

When change has your name on it

Greek philosopher Heraclitus said that change is the only constant. Whether we make them or they're thrust upon us, decisions that change our lives are often for the better. By Ariane de Bonvoisin



Ariane de Bonvoisin is the author of *The First 30 Days: Your Guide to Making Any Change Easier* (Jonathan Ball).

In my early 30s, I was living the big life in New York City, yet I wasn't happy. A few things needed to change: I wanted to get out of the corporate world, break off a relationship that was wrong, start a business, write a book and lose weight.

My job was huge: I was the MD of a US\$500 million fund for one of the largest companies in the world. I was at the top of the ladder, but it was the wrong ladder, leaning against the wrong wall. Externally, the relationship seemed perfect; he was one of *People* magazine's "Top 50 Bachelors". I knew it was wrong, but I didn't want to be single. As for

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starting a business, I had an idea to help make life changes easier. I was born into a life of change: I grew up in six countries, attended seven schools and had numerous jobs, but still, I preferred the safe route. I didn't see myself as an entrepreneur and I definitely wasn't a writer. I was a girl with an MBA from Stanford University. Then there was my weight battle. In my 20s, when all that mattered was the famous rat race, I ate my emotions.

We have something I call an "inner microphone": it wakes us up in the morning and tells us what changes to make. Mine could no longer be ignored. "You're in the wrong job. You're with the wrong guy. You've got to lose weight."

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HOW DID I PULL OFF ALL THE CHANGES?

■ **Self-responsibility.** I got honest. We say we don't know what we want, but we actually do. We just don't want to admit it, because it involves hard work. Our lives are ruled by excuses: "I'm too old", "It's not in my nature", "It's too difficult", "It's going to take time", "I don't have any experience", "I'm not smart", "It's risky", "It's going to upset my family"... What's yours? Excuses come from preferring safety to facing fear. We have to trust life.

■ **Self-acknowledgement.** Many people tell me: "I'm bad at change." In fact, you're great at change. Think about it: you're a combination of all the changes you've faced, initiated and witnessed. You have a "change résumé", a "change muscle". You've been through dozens of changes: graduation, deaths of loved ones, marriage or divorce, children, health problems, moving houses, cities or countries, changing jobs.

■ **Self-care** – getting things out of my head and onto paper. Doing regular exercise and yoga also helped get me out of my brain and into my body. I read inspirational books and tried new things, like going on a silent retreat.

I did leave my job in NYC and the guy – two very difficult changes. In time, I did write that book, I did fall in love and I did start a business. The best change of all was that I now live in SA and have a fabulous son named Everest.

When life's uncomfortable, it's because we aren't heeding the call to change and we aren't accepting what needs to happen now. The time before a change is much harder than the change itself! 🌈