

## Introduction

My friend Allison told me, with the sincerity of the wounded, “Marina, I hate my job. I hate my career. I have got to get out.”

She said she woke up on weekday mornings covered with a blanket of dread. Getting out of bed at the last possible minute, she pushed herself out the door with two cups of coffee. Once at work, she rewarded herself with a bagel, and then edged through the day with her eyes on the weekend.

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Unlike Allison, Rachel liked her job. And why not? Her career had been good to her. Diligently working her way up, she now felt comfortable and secure. But Rachel also had a nagging feeling that she could do more with her life. She had no idea what.

### ***You are not Alone***

Allison and Rachel are real; they are the first of women I’ve mentored that I will introduce to you, to guide us through this book. From their stories—and mine—you will see that changing or expanding your career is possible at any age, at any time. Best of all, a shift can be achieved in a way that *uplifts your spirit and feeds your soul*.

If you are considering a career change, you are not alone. According to a 2007 Reuters survey, 60% of workers in the United States either have recently made a career change or are planning one. That makes changing careers more popular than marriage: according to the U.S. Census Bureau, less than 50% of American households are in traditional, male-female marriages.

Another U.S. statistic: 41% of employees are like Allison; they dislike their jobs. Job dissatisfaction is more likely if you are young, or if you work for large companies.

While career change is popular, it is also stressful. Changes in your career or job consistently rank high on the stress indicator charts. Not surprisingly, being fired tops the job-related causes of stress.

But we can't talk too much about stress without defining it.

### ***What is Stress?***

When I typed "stress" into the Google search engine, 217 MILLION links popped up to tell me about stress—six times more entries than books checked out of the New York City Library during one year.

But what precisely is stress? The Oxford Dictionary defines it as a "demand on physical or mental energy." With this definition, you can see that even changes that we welcome, like a new baby or new job, cause stress. On top of the additional demands, it takes mental energy to adjust to the new.

Since change and stress are tied together at the hip, is there a stress-free way to go about change?

As you will see in *Career Change the Stress-Free Way*, the answer is yes. There are keys to changing your career without placing demands on your physical and mental energy. But the methods do demand your attention, and participation with ease from your whole being—which is what I suspect you would also like from your new career.

Speaking of careers, am I the only one who thinks the definition of career is changing?

### ***What is a Career?***

Some careers are as unambiguous as a good hair cut. If you are an accountant, you are an accountant, regardless of where you work. But if you are an accountant who sells books online, are you also a writer? And an internet entrepreneur? If you then offer teleseminars on the joys of accounting, are you also a trainer?

The definitions and boundaries of careers are stretching. Unlike earlier generations, we are both changing careers more frequently and juggling two or more careers at the same time, as the accountant/writer/entrepreneur/trainer we just met.

The options are yours, and they don't have to be overwhelming.

## **Who Are You?**

I wrote *Career Change the Stress-Free Way* for anyone who works and who cares about making the most of those 40-plus hours spent on career. You might be a:

- College student facing her first career
- Mom who works for her family, and is re-entering the outside work force
- Baby Boomer burnt to a crisp with a job she has outgrown
- Senior wanting to pass on her wisdom
- Anywhere in between.

This book is not just for women. But if you are a guy, one warning: because I had to learn hundreds of sports metaphors to function in the corporate world (expressions like “end game” and “my bad”), the metaphors in this book are my revenge. If you are a male and can handle the language, welcome. The methodology will work for you as well.

The keywords among you, regardless of gender, are: CHANGE. WORK. FULFILLMENT.

## ***What to Expect***

After reading *Career Change the Stress-Free Way*, you will have a map for making a career change, if change is what you choose to do. If you also do the exercises, you will have some ideas—or know for sure—where your map will lead. You will understand how to plan for your new venture, try it on for size, and to commit (or not)—all in the stress-free way.

The choices staring you in the face are ones that faced me. It was not until I starting switching to my third career, at age 54, that I understood the how-to's of a graceful career change, and began sharing them with others.

Now, I am privileged to support women as they imagine, plan, and make career changes (you can see how at [www.pinkedge.com](http://www.pinkedge.com)). Since I made the mistakes first, I can spare you wrong turns and dead ends in your new career journey.

I will show you the stress-free way to change.

## ***Three Keys of the Stress-Free Way***

The stress-free way is unique because it guides you in inner--as well as outer—change. You will receive three keys to inner change.

1. The first inner key I call “tuning in”. It is an easy style of meditation accessible to anyone. Meditation is a proven stress reduction technique. Even if you’ve tried meditation and have stressed out because you thought you couldn’t do it, tuning in will freshen your perspective.
2. The second inner key is called “noticing”. It is a way to watch your thoughts without judgment. When you observe the bees in your mind, you give them the opportunity to stop buzzing, and to even go away.
3. A quieter mind leads to “just knowing”, the third inner key. Just knowing is listening to your intuition, which provides your journey with shortcuts and time-savers, as well as an unbeatable inner compass.

Along with these three keys, other aspects of the stress-free way are to:

- Travel at your own pace--whatever that pace might be
- Pick and choose--use what works and set aside the rest
- Practice in steps--baby steps are not only OK, they are encouraged

## ***Organization & Exercises***

*Career Change the Stress-Free Way* is organized into four parts. The first part is the Introduction. I hope, by reading about my babysitting and early jobs, that you will remember yours. What lessons did you learn? Which ones have you forgotten?

The next three parts cover the phases of career change--Discovery, Zooming In, and Moving On. Each chapter has exercises that will support your career change more thoroughly than only reading would.

About the exercises: my suggestion is to read the book once, and then return to complete the exercises. That way you will know which exercises you can skip and which are vital to support you in your career shift.

## ***What Is Not In Career Change the Stress-Free Way***

While the experiences are real, the true names and facts of women I have worked with are not in the book; I have changed those to ensure privacy. The conversations I had with the women are both condensed and expanded to make the points clear.

You will also find that almost every chapter could be a book by itself—but who has time to read that much? So I chose a broader approach, knowing that we can always dig deeper in one of two ways.

I welcome you to my company's website, [www.pinkedge.com](http://www.pinkedge.com), for more resources than fit in this book. Simply select "free stuff" from The Pink Edge home page.

Join a Career Change the Stress-Free Way telecourse to design your new career in the stress-free way. I've made the telecourse easy for you to take; please see the Special Offer at the end of this book. Like a party, Pink Edge telecourses are fun. Unlike a party, they offer you support and guidance to change your career and expand your spirit.

Before you begin, I congratulate you for being open to change, and look forward to meeting you soon.

To your career success!

Marina Spence

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## Babysitting Lessons

I grew up in a Northern California town where locking doors at night, at least in the early 1960s, was optional. My neighborhood was a small town within a small town; you might not like your neighbors but you did know them.

When Mrs. King, our next-door neighbor, first needed a babysitter she asked my mother if my older sister could help out. Since the babysitting job was on a school night, my mother said no; my sister, who had just been diagnosed with extremely poor vision in one eye, needed extra time for homework. But I was available and, by default, became a babysitter. I was not quite 12.

I remember feeling nervous just before my first night. What if the two kids didn't listen to me? What if they were still awake when the Kings came home? What if...what if...what if...?

Babysitting Lesson #1: It's normal to be scared when starting a new career

My worries evaporated the first night; babysitting was a dream job. I babysat for the best-behaved kids in the state of California. Roger, age seven, and his four-year-old sister, Carol, did what I said, when I said it. After playing with them and reading them to sleep at their 8:00 bedtime, I read my own book and rummaged through the cupboards for what food I could take without Mrs. King noticing it was gone. At 10, I watched "The Carol Burnett Show" and counted up how much money I would earn.

For this "work", I earned 35 cents per hour! That meant I had money to buy vanilla cokes and MAD magazines without having to ask my parents! Beyond the thrill of independence, I knew my parents worried about the

envelopes in the “To Pay” section of the file organizer; their fears clung to me like paper clips to a magnet. Less allowance for me meant more for THE BILLS.

Who could be luckier? I had fun and helped out my parents at the same time.

Babysitting Lesson #2: Work can be fun!

Babysitting Lesson #3: Having money is great!

### ***A Harder Lesson***

One summer day after a babysitting evening, Mrs. King came over. As my mother opened the front screen door, I heard Mrs. King say, in her distinctive South Carolina drawl, “I’m going to wring your daughter’s neck.”

Thinking she was talking about my younger sister, who had a talent for trouble, I was about to step into the kitchen from the living room to say hello. But her next words stopped me.

“She should have told me that my father called last night! I didn’t know it until just now, when he called back.”

Then I remembered the telephone call that I had received last night. It went something like this:

ME: Hello?

HIM: Is Lydia there?

ME: Umm, no...(I wondered: should I say I was the babysitter? Mrs. King never told me what to do when the telephone rang. Should I take a message? I looked around for a message pad but didn't see one.)

HIM: Never mind. I'll call back later.

Click.

I went back to watching television and keeping myself awake, since my new worst fear was having the Kings come home at 11 p.m. and finding me asleep on their couch. I forgot to tell them about the call.

During Mrs. King's angry visit, I hid in our living room, expecting my mom to stand up for me. Instead, she calmed Mrs. King down by listening and sympathizing. Later, she asked me if I had been listening to Mrs. King and, when I said, "yes," that was that.

But I wasn't satisfied. "What's the big deal?" I grumbled to myself. "Her dad called her back. She should have shown me how to answer the phone!"

#### Babysitting Lesson #4: Bosses can sometimes be unfair

Mrs. King quickly forgot about being angry. The next week she showed me how to answer the phone and take messages.

After a few more months of babysitting, I discovered that other babysitters in the neighborhood received 50 cents per hour, not 35. I told my mom and she must have mentioned it to Mrs. King, for she raised my pay to match.

## Babysitting Lesson #5: Get paid what you are worth

After the Kings moved back to South Carolina, I babysat for other neighborhood moms. During the summers, my sisters and I also worked in our home, following a checklist that mother left every day before work.

But working in other people's homes was eye opening. Each house in the subdivision was designed in one of three ways. By looking at the house from the outside you could tell how the inside was laid out. From babysitting, I found out that, regardless of outside similarities, a house "felt" like the owners. If I had been blindfolded and led to different homes, I would have known whose house I was in just by the feel. (At that time, I had no words for "energy" or "vibration.")

Besides feeling different, each house was decorated to suit the owners. I saw possessions that my parents would not have dreamed of having: a picture of President Kennedy, a crucifix, a liquor cabinet. And where were the neighbors' books, which were found in every room of my family's house? I assumed their bookcases were in the rooms I did not enter.

I went home and thought about what I had seen and felt in the homes where I babysat. While the smells, sounds, and feelings of home comforted me, I didn't mind having questions. Why did each house feel so different? Why were some people Republicans and others Democrats? Why did my parents tell me that drinking made people miserable when that didn't seem to be true? My family was Baptist and Christian. Were Catholics Christians too? Why didn't more people read? Did they know what they were missing?

Babysitting Lesson #6: Career can take you out of your comfort zone—and that's a good thing!

I figured I would babysit every summer until college. But when I was 15, my best friend Donna asked if I wanted to work with her at a peach orchard picking peaches--for \$1.65 per hour. I quickly told my new client that, unfortunately, I could not babysit for her after all. I had a new career.

Babysitting Lesson #7: Changing careers can be easy

### ***The Fields***

Donna and I picked peaches in 100 degree Sacramento Valley heat. We picked the fruit the mechanized peach harvester did not shake out of the tree—the peaches still on the top branches. I don't remember getting scratched or bruised, though I must have. I only remember the sublime, fresh-from-the-tree taste of the peaches and their sweet, pungent smell.

After three days in the orchard, Donna and I were invited to join the crew at the sorting belt. Saying yes was the only answer. Not only was the work easier than picking, we would work in an open-air but covered shed--out of the sun.

The first day, I nervously took my place behind the conveyor belt. On one end of the belt came the peaches, straight from the field—maybe even the ones that Donna and I had picked the day before. On the other end, waiting like an open, hungry mouth, was an empty bin. When full, it would be loaded on a truck and driven to the cannery. As the peaches passed

on the moving belt, the sorters removed the peaches that were too green, too small, or too ripe to pass the cannery inspection.

The belt moved quickly; a sorter's eyes and hands had to move quickly as well. If a cannery inspector rejected a bin, the rancher blamed the sorting boss, who in turn blamed the crew.

Sorting peaches for six, eight, or ten hours a day was harder than reading kids to sleep and raiding cupboards, but I liked it. Jose, the boss, had sharp eyes and was quick to fire anyone who could not keep up. But he was also fair, laughed more than he yelled, and sometimes took Donna and me out for Mexican food after a shift.

The summer before I left that small town for college, I found a job that paid double what I earned in peaches—sorting tomatoes. Friends of friends honked outside my house at 5 a.m., followed by a 20-mile drive to the tomato fields in the next county. Once there, I jumped on a tomato harvester, any one that had room for another worker.

Instead of working in a sorting shed, tomato sorters stood on the platform of the harvester as it moved through the fields ripping tomatoes from the vines. Along with tomatoes, the harvester also pulled up dirt clods triple the size of grapefruits and the occasional snake.

We sorted quickly, but were slowed by the clods and by the dirt in our eyes, nose, and mouth. Even with a face handkerchief covering everything but the eyes, I went home with dirt-packed nostrils—as well as bruised hands, aching shoulders, and tired feet. But I stuck with it and proved to myself that I was not afraid of a little dirt.

When I look back at working in the fields now, I see that even though I wasn't babysitting anymore, I was using the same lessons. The dirt, snakes, and heat of the tomato fields didn't deter me; I still thought work was fun. It was fun to prove myself against myself, and to win.

## Babysitting Lesson #2: Work can be fun!

### ***New York, New York***

Thirty years after sorting tomatoes, I consulted for New York City mega-firms. The clients who needed my expertise leading software projects were world-class companies; most employed more people than lived in my hometown.

Even in the City's slow-down of 2001, I enjoyed a thriving consultancy business, professional accolades, and a penthouse apartment overlooking the Hudson River. While I had vague thoughts about leaving project management someday, they were dreams and not plans. Why should I leave? I was 51 and in the top 1% of U.S. female wage earners. I could not fathom starting from scratch, again.

I knew what it was like to start a career when others my age were fine-tuning theirs. I had left my first career, social work, at 30. I walked away before I knew what I was going to do next. For eight years, I circled and turned, and supported myself in ways guaranteed not to make the graduate school newsletter: newspaper delivery driver, housecleaner, temporary office worker, waitress. I even worked at MacDonaldis for two weeks, a job that delivers the extended version of "humility". (See Appendix A for the complete list of my jobs.)

For the most part, I didn't mind. The jobs supported me while I first figured out what career to pursue and also when I returned to school. Journalism school was fun and led to a job as a technical writer. But after six months of writing manuals, I was bored. I longed to exercise my mind in ways I never had before.

And so I returned to school again, this time in computer programming. One year later, programming became the entry point to a nearly 20-year career in Information Technology. (A digression: as unwieldy as the name sounds, Information Technology has been good to women. While women

in the U.S. now earn 77 cents to every dollar earned by their male counterparts, women in the computer field earn 90 cents.)

No job was a waste; I certainly learned about the diversity of Oakland, California, from delivering telephone directories there. But software is quick. By taking more technical classes at night and honing my strengths, I quickly moved from programming to managing small projects, which in turn led to managing large projects. Eventually, I developed a specialty within project management, setting up procedures to more effectively deliver software projects.

In the beginning and through the middle, I enjoyed my career. I read everything I could, took classes, found a mentor, wrote articles, spoke at conferences, and threw myself into a leadership role in the leading professional association. And all the while I consulted, on long-term assignments, for Fortune 50 companies.

But gradually, my career passion waned. Still, I assumed project management would be the career blanket I would carry until “someday” arrived. Someday I would have more autonomy at work. Someday work would be more flexible. Someday I would get paid for work that more clearly made a difference in the world. Someday...

Then, one October day in 2004, I did what I never thought would happen: I cried at work. I was at my desk in an open, everyone-can-see-everyone environment. And, not only were tears streaming down my face, but I was sobbing. Loudly.

My client at the time was an aggressive brokerage firm. I had just returned to my desk from a meeting with my temperamental boss. And while our exchange might have tipped the tears, I don't attribute them to him. The crying came from a deeper place.

As I cried, people looked at me and then looked away. Finally, one team member came over, gave me a tissue, and took charge. “Let's go to the ladies room,” she said. I followed; I will never forget her kindness.

At the time I, of course, knew the rules. Rule #1: Don't cry at work. Rule #2: If you break Rule #1, don't let anyone see you.

But worst of all, for years I had forgotten—like an amnesia victim who forgets her identity—the most important Babysitting Lesson of all:

Babysitting Lesson #2: Work can be fun!

In three months, the assignment at the brokerage firm ended. I vowed that the next client would be different: no mercurial boss for one thing, more meaningful work for another. Both happened. But still three questions lingered, ones that had surfaced in the space created by my crying jag. They were:

- What do you want to do to make money?
- What is holding me back?
- How can I make changes in a stress-free way?

Those are the questions that I answered over the next three years, as my career, once again, morphed into something new.

To make my journey into a map for you, let's start with the same questions:

- What do you want to do to make money?
- What is holding you back?
- How can you make changes in a stress-free way?

To answer, let's begin the Discovery Phase of the Stress-Free Way.