

“Making the Leap,” an article about making a career change by **LIZ CURTIS HIGGS**

Every career change requires a leap of faith. Here are four ways to shorten the distance and jump with confidence.

Act Your Age

Madeleine L'Engle, who wrote *A Wrinkle in Time* in her forties, said, “The great thing about getting older is that you don’t lose all the other ages you’ve been.” Your fearless ten-year-old self is still inside you. So is a rebellious teenager. And an adventurous twenty-something. Tap into that energetic mindset as you prepare to make your move, instead of falling into the “I’m too old” or “It’s too late” trap. You’ve faced new frontiers before. You can do so again, only smarter.

Do Your Homework

With the Internet at your fingertips and a bookstore or library around the corner, exploring a new career isn’t difficult, just time-consuming. Spend the time. Avoid shortcuts like contacting someone who’s successful in the field *before* you’ve done your research and know the right questions to ask. Instead, dissect industry websites, read trade journals, follow blogs, find out who’s who and what they do. Then when you step into their circle you’ll sound like an aspiring professional and not a naïve wannabe.

Look and Listen

Many professions have regional or national conferences that welcome people interested in the field to attend. Make the investment. Go on your own so you’re forced to mingle. Resist the urge to offer opinions or brag about your talents. Simply observe, take notes, and listen. These will be your peers someday. You’ll impress them most by being attentive, not aggressive, your first time out. At the second gathering, ask intelligent questions. By your third appearance they’ll be curious to hear what you have to offer. Now you’re ready to wow them.

Make New Friends

Your old friends and colleagues may not understand or support your plans and dreams at first. While they’re adjusting to the idea, develop a second social network among people in your new arena. Be a genuine friend, vow to give rather than take, and offer your current expertise freely. In exchange they’ll build a bridge beneath you, introduce you around, and tell you when it’s time to take make your move. Helen Keller said it best: “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

Liz Curtis Higgs is an award-winning speaker and best-selling author. Her recent work includes the historical novels *Here Burns My Candle* and *Mine is the Night*, contemporary novella *A Wreath of Snow*, and the non-fiction book *The Girl’s Still Got It*. Visit her website at www.LizCurtisHiggs.com.