

GOOD LIVING: CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE HEALTHY, WEALTHY AND WISE.

Career resilience

Midlife prompts many to act on career aspirations

Linda Naiman is one of those rare people who knew exactly what she wanted to be as a child — and became it. “I knew I’d be an artist,” she says.

Somewhere along the way, though, she came to the difficult conclusion that many talented artists reach. “I realized that I might not make much money as an artist. So once I finished art school, I studied graphic design.”

As a graphic designer, she achieved notable success, working with organizations such as the Pan Pacific Hotel chain and winning many awards. But after a decade, she began to feel the need to evolve in a new direction. “At about the 10-year mark, I peaked as a designer, financially and creatively. I was also exhausted,” she says.

Turning for inspiration to the popular book *The Artist’s Way*, by Julia Cameron, Ms. Naiman realized that despite the many years she studied art and design, no one had ever taught her how to be creative. After studying the self-guided course, she says, “I felt a calling to liberate creativity in other people.”

That was beginning of her second career, as a creativity consultant, or as she describes it, “a corporate alchemist. I



PHOTO: LYNN FALCONER

Kindred spirits and friends Linda Naiman and Erna Hagge of Vancouver both successfully transitioned in midlife to new, rewarding careers as professional coaches. People who think that midlife means approaching the end of their work cycle may be missing a great adventure, says Ms. Hagge. “You’ve got a lot of life experience, inner wisdom, maturity and knowledge behind you. Now is the time to dream big.”

help people in business turn leaden thinking into gold by applying the principles and practice of art and design to leadership.”

Among other things, Ms. Naiman has developed creativity programs designed for business, and co-authored a book with Arthur B. VanGundy,

Orchestrating Collaboration at Work.

Along the way, she has become widely known as a pioneer in arts-based learning,

and is invited to conferences all over the world. She cites her painting sessions with British Petroleum (BP) managers in their New York City boardroom overlooking Madison Avenue, and speaking at the U.S. Navy’s Transformational Leadership Symposium at its Naval Surface Warfare Center, as particularly memorable career highlights.

Today, she is evolving her third career, coaching entrepreneurs and boomers in “transitioning from success to significance; for people who want to infuse their work with meaning, purpose and creativity.”

One of the people who inspired Ms. Naiman’s most recent transition is Erna Hagge, who recently ‘retired’ after many years at the University of British Columbia, where she worked in human resources before developing and leading UBC’s award-winning Coaching Services Program, the first organization of its kind.

In her latest career, Ms. Hagge is now teaching coaching skills internationally. “Historically, we’ve come out of

the industrial age, in which everything was very mechanistic and the boss had all the answers. But it doesn’t work that way anymore; people in the technological age have endless information at their fingertips, so we have really good self-directed learners.

“As we move forward, with all the challenges in our world, we need to connect to our own wisdom, not someone else’s; to find our own answers, passions, strengths and values. Coaching helps people do that.”

In today’s environment, career resilience is an essential attribute for success, even for survival. “If you identify with your job or career, you’re in trouble, because that changes,” says Ms. Naiman. “But if you know who you are and can take a stand for what you believe in — your values — you have a ‘north star’ to guide you.”

If you don’t know what you believe in and what you’re good at, what your natural strengths, gifts and talents are, it’s time to ask people for feedback, she says. With that self-knowledge, you can link your strengths to needs in the world and create a vision for your life.

“Artists, leaders and entrepreneurs tend to have something in common: a guiding vision and potent point of view. When you have a guiding vision, it is much easier to make choices and decisions about where to channel your time and energy; by asking yourself, ‘Will this opportunity help me achieve my aspirations?’”

People who think that midlife means approaching the end of their work cycle may be missing a great adventure, says Ms. Hagge. “You’ve got a lot of life experience, inner wisdom, maturity and knowledge behind you. Now is the time to dream big. One of my clients just got her second PhD at 70; she’s the head of nursing in a very large organization.”

This is not the time to wrap things up, but to rev them up in a way you’re passionate about, she says. “If you think you can’t do that — go to a coach. We have the chance to design our future.”

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