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## Self-Help Tips to Blast through Blind Spots

The people who were kind enough to contribute to my book, *YOU-TURN: Changing Direction in Midlife — over 40 stories from people over 40*, discovered their own you-turns, and many made their own mistakes. During their stories, the same words pop up: fear, anxiety, unknown, belief, failure and success. Each of these people faced, faltered, fell and got back up again to fulfill their destinies. Some changed by default—life or other people forced them to change—and some chose it on their own. Embracing their inner power to change their lives, they all turned their middle-age burnout into a middle-age blaze. You can, too.

Below are ten tips to help you:

1. Don't wait until you aren't scared. You'll be dead. Most of us are scared all the time! Change does not require fearlessness, but it does require courage. Courage is not being fearless—it's doing what is right in the face of fear. Without fear, there'd be no courage.
2. Realize that it's much scarier to stay where you are than to go for your goal. Anticipation is generally scarier than reality.
3. Late bloomers smell just as sweet as early or on-time bloomers. In fact, the latter may all be dead and you come out smelling like a rose. Trust your own bud to blossom in its own time.
4. Afraid of making a mistake? Well, what are you in the midst of right now? Continuing down a path that is no longer fulfilling for you is compounding your pain. If you take a risk and it doesn't work out, then at worst, you'll have made two mistakes instead of one. So keep making mistakes until you get it right.
- 5.

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1. Volunteer in your community. We are born to serve, give, teach, heal, enlighten. If you go out into the community and give something of yourself, you'll awaken something inside of you—guaranteed. We all have many facets and gifts. They can be sparked anytime, anywhere, and generally light up very quickly when we are selflessly involved. Your untapped talents will rise to the surface when you work with the developmentally challenged, help with a political campaign, deliver food to AIDS patients, collect recyclables—the list is endless. Selfless service can alter your life.
2. No “shoulds” allowed! Many people torture themselves with “I *should* have X by now!” or “I *should* have done X by now!” or “I *should* be X by now!” As the late, great psychologist Dr. Albert Ellis said, “Stop should-ing all over yourself!” He also said, “Stop must-urbating!” for those haunted with “I *must* have X” or “I *must* be X” or “I *must* get X.” Replace *should* and *must* with “chose to,” and see how many possibilities open up to you—e.g. “I chose to be a stand-up for nine years.” This allows you to take responsibility for your actions and frees you to make a new choice.
3. Most skills are transferable. If you choose to view life from a linear perspective, it would appear that my decade each in opera and comedy were wasted. However, viewing it dynamically, we see how it led to my new career. Trust me, the road from stand-up comedy to mental health is a very short one. My stagecraft enabled me to add humor to the austere; it prepared me for public speaking, working with creative artists in Hollywood, and for writing this book! Make a list of all your

skills. Then list what you like to do on your days off. Let those two lists marinate for a few days, then start connecting the dots. And don't limit yourself to something that already exists ... create your own niche.

4. Many people do know what they'd rather be doing but are simply afraid to make the change. Start by simply making a list of all the steps of action that would be required if you had the courage to proceed. Review your list daily. Next, pick a date when you'd ideally like to attain the goal. Work backward and plan each step toward that goal at a reasonable working pace for you. This allows you to be psychologically geared and excited about the whole process, rather than overwhelmed. Perhaps the first simple, baby step is just looking up one phone number of a contact. For the following step, write out a script of what you'd like to say to that contact when you reach him or her. Don't make the call yet; just write the script. Make the call when it is in your plan to take that action step.
5. Many people don't have a clue what their right path is. They just know they are in pain or unfulfilled now. Well, your imagination is a magic wand. If you feel stuck, just ask yourself: “If I were to imagine that I DID know what I wanted to do with my life, it would be X.” Give yourself time to realize the answer. Remember that YOU are the magic wand ... the agent for change.

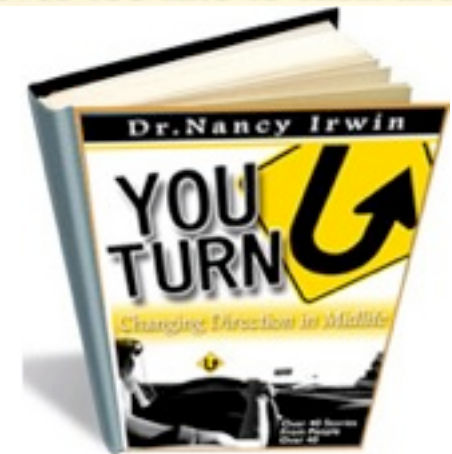
10. It really doesn't matter *what* you do. It's *who* you are while you're doing any and everything you do. So we really all have the same purpose. To think that there is *one* thing you are

“supposed” to do is placing enormous, undue pressure on yourself.

Anyone can do this. Just set a goal, lay out the steps that you need to take—remembering to take one step at a time—and always be sure to celebrate the successes you create along the way. Keep supportive people around you.

Don't wait for the fears and doubts to disappear—they never will. Because you are human. Take action in spite of the fears. We are all scared and doubtful every day of our lives—relationships, family, finances, work, it's never-ending. But you can soft pedal those feelings rather than letting them run you over. ###

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