Why?

“Because I love the colors and shapes.” Why?

“Because they're pretty, handling them makes me happy, and there are so many ways to sort them.” So?

“Because sorting them gives me pleasure and is endlessly creative.” OK!

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

2. What is your destination?

Now that we've discovered where your past has led you and what your present offers, let's set your GPS for where you want to go and carry forward the items from your past and present into your future.



What's your bliss? What tasks give you joy? What of your talents give you joy? Think of those re-inventors I described earlier. Can you see yourself taking people on photography tours? Describe what your ideal day would be, whether career related or not. Write in the present tense to make it more immediate and real. **Forbidden:** ANY thoughts of "how could this possibly happen?" This is a dreaming exercise.

I love doing workshops, making PowerPoint presentations, event planning. I love design, layout, sorting, creating order. I love building the foundations for people to live their bliss. Define your goal. Write yourself a mission statement for your life!

"I love gardening/decorating for Christmas/decluttering/baking/detailing cars/web design, etc. I intend to do that for people who hate to do it. I use my skills to ease the burden or create joy for my clients. I serve my clients by _____." Go back to the questioning exercises we've done already.

"I love to work with children." That's nice...why?

"I love their creative minds." That's nice...what about their creative minds?

"I love to hear their ideas about how the world works." That's nice...why?

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

“Well, because they have really inventive ideas that could benefit others.” That’s nice. How do you like to work with children? Individually? In groups? Drawing? Playing? Using music?

“I love being in a group of children talking about ideas, like those funny AT&T ‘It’s not Complicated’ commercials.” Now we’re getting somewhere.

3. The Journey

You can set your GPS, but you’ll get nowhere fast unless you take action! Your navigator may tell you what turn to make, but it’ll stay silent and wait for you until you actually make that first turn. Using the discoveries you’ve made so far, brainstorm with friends and think of fun and creative ways to use those “why” answers. Don’t think yet about “how” - think only of “what.” Make as long a list as you like – with no limits!



Okay, now that you’ve discovered some ways to reinvent yourself, even if they seem imaginary just now, let’s look at the tasks along the way. What could you do to get from your current location to your destination? What “virtual MapQuest” will you use? Do your research — find out how to match what people want with what you want to offer. Google some of your brainstorm ideas, no matter how odd.

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

Taking my example, when I uncovered the things I most love to do, I looked at the group of people I wanted to target – motivational, spiritual, holistic workers. I asked questions and studied online: What is your biggest pain? What do you not have time for? If you had abundant finances, what is the first thing you'd outsource? Based on their answers, I created a match between the skills I love to use (not just skills I have, but those I truly enjoy) and what they needed. I built my offerings on those things.

Let's say you really enjoy bookkeeping – you like numbers, structure, order. Your hobbies include ballroom and swing dance, and yoga. You could solicit yoga and dance studios as your target niche market for bookkeeping. Ask questions of the people and businesses you find, offering some sort of thank-you gift in exchange – a marketing referral, or an hour's free work, or some other item of value to those with whom you speak. Ask them the same questions: What do you wish you could outsource? What takes most of your day? What do you want someone to help you with?

As you start doing research, focus on the WHAT not the HOW. Keep your eye on what your goal is, and take all the steps you can to achieve that goal. Don't try to figure out how success will happen. You don't keep checking your GPS to see how it's taking you to your destination, you just know it is taking you there. When you place an order with Amazon you don't check every day to see if it's coming. Likewise faith in the outcome and taking inspired action will get you where you want to go. If you worry over the details, your focus has shifted from your goal to the "how." I didn't worry about how I would become a successful Virtual Assistant. I just took action based on the signs I saw, based on what I learned, and it just happened. Talk to EVERYONE. Network, write blogs and articles, use social media, get on all the local business listings. Lots and lots of research...LOTS!

As you continue on the journey to reinventing yourself, remember to stay flexible. You may have a goal in mind which, once approached, changes into something different. Keep your eye on what you want, stay flexible, ignore "how," pay attention to signs and ideas, and it will happen.

Reinventing Yourself: What do you REALLY want to be when you grow up?

Order the Tiramisu!

Here's a story told by my friend John Davis, a fabulous motivational speaker (www.CorporateActionHero.com) that perfectly illustrates the principle of focusing on your goals.

You're at a restaurant having just finished a great meal. The waiter asks if you want dessert. You say "Yes." Is your dessert coming? I don't think so - you didn't tell him what you want!

If you tell him you want tiramisu, he's gone off to the kitchen to get tiramisu. If you stop him and say, "Wait, I want ice cream instead," then your goal has changed, and you'll get ice cream. If you change your mind ten times before he even gets to the kitchen, you won't get any dessert at all because you'll have a really annoyed waiter!

State your goal, focus your energy on it, and order the tiramisu!

